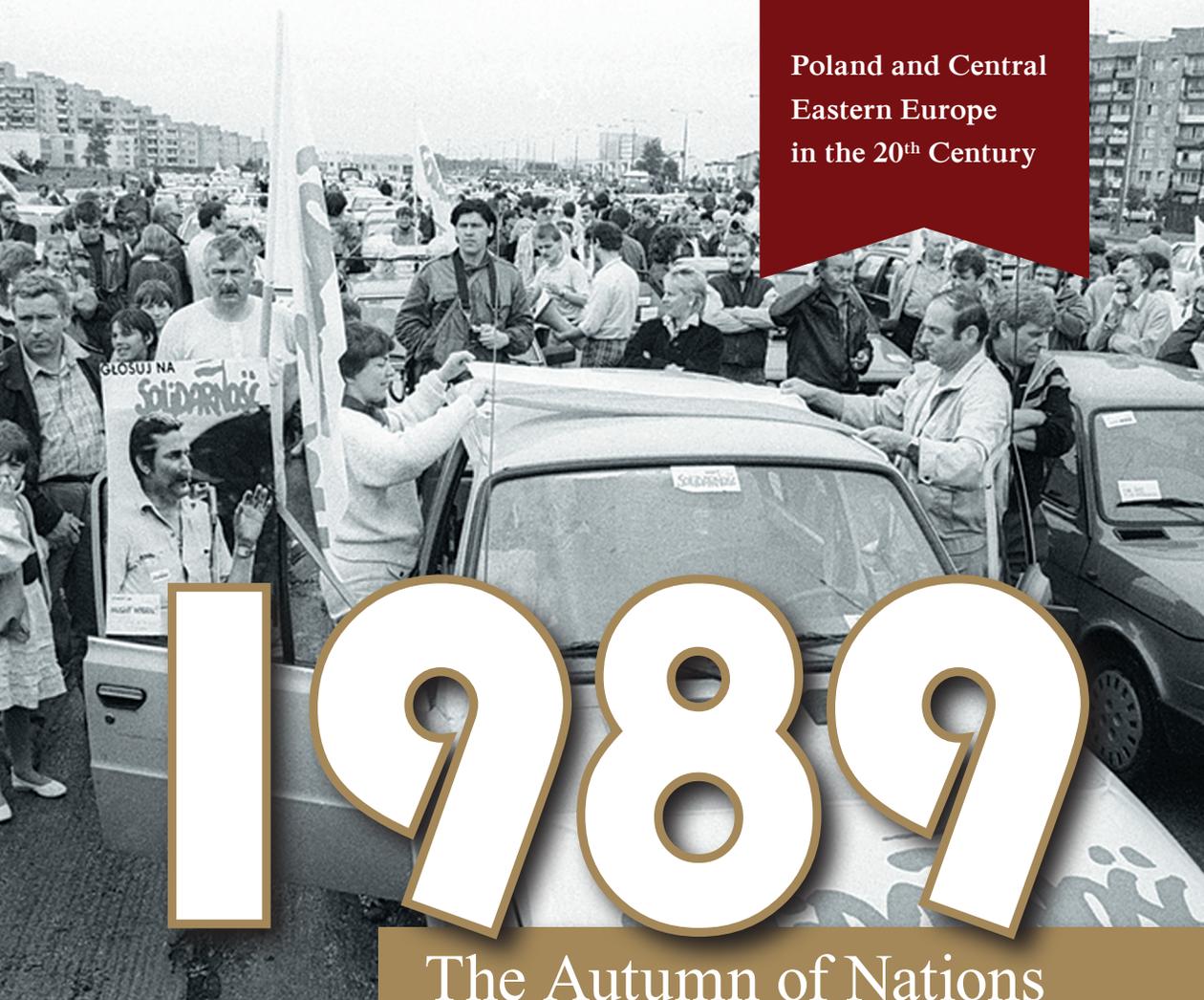


Poland and Central  
Eastern Europe  
in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century



# 1989

The Autumn of Nations



Adam Burakowski  
Aleksander Gubrynowicz  
Paweł Ukielski



European Network  
Remembrance  
and Solidarity



NATOLIN EUROPEAN CENTRE



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PUBLISHED BY  
Natolin European Centre  
Nowoursynowska 84, 02-797 Warsaw  
e-mail: [fundacja@natolin.edu.pl](mailto:fundacja@natolin.edu.pl); [www.natolin.edu.pl](http://www.natolin.edu.pl)

IN COOPERATION WITH  
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eLitera Joanna Ćwiklak, impresje.net Miłosz Trukawka

Warsaw, 2020

ISBN 978-83-955090-7-0  
ISBN ENRS 978-83-941048-3-2

The publication was issued in the framework of the project *The Electronic Platform for the Transfer of Knowledge and Source Materials: Visions of Poland's Role in Central and Eastern Europe in Geo-Political, Economic, Civilisation and Cultural Concepts in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, funded under the "DIALOG" programme of the Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education and implemented in the years 2018-2020.



Ministry of Science  
and Higher Education  
Republic of Poland

# Autumn of Nations

## Table of Contents

1. Book Info	6
2. Preface   <i>Adam Burakowski, Aleksander Gubrynowicz, Paweł Ukielski</i>	7
3. Introduction   <i>Adam Burakowski, Aleksander Gubrynowicz, Paweł Ukielski</i>	41
4. <b>Poland.</b> It all started there   <i>Adam Burakowski, Aleksander Gubrynowicz, Paweł Ukielski</i>	77
5. <b>Hungary</b> – from Dictatorship through the Process of Transformation   <i>Aleksander Gubrynowicz</i>	231
6. <b>The GDR</b> – A Lost Revolution?   <i>Aleksander Gubrynowicz</i>	335
7. <b>Czechoslovakia</b> – The System's Implosion   <i>Paweł Ukielski</i>	497
8. <b>Romania</b> – A Bloody December   <i>Adam Burakowski</i>	585
9. <b>Bulgaria</b> – In Search of the End of Communism   <i>Adam Burakowski</i>	653
10. Concluding remarks   <i>Aleksander Gubrynowicz, Paweł Ukielski</i>	721
11. Bibliography	761
12. About the authors	799
13. Index of names	801

The cover of the book includes the following photos:

- Wybory 1989 [1989, elections in Poland], photo by Janusz Bałanda Rydzewski / archives of the European Solidarity Centre (ECS) in Gdańsk;
- The Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989. The photo shows a part of a public photo documentation wall at the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin. The photo documentation is permanently placed in the public ([https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesie%C5%84\\_Lud%C3%B3w#/media/Plik:West\\_and\\_East\\_Germans\\_at\\_the\\_Brandenburg\\_Gate\\_in\\_1989.jpg](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesie%C5%84_Lud%C3%B3w#/media/Plik:West_and_East_Germans_at_the_Brandenburg_Gate_in_1989.jpg));
- TAB-71 during Romanian Revolution of 1989 from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TAB-71\\_during\\_Romanian\\_Revolution\\_of\\_1989.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TAB-71_during_Romanian_Revolution_of_1989.jpg), Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0), <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.pl>, Oliver M. GRUER-LAVIN, access: 10.09.2020.
- A photo illustrating the revolution of 1989 in Czechoslovakia, belonging to private collection of prof. Lubo Stacho (and provided on the cover thanks to the courtesy of the owner).

We would like to thank the following institutions for their involvement and financial support which allowed us to publish this book: Polish Institute in New Delhi (2016), Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (2017), Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary (2015).



## Preface

When in 1989 the communist system tumbled, the whole world was astounded. Since the onset of the Round Table talks in Poland in February until the execution of Elena and Nicolae Ceaușescu in December, Central and Eastern Europe underwent a tempestuous yet relatively non-bloody process of breaking free from the communist regime. Today, thirty years down the road, the perspective seems distant enough to attempt comparative studies without being too emotional. On the one hand, many people still recall the events of that time. On the other hand, the young generation who has entered adulthood has always enjoyed freedom in their lives.

30 years from regaining freedom is a perfect distance for analysing both the events leading up to it (the last years of communism and its collapse) and the summing up of the post-communist period. The removal of the remnants of the system forcibly imposed on the nations of Central Europe was not limited to the profound transformation of the system in 1989 or even in the following two or three years. The rejection of the communist legacy in all the countries of the region took much longer; in some areas, the process has not been completed to date. The authors took into account all of the above circumstances when building the contents of the book.

The title of our book: *1989 – The Autumn of Nations* most fittingly defines its subject matter. The main events discussed and analysed by the authors took place in the autumn of 1989 and they are the focus of the work. From the point of the view of the interested parties, the collective actors of the events were the nations regaining political independence after 45 years of enslavement. Naturally, the entire analysis is not confined to the second half of 1989. Narrowing the scope so much would prevent the explanation of both the mechanisms and root causes of the transformations. Neither would it help to study their effects and the presence of the remnants

of communism today. Therefore, the reflections on each of the countries under scrutiny are divided into three principal sections, i.e. the last years of communism, the direct process of the collapse of the regime and the ramifications of the above process 30 years later.

Although more than quarter of century has already passed since the fall of communism, the *Autumn of Nations* continues to fascinate both professionals working in the field as well as ordinary readers. In those years, countless publications, document collections, memoirs from those directly involved and even creative writing on the subject have been published – all trying to shed more and more light on the mood of that historic period. As a result, the question begs to be asked: when faced with such intense interest, is there any further point in writing on a subject, which, at least initially, seems to have been fully exhausted as a topic for research?

There are many reasons why – in our opinion – the above question should be answered with the affirmative.

Specialist literature (and journalism) published after the fall of the Berlin Wall, has continued a relentlessly heated debate on the subject of factors, which sit at the heart of the events that took place in 1989. Because a large number of experts from various fields have taken part in this discussion (while also representing a whole spectrum of world views), the attempt to formulate coherent research concepts aimed at explaining this puzzle seems to represent a separate research problem in itself. The Polish sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis drew attention to the fact that discussions about the theories of the fall of communism can be divided into several areas, including:

- "the theory of modernisation (communism collapsed because it could not ensure progress);
- the theory of disappointed hopes (communism collapsed because it failed to satisfy the hopes it had raised);
- the theory of institutionalisation, which emphasises the spontaneous and planned selection of institutions to close the gap between social and individual returns, and to reduce transaction costs;
- theory of globalisation, which views the end of communism as a consequence of the breakdown of the bipolar world order. That was caused to the high extent by the "second bourgeois revolution" transforming national regimes of accumulation and dismantling communist bloc

(with its collective property rights that worked as an “ontological screen” slowing down the global capitalist expansion);

- process theory, reconstructing spontaneous self-organisation producing new order out of chaos.”<sup>[1]</sup>

Therefore, as we see in the writing on this subject, there has never been agreement regarding the causes of the fall of communism or any sort of definite explanation of the events of 1989. The basis for the theories presented above (or at least their majority) were shaped at the end of the 1990s, during a period when many facts essential to the understanding of causes, course and consequences of the *Autumn of Nations* could not yet be assessed by experts nor by wider public opinion. As a consequence, even if the timeline of the most important facts which caused the handing over of power by the communist regimes in 1989 is generally well known by researchers, in terms of the accessibility of archive materials (which have only gradually been made available to experts after the fall of the Iron Curtain) we still lack clear and definite answers to many related questions. In this case, one of the basic aims of this publication is to once again relate the events of the *Autumn of Nations*, in line with what is known on the subject today, which following further releases of new piles of documents and publications has been notably expanded. Only in the light of such clarifications will it be possible to once again pose questions about which factors were key in the process of erosion and then the fall of communism, and to then consider whether these events did indeed have a revolutionary character or were more a series of deep reforms, introduced on conditions set by the main players on the political scene of the time.

In this context the question remains whether it is still worth researching this topic, after so many years, following all the attempts made in the 1990s, and whether the appearance of new data in itself is sufficient to justify the waste of paper and ink on further analysis of considerations which – even if only cursorily – have been described in previously published writings on the topic. In our shared impressions, doubts of this kind are not justified, for two reasons. First of all, literature on the subject has not really attempted a more in-depth comparison of the experiences of various countries in the region formerly ruled by communist regimes, even though such a comparative perspective could have produced a lot of interesting

information both about the course as well as the outcome of the changes brought about by the *Autumn of Nations* in the dimension of the whole region.

It would appear that the clearest presentation of this problem was provided by Timothy Garton Ash, who in his landmark essay from 1989 referred to changes taking place in Poland and Hungary as “refolution”, while preferring to use the conventional term “revolution” when considering the more radical changes occurring in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, or Romania.<sup>[2]</sup> In addition, if we are to consider the whole of the *Autumn of Nations* as a certain kind of singular event with a common denominator, then in this context two further research considerations present themselves. On the one hand, one would consider what was behind the radical differences between the ways in which communists were removed from power in 1989–1991 (which had a great impact on the pace and scope of reforms which were introduced in the countries in question in the 1990s). On the other hand (in fact, on the other side of the same coin), we should pose the following question: what, apart from the differences, linked all these processes and events taking place in each country, and then indicate those elements which were common to all the countries in the region.

Secondly and perhaps more importantly: regardless of how many facts have been established by experts in the past 15 years that could force us to revise the views formulated in the writings published in the 1990s, it seems obvious that the changes which are taking place in the world at present, starting with the outbreak of the global economic crisis in 2008, are forcing us to revisit the events surrounding the *Autumn of Nations* and change our perspective from that dictated by the realities at the start of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We face the evident crisis that is affecting international organisations, including the European Union, increasing criticism of the existing rules governing free trade, democracy, and globalisation, which represent a paradigm that had formed the basis for ideals, which fuelled the changes taking place in 1989. It creates a whole new research perspective and the need to ask a new, fundamental question: how much did the wave of contestation rising across Central Europe, involving the changes unleashed by the *Autumn of Nations*, emerge out of the process of removing communists from power and decisions taken in the early years following 1989.

It is these questions, including those about similarities in the origin of events, their patterns and ultimate outcomes, as well as asking to what extent the recently observed political reversal in the region can be explained by burdens of the communist past and the process of regime change, provide us with issues for analysis – questions which this book aims to answer.

The aims of our work, presented in this context, also determine the adopted methodology, along with the structure and timeframe. In terms of the first consideration, it is necessary to note that the deliberations, which follow apply the standard methods used in political research – in this sense, this book belongs to the field of political science. The question of its structure and scope of research materials are somewhat more complex, and these are due a more detailed discussion.

Analysed here are six cases, the countries that changed their regimes in 1989: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (the GDR), Hungary, Poland, and Romania.

The overall analysis, which this book contains, relates to the countries that – not counting the USSR – had belonged to the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact before 1989. In this respect, we are faced with the problem of whether (and if so, to what degree) the events described by us should be associated with a geographical or geopolitical area known as Central Europe. In this case, we must take some degree of care. In history, this concept (both in academic and journalistic writings) had multiple meanings. Sometimes, it was used to describe only the countries founded upon the remains of the Habsburg Monarchy, and at other times (as in the time of WWI) the Germanic term *Mitteleuropa* referred to a large part of what is Poland and Ukraine, and also the Baltic States (but not Bulgaria).<sup>[3]</sup> In the interwar period, ideas of broadly understood Central Europe were formulated e.g. by Józef Piłsudski and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. An interesting attempt to specify what is and what is not Central Europe was made by the Polish historian Oskar Halecki, who distinguished between two Central Europes: a western (German-speaking) one and an eastern (non-German) one.<sup>[4]</sup> The dispute over the borders of Central Europe, which has been going on for some time, has never been settled. Regardless, it is necessary to clearly state that some of the territories where certain events or processes covered by this work took place (especially territories which, prior to 1990, were part of the GDR)

were not too often considered to be in Central Europe, while other areas which we make reference to (especially Czechoslovakia and Hungary) were considered *par excellence* to be within Central Europe/*Mitteleuropa*.

In constructing the methodological tenets of this work, we were aware that the 45 years' period of communist regimes and their post-1945 influence on the shape and functioning of the Old Continent left behind it a strong mark on all the countries that had once been collectively referred to as "countries of the Eastern Bloc".<sup>[5]</sup> This mark had a strong influence not only on the dynamics and scope of changes following 1989 (which were at least one year ahead of the analogous changes within the USSR), but also on the course of further economic and political transformations implemented in the countries – former members of the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact. Consequently, it was membership in these two Kremlin-controlled organisations, which was the decisive criterion that determined the inclusion of a given country in our research.

In this context, however, we may encounter doubts as to whether, from a methodological perspective (and this includes both historical and political science points of view), singling out processes which took place solely in countries belonging previously to the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact from a whole chain of consequences the *Autumn of Nations* had for Europe and the world, can be justified. As we now know, the fall of communism in the countries of this region was the foretelling of much more serious repercussions on a global scale, in which the absorption of East Germany into West Germany (often described as "German re/unification"), the collapse of the Soviet Union or the end of Yugoslavia represent merely the account of the most important consequences of events covered in this work. Such doubts can be further amplified when we take into consideration that the events of the *Autumn of Nations* as experienced by the six countries featured in this work did not take place in a "political vacuum", but were in fact a part of a much bigger process of changes taking place in the international arena of the time. Elements such as disarmament negotiations conducted by Ronald Reagan (and then George Bush Sr.) with Mikhail Gorbachev, along with perestroika and glasnost in the USSR, naturally had to be taken into consideration (and indeed were taken into consideration) by the actors on the political scene in the countries of the Comecon and

the Warsaw Pact, regardless of whether we are talking about functionaries within the Communist Party or the democratic opposition movement.

There is no doubt that anyone writing on the subject of the *Autumn of Nations* must take seriously these questions. It is our belief, however, that the solitary fact that the events of 1989 really did result in a whole set of long-term repercussions, felt far beyond the borders of the countries directly involved, does not stop us from focusing our analysis on the group of countries which had formerly been members of the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact (excluding the USSR). These doubts – though in some ways justified – do not present a strong enough argument in order to broaden the scope of this work, specifically to include in our analysis those communist countries, which until the end of the 1980s were not subject to Soviet rule as well as the case of Soviet Union itself.

In this formula, including Yugoslavia and Albania in our research is not justified, primarily because these countries (from the 1950s onwards) remained outside the direct sphere of Soviet influence, often being in direct political conflict with the Kremlin itself.<sup>[6]</sup> As is widely known, both in terms of domestic and foreign policy, Belgrade and Tirana made choices, which would not have been possible in any country within the direct sphere of Soviet influence. As a consequence, even if the erosion of the post-WWII political systems in both countries really did coincide with the fall of communism in other countries in the region, as well as the fall of the USSR itself, these processes do however present such substantial differences that they cannot be associated with the processes taking place at the time in the then members of the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact. We are of the opinion that both the collapse of Yugoslavia and the fate of Albania are only loosely connected with the central topics of this monograph and so both countries are excluded from further consideration.

In turn, including the Soviet Union and its collapse in our research could bring other – potentially negative – consequences, from a methodological point of view. At this point, suffice it to state that trying to comprehensively study the vast areas which (rightly or wrongly) the USSR considered to be part of their territories would automatically force us to ask questions about a common denominator shared by processes taking place across a map which is very much divided along cultural, historical, economic and ethnic

lines, such as the European and mostly Catholic Lithuania and, its polar opposite, the republics of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, etc). It also seems obvious that, considering these very differences, this would not be an easy task. More importantly, however, unlike the countries of Central Europe, the fall of the USSR did not represent, as such, the fall of communism in those former republics. It is worth noting here that in Tajikistan the communist regime clung on to power until the end of the 1990s. In Turkmenistan, the established government doctrine often referred to the legacy of the former USSR, not to mention the fact that in many countries of Central Asia power was held (often for many years) by the previous first secretary of the communist party the respective republic, having merely introduced certain changes in theory and practice.<sup>[7]</sup> The collapse of the USSR did not always result in radical changes taking place in its former territories, nor did it have to result in the change of elite or ruling groups, and even – as in the example of Tajikistan (and Belarus, following Lukashenko's ascent to power) did not automatically have to result in the negation of communist ideology, nor dramatic reorientation in foreign policy. To sum up: in effect, political and social processes taking place in the post-Soviet space were largely marked by the continuation of the existing *status quo ante*. In addition, as in the case of the former Yugoslavia, ethnic or religious conflicts (and this includes conflicts which were either domestic or cross-border) were dealt with not through dialogue and negotiation, but through use of military might. The Kremlin did try to retain some form of influence over this part of the world, following the collapse of the USSR, when both in times of Yeltsin and even more so Putin, Russian diplomatic corps has considered the former Soviet republics as the “near abroad” (or even *Russkiy mir* – a “Russian world”), and so a sphere of their influence which, in their opinion, should be respected by other world superpowers (especially the US and China), regardless of whether the residents of those countries liked the idea or not. In this context, the events of 1989 in Central Europe and the processes, which occurred there as a consequence of the *Autumn of Nations* differ notably both from the events happening simultaneously across the Western Balkans and those taking place in the Soviet space. It is therefore worth noting that the countries addressed in this work remained formally independent throughout the duration of the Cold War.

As a result, even if their political dependence from the USSR remained notable (and it was the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact agreements which were the main tools of economic and military control by the USSR), then still – speaking from a legal perspective – Moscow has never negated the idea of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania as being independent subjects of international law (and so not parts of Soviet territory, with an independent army, police, currency, chain of embassies, etc). This status of relative freedom was quite different from those republics absorbed directly into the USSR. At the same time, unlike Yugoslavia and Albania, the Comecon and Warsaw Pact states, though formally independent, in political practice remained severely hampered by Kremlin influence throughout the period of the Cold War.

And yet, aside from these legal and factual subtleties, it is necessary to strongly state that the very process of removing communists from power, as well as the *Autumn of Nations* itself was conducted very differently in the countries covered by this book, compared to the Western Balkans and the USSR itself. The subsequent transformations in Yugoslavia and Albania, as well as post-Soviet republics were also different. The change of socio-political systems occurring after 1989 in former Comecon and Warsaw Pact states happened peacefully, simultaneously accepting their own paradigm based on the experiences of the West with their liberal democracies and economies based on market forces, in contrary to post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav countries. The countries covered by this monograph also entered NATO and the EU, thereby definitively leaving behind being in the sphere of Soviet influence, becoming part of Euro-Atlantic structures.<sup>[8]</sup>

In summary, the above characteristics which differentiate countries formerly part of the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact when compared with those in the Western Balkans and the post-Soviet space are distinct enough to exclude the latter group from the scope of this work. Countries in which – in the official sense – communism ended in 1989, had essentially been formally sovereign, even if in practice they did play a satellite role in relation to Moscow, and thus it is their historical, legal, cultural and economic distinctiveness, which places them as subjects of this monograph, aimed at answering the research questions posed above.<sup>[9]</sup>

And yet, because it is true that the processes which occurred in global politics towards the end of the 1980s were a definite reference point for parties active in all the countries we have selected, a whole of this book is based on a certain methodological compromise which is reflected in its structure. In the Introduction, we cover the most important events dating between 1945–1991 in global politics (with special focus on the situation and politics of the USSR and its relations with the USA), albeit only and exclusively in the sense of being essential to understanding the process of erosion and collapse of communism, and then the system transformation and its impact on the six countries under discussion. We also summarise the theoretical basis and formulate our theory of what happened during the *Autumn of Nations* in 1989. Subsequent chapters are devoted to individual countries, in which each one is treated separately and every chapter is divided into three parts. The first is an attempt to describe the situation in a given country before the fall of communism, the second relates to the events around 1989, and the third analyses the changes, which emerge from the *Autumn of Nations*. Answers to the questions posed above and general conclusions are covered in the final, concluding chapter.

In the literature on this subject one finds numerous interpretations of the changes which took place during and then after 1989. The discussion as to how one can qualify the fall of communism and its wider consequences has been ongoing ever since. Researchers have pondered and argued over how much reform was involved, how much revolutionary aspects, along with a number of other factors – globalisation, foreign influence or generational change, and to what extent the said changes were of political, economic and/or social nature.

Thus, it is incredibly difficult to find any common denominators or construct a coherent theory, seeing as the events of 1989 were the culmination of all the elements mentioned above, which took different forms depending on local circumstances. The greatest number of reformative elements was to be found in Hungary, then in Poland, and eventually Bulgaria. The East German experience was by and large revolutionary, even more so in Czechoslovakia, culminating in Romania, where a number of bloody incidents occurred. Globalisation undoubtedly had an influence on the domestic markets of Soviet bloc states, as well as on the functioning

of the Comecon. The greatest external influence affected East Germany, with Bulgaria being least affected, as its external partnerships were severely limited to the Soviet Union and, for a short while, Turkey.

An additional element that makes it harder to find a common denominator is the fact that all of the above countries took, at least at the start, quite different paths towards freedom. East Germany was absorbed by the powerful, wealthy West Germany. Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic, which carried out quick reforms, and Slovakia, which blocked changes in its early years of independence so effectively it did not become a member of NATO in the initial stage of its expansion into East-Central Europe. Poland was the first to introduce radical market reforms, although political reforms were slower in coming. For a long time, Hungary enjoyed relatively favourable economic conditions which, paradoxically, delayed economic reforms (while also quickly removing from influence anyone who spoke about their need with any sort of verve), which then resulted in radical changes 20 years later and allowed Viktor Orbán to come to power. Romania and Bulgaria, in the first half of the 1990s, languished in stagnation, while later reforms were ineffective and incomplete, and as a result, these two nations were late in being included in Euro-Atlantic structures, while presently they are experiencing fundamental problems, and represent two of the least developed countries in the European Union. In the course of the three decades, which have passed since 1989 many theories on the causes, course, effects, and the nature of events themselves have been put forward. The fundamental question asked has been whether these events can be considered to have been a revolution, or rather reforms. Another question in political science was when one can consider a systemic transformation to be completed, and how to name the system, which was established in Central and East European countries after the fall of communism. In later years, numerous aspects of systemic change, which followed 1989, were subject to analysis – from the perspective of changes of elites, social changes, the establishment of a democratic party system, etc. Currently, as the present is separated by the 30 years that have lapsed, nobody in East-Central Europe wants a return of communism, and since the days of the Soviet Bloc are now fading from memory, one can conduct a certain review of the theories, which have evolved in relation to the causes and effects of the fall of communism.

One of the best-known theorists dealing with this period was Ralf Dahrendorf, a sociologist and political scientist of German-British origin. His work focused mainly on the question of whether the events of 1989 could be considered a revolution. He defined it as “rapid circulation of elites accompanied by a radical transformation of regimes”.<sup>[10]</sup> And yet he stressed that there is a definite difference between “revolutionary situations” defined as “rare and serious conditions of human affairs”, which “occur when a ruling class has held down not just other groups but also an existing potential for change for extended period of time” and “revolutions”. He wrote, “revolutionary situations are not revolutions. They are a powder keg, but that has to be set alight”.<sup>[11]</sup> Dahrendorf considered events of 1989 to have been a revolution, although he did note that this process took place in different ways in different countries, seeing as “there is no straight and painless road from monopolistic structures of power to pluralism and democracy”.<sup>[12]</sup>

The American historian and political scientist Padraic Kenney arrived at a similar conclusion, and considered the events of 1989 to have decidedly been a revolution, going as far as to say: “to most observers, both inside and outside Central Europe, the revolutions were completely unexpected, in their pace and in their popular nature”.<sup>[13]</sup> The revolutionary character of the change of 1989 was also underlined by the Hungarian-American historian Iván Tibor Berend, who did however pose some reservations, seeing as, “The revolutionary transformation, however, did not follow the classic scenario of the French Revolution. It began as a ‘negotiated revolution’ when the two confronting parties sat at a round table and, both having made compromises, agreed on a peaceful metamorphosis. It began as a reform from above in Hungary without any violent conflict when the old regime relinquished its remaining power to a new one. The revolutionary symphony of ‘Annus Mirabilis’<sup>[14]</sup> began with two slow, but historically tense and powerful movements”.<sup>[15]</sup>

The British historian Robin Okey, an expert on East-Central Europe, also considered what occurred in 1989 to have been a revolution, though with certain provisos. He wrote, “We must remember, first, that 1989 had two aspects: the so-called negotiated revolutions in Poland and Hungary (...) and the dramatic events of the autumn. (...) Both the negotiated and the more

spontaneous revolutions of 1989 played indispensable roles in the overall process of that year.”<sup>[16]</sup>

Vladimir Tismăneanu, an American historian and political scientist of Romanian origin, frequently asked questions about the nature of what happened in 1989, while in his team projects he tried to gather authors who presented a range of perspectives on the matter. He was himself of the notion that the events, which took place at the time, could be considered to have been a revolution, rather than reforms. He wrote: “The revolutions of 1989 were, no matter how one judges their nature, a true world-historical event: they established a historical breaking point (only to some extent conventional) between the world before and after ‘89 (...) The upheaval in Eastern Europe represented a series of political revolutions that led to the decisive and irreversible transformations of the existing order. Instead of autocratic, one-party systems, the revolutions created emerging pluralist polities”.<sup>[17]</sup>

The Romanian historian Dragoş Petrescu also agrees with the thesis that 1989 constituted a revolution, though once again with some reservations. He wrote: “There are at least three major differences between the 1989 events and the “great” revolutions, which can be summarised as follows: the 1989 transformations were not inspired by utopian visions, did not have a class character and were not violent, the Romanian exception notwithstanding. (...) The first phase of the 1989 changes consisted of the “negotiated revolutions” in Poland and Hungary. (...) The second phase of the 1989 political transformation in ECE [East Central Europe] consisted of the non-negotiated – i.e., not based on the roundtable talks principle – but non-violent revolutions in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. The major feature of these non-negotiated and non-violent revolutions was that political bargaining concerning the transition to a new political order occurred only after massive mobilisation from below. The respective regimes did not open roundtable talks with the political opposition previous to the wave of mass mobilisation, but refrained from ordering a bloodbath in order to suppress the street protests.”<sup>[18]</sup> As a result, Petrescu calls these events “Entangled Revolutions”.

The British political scientist Richard Saull presented an interesting interpretation, in which he suggested that the whole history of communist systems and the Cold War was in effect a history of revolutions. He wrote,

“The dynamic of the Cold War, then, was class-based social revolution. It was this, alongside the persistence of the Soviet strategic challenge to American capitalist power, that provided the momentum of the Cold War and also its resolution. Beyond direct Soviet expansion based on the external projection of military power, which risked nuclear war, the only way in which the international capitalist order could be challenged was through its local contestation and overthrow within the weaker, more fragile links of that order. These turned out to be states in the Third World rather than the more advanced capitalist states of Europe. Because of the geopolitical constraints imposed on the projection of the Soviet power, social revolution was the only means through which the Soviet system could expand. It was this that ensured continued Soviet support for international revolution until the mid-1980s.”<sup>[19]</sup> In this context, the year 1989 comes across as the ending of a whole series of revolutions, supported across the globe by the Soviet Union.

A substantial number of experts, however, believes that in the case of the events of 1989 it is hard to talk about an actual “revolution”, and that it was more of a reform, or rather the start of a whole wave of reforms which in time came to be called “transitions”; in the case of the above mentioned countries, these reforms were meant to lead to democratisation, culminating (in ways which were not just symbolic) with accession to the European Union. The Polish sociologist Antoni Z. Kamiński in a book he published in 1992, right in the midst of these events, did not in effect refer to them as a revolution, but instead focused on economic and political reforms, considering them the effect of internal systemic dynamics. At the same time, he stressed that these reforms were only possible in one “direction”, i.e. in the direction of democracy and free markets. Kamiński’s words, written in 1990, seem very apt today: “We have two logically consistent global systems, but only one is Communist, the unreformed one. Successful reform will result in a variant of the liberal, democratic order that merges into the existing world economy. This we can see happening now, and with all the implications already mentioned.”<sup>[20]</sup>

Bartłomiej Kamiński, another Polish researcher, wrote about an “institutional decomposition of state socialism”. He drew attention to the fact that members of the late communist bloc were characterised by a growing tendency of a “syndrome of withdrawal”, defined as follows: “the withdrawal

of the state is a form of escape from its own predicament, the catastrophe of its own making. The escape has economic and political components that lead to more or less limited economic and political pluralism. (...) The ultimate stage of the withdrawal involves the creation of competitive political system with autonomous law guaranteed by independent courts”.<sup>[21]</sup>

Karol Soltan, an American political scientist of Polish origin, made the bold statement that: “The events of 1989 were not a revolution (neither liberal, nor self-limiting, not velvet, nor anti-revolutionary). They were not simply reforms or restoration. They were a rebirth, and rebirths (not revolutions, as Marxists would have it), are the locomotives of history. (...) The events of 1989 were profoundly anti-revolutionary, so they cannot be called revolutions. Yet they were also clearly not part of the routine of politics the way ‘reforms’ are. They were more dramatic, radical and involved changes too deep for this simple category of ordinary politics to be applicable.”<sup>[22]</sup>

Those researchers who focus on the “transition”, by which we mean a shift from totalitarian to democratic systems of governance, and from centralised to free market economies, also draw attention to the reform-like aspect of these events. A key number of works on the subject completely avoids the question of the revolutionary nature of said events, focusing solely on what took place later, after the fall of communism as a whole. This type of argumentation is to be found frequently enough that, as a form of exemplification, we can quote here a fragment of the *Handbook of the Economics and Political Economy of Transition*: “During the transition process, there is a co-existence of elements of centrally administered socialism and market relations; thus, traditional economic theory based on the presence of market relations was most likely not appropriate. As such, the transition was effectively implemented in the dark. Thus, while not only the collapse and the timing of the collapse of centrally administered economies surprised economists, many aspects of the transition process also did. The transformation was one of the most dramatic non-marginal adjustments in economic systems ever experienced.”<sup>[23]</sup>

Many researchers avoided using simple definitions, which would split the events of 1989 as either reforms or revolutions, indicating instead that one can see in them elements of both these phenomena. Timothy Garton Ash, while events of 1989 were still unfolding, created a hybrid word which

in later years was frequently cited – “refolution” – writing (in an essay which used this word for its title) that: “what is happening just now is a singular mixture of both reform and revolution: a ‘revorm’, if you will, or perhaps a ‘refolution’. There is, in both places, a strong and essential element of voluntary, deliberate reform led by enlightened minority (but only a minority) in the still ruling communist parties, and, in the Polish case, at the top of the military and the police.”<sup>[24]</sup> In his essay, Ash wrote also about the process, which was just beginning back then – the enfranchisement of the nomenklatura: “There have been many suggestions as to how communism might be turned back into capitalism. But it is the simplest of all: communist bosses become capitalist bosses!”<sup>[25]</sup>

It is, however, worth noting here that Ash used the word “refolution” above all to refer to events in Poland and Hungary, while when it came to the more radical developments in Czechoslovakia, East Germany or Romania, he tended to lean towards the classic idea of revolution – as noted by the British political scientist Keith Crawford in his book which was in effect a summary of this discussion. Crawford, much like Ash, noticed certain elements of revolution, and yet stated that, “the extent of the ‘revolution’ in terms of social structures is questionable. Even before the revolutions actually took place, several leading Communists were already planning change. They were all equipped to take advantage of the new economic freedoms after 1989 and so have become the new capitalists and the holders of extensive economic powers throughout ECE [East Central Europe] today.”<sup>[26]</sup>

As a consequence of these very complexities in the nature of the events of 1989, many researchers have followed in Ash’s footsteps and talked about things such as “rationed revolution”, including the Polish historian Antoni Dudek, who used the phrase as the title of his book about the fall of communism in Poland,<sup>[27]</sup> or *Entangled Revolutions* by the aforementioned Petrescu. And yet, in our opinion such attempts are too broad in scope and instead of explaining anything they do more to distance us from the nature of the problem. A much greater number of researchers took a different approach, avoiding simple classifications and suggested definitions such as “systemic transformation” or “economic and social transformations”. It is hard to deny the aptness of such definitions, but it has to be stated that they are also broad enough to essentially explain nothing. They could

be used to refer to any location or event when one system replaces another. For example, Great Britain in the 18<sup>th</sup> century also experienced a “systemic transformation” as well as epoch-defining “economic and social transformations”. Such phrases therefore, although being appropriate and useful in describing (loosely) all that occurred in all of the countries of East-Central Europe in 1989, do not echo the unique character of that time and fail to reflect its specific aspects.

The most complete theoretical typology relating to the events of 1989 was presented by Jadwiga Staniszkis, who summed up the above-mentioned list of types of explanation: “Each of the approaches mentioned above addresses in a different way questions of a revolutionary or evolutionary character of the end of communism and points either to implosion or explosion as a main vehicle of change.”<sup>[28]</sup>

In our opinion, the above theoretical deliberations do not use up the problem. Therefore, in the concluding remarks we would like to propose some new research clues that could be helpful in understanding a complex nature of the collapse of communism. Such words as “rejection”, “acceptance”, and “counterrevolution” are used there.

This study, attempting to provide a synthesis of the subject, namely to make a comparative analysis of six (now seven, after the division of Czechoslovakia) countries which took part in the *Autumn of Nations*, is one of the few comprehensive relevant publications. The first collective work published in Poland on the collapse of communism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe has been the 1991 *The Autumn of Nations* by Jacek Gorzkowski and Wojciech Morawski<sup>[29]</sup>. The book attempts to demonstrate the transformations that led to the collapse of the totalitarian system in the region. The book must be mentioned here even if, coming out soon after the events and being based almost exclusively on media coverage, it has become a bit outdated (as numerous documents, memoirs and other records have come out since). Photographs from the many countries published in it are especially interesting.

Academic publications concerning the subject matter at hand have come out also in other countries. We should refer here in particular to a monumental work by three Czech historians. In 2000, Jiří Vykoukal, Bohuslav Litera, and Miroslav Tejchman published a book *The East: the Birth, Development, and Decline of the Soviet Bloc 1944–1989*.<sup>[30]</sup> The nearly 800-page study introduces

the history of communism in the USSR and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including Yugoslavia and Albania (as well as Finland and Greece, to some extent). This premium comprehensive textbook is highly recommendable for all those interested in the issues discussed. Another engrossing work is the 1999 *The Miracle of a Revolution* by Romanian historian, writer, and media star Stelian Tănase.<sup>[31]</sup> The author focused on the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Europe, but also devoted ample attention to China, where a failed attempt to extend political liberties ended in a massacre. Tănase did not limit himself to what had happened prior to 1990, but he endeavoured to analyse the political and economic evolution of the post-communist countries. Events of 1989 in six countries of the Soviet external empire were described in dynamic, almost reportage form by the American historian of Hungarian descent, Victor Sebestyen.<sup>[32]</sup> A broader perspective, covering also *inter alia* Slovenia and Ukraine, was presented by Pardaic Kenney, who intertwined personal experience, contacts, and witnesses testimonies with historical analysis.<sup>[33]</sup> Horizontal view on influence of the opposition on the collapse of the communist regime in Central Europe was presented in a collection of texts edited by Petr Blažek i Jaroslav Pažout.<sup>[34]</sup> We should also mention here the work by Romanian scholar Dragoș Petrescu<sup>[35]</sup> and numerous works by American scholar of Romanian origin Vladimir Tismăneanu.<sup>[36]</sup>

Far more extensive is the comparative literature dedicated to the transformation process taking place after the “Autumn of Nations” and as its consequence. Mention should be made here of publications by Sharon L. Wolchik and Jane Leftwich Curry,<sup>[37]</sup> Herbert Kitschelt,<sup>[38]</sup> Graeme Gill,<sup>[39]</sup> or János Kornai.<sup>[40]</sup> Works published at the University of Wrocław,<sup>[41]</sup> the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (UMCS)<sup>[42]</sup> and the Centre for Central and Eastern Europe of the Institute for Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences<sup>[43]</sup> are worth noting. Interesting analyses are also made by Jacek Wojnicki.<sup>[44]</sup> Texts indicating a common denominator of the transitions in Central Europe, additionally attempting to create a certain model, are an invaluable source of understanding the relevant processes: publications by Leslie Holmes,<sup>[45]</sup> Claus Offe<sup>[46]</sup> and – in Poland – by Jadwiga Staniszkis,<sup>[47]</sup> as well as Jan Kofman and Wojciech Roszkowski.<sup>[48]</sup> The last two authors are moreover editors of a veritable mine of knowledge about the actors

of the 1989 events in Central Europe, i.e. of a comprehensive biographical dictionary dedicated to figures from the entire broadly construed Central and Eastern Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>[49]</sup>

Numerous cross-sectional works, presenting history of the region in a broader perspective, should be mentioned here as well. Noteworthy are works by Wojciech Roszkowski, who described whole history of Central Europe<sup>[50]</sup> and its cultural heritage throughout centuries.<sup>[51]</sup> Robin Okey portrayed almost quarter of millennium of the region's history starting with the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and finishing in the 1980s.<sup>[52]</sup> Numerous works also present 20<sup>th</sup> century history of Central Europe – let us mention only books by Adrian Webb,<sup>[53]</sup> R. J. Crampton<sup>[54]</sup> or, depicting post-Second World War times publications by Thomas Simons Jr.<sup>[55]</sup> and Ivan T. Berend.<sup>[56]</sup>

Far more numerous were the publications dedicated to the events in individual countries. The fall of communism began in Poland at first, and the literature concerning this process is exceptionally rich. It is impossible to present even the most summarised selection of publications devoted to the topic; however, we would like to focus reader's attention at least on works of few authors. The most comprehensive studies concerning the year 1989 in Poland were published by Paulina Codogni, who described both the Round Table negotiations,<sup>[57]</sup> and the partly free elections held on 4 and 18 June 1989.<sup>[58]</sup> This topic was also researched by *inter alia* Krystyna Trembicka,<sup>[59]</sup> Jan Skórzyński<sup>[60]</sup> and Andrzej Garlicki.<sup>[61]</sup> Paweł Kowal<sup>[62]</sup> and Antoni Dudek<sup>[63]</sup> extensively described close of the communist regime rule in Poland. The latter is also author of the most comprehensive history of Poland after 1989.<sup>[64]</sup>

History of Poland under communism is described in great number of monographs, analyses, articles, and editions of documents; it is not our goal to enlist them here. However, we have to point out that it is impossible to analyze or portray those times in Poland without knowing the works of Andrzej Paczkowski,<sup>[65]</sup> Andrzej Friszke,<sup>[66]</sup> Jerzy Eisler<sup>[67]</sup> or Dariusz Gawin.<sup>[68]</sup> In spite of time that has passed by, still actual remain edited in exile books by Jakub Karpiński.<sup>[69]</sup> Among editors of publications about communist Poland, special position is held by the Institute of National Remembrance. In its almost 20-years' long history, it had published hundreds of books, most of them could have been listed in here. Literature of synthetic character,

describing Polish history in broader perspective is also rich, just to mention works of professors Wojciech Roszkowski<sup>[70]</sup> and Andrzej Paczkowski.<sup>[71]</sup>

When talking about the literature on the transition period in Hungary, the readers will find themselves in a relatively comfortable position as, unlike in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in Budapest the transformation has been addressed in a few extremely important publications available in English. The key works, apart from those used in the chapter, by Rudolf L. Tóké and Ignác Romsics, include texts by János Kornai,<sup>[72]</sup> where the author explains the advantages and disadvantages of the economic transformation on the Danube. As far as Polish-language sources are concerned, the relevant period in Hungary has been extensively dealt with in the works by Bogdan Góralczyk quoted in the relevant chapter; the reader will find there further bibliography (if the language barrier is not a problem). In addition, one can also refer to a collective publication *Transition with Contradictions: The Case of Hungary 1990–1998*,<sup>[73]</sup> although it deals mainly with the post-communist period. It is also always recommended to see the history of Hungary in a broader perspective, as presented e.g. in Paul Lendvai's,<sup>[74]</sup> László Kontler's<sup>[75]</sup> or Bryan Cartledge's<sup>[76]</sup> books.

The fall of the Berlin Wall has been treated so extensively that the enumeration of all the works addressing this complex question is impossible. Yet it should be stressed that anyone seeking access to key archival records of that time is somewhat privileged in that many can be obtained on well-edited websites. Visiting them is highly recommendable as they both provide information of a given period and serve as examples of excellent promotion of German history. Three out of a host of websites dedicated to this question are especially noteworthy. The first one is under the auspices of the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (BpB), the *Deutschlandsradio* and the *Centrum für Zeithistorische Forschung*, Potsdam, and gives an overview of the history of the Berlin Wall.<sup>[77]</sup> The constantly revised website *DDR 1989/90 Dokumente*<sup>[78]</sup> is a major source of knowledge about the history of the GDR opposition; here the interested readers will find documents on the major political parties in communist Germany during the transition period. Finally, bearing in mind the uniqueness of the institution and the aims of the documents it has produced, we recommend a visit at the website of the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service

(*Stasi*) of the former German Democratic Republic, known also as the *Stasi* Records Agency or BStU.<sup>[79]</sup>

The basic difficulty in the case of literature on the collapse of the GDR lies in its excess rather than scarcity. A detailed list of the most significant German publications can be found in the texts by Andreas Rödder,<sup>[80]</sup> Erhardt Neubert<sup>[81]</sup> or Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk,<sup>[82]</sup> all of them quoted in this book. If those texts are to be treated as a reference point for readers and scholars, to some extent this selection is based, on the one hand, on the exhaustive merit-related approach of the authors, and on the other hand, no doubt in light of the numerous publications on the issue over the past 30 years, the authors have the edge of publishing their works relatively recently. In this context one should also take note of works of Andreas Malycha<sup>[83]</sup> and Jan Philipp Wölbern<sup>[84]</sup> published 25 years after the events. This is important, as because of wide-ranging research on the history of the GDR and processes expiring in Germany in 1989, some of the earlier texts may simply prove incomplete. A certain problem arose when writing the GDR chapter because of searching for representative memoirs. Trying to retain an objective approach, the author of the chapter after all decided not to include in the footnotes the multi-volume diaries of Helmut Kohl, Hans Modrow and other participants of the events. An exception to this rule is the memoir of Claus J. Duisberg, because of a unique perspective offered. Duisberg, a high-ranking civil servant in the German Federal Republic, sheds interesting light on the last years of the GDR and the unification process from the point of view of the Bonn administration. Naturally, his book gives vent to his likes and dislikes.

The Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution has been comprehensively dealt with in both Czech and Slovak publications. The question is one way or another tied with the next significant event in the history of both nations, namely the division of the federation, taking place merely three years later. In Poland, this question was addressed in Paweł Ukielski's monograph<sup>[85]</sup> and texts by Marek Bankowicz,<sup>[86]</sup> in English, works of Michael Kraus and Allison Stanger,<sup>[87]</sup> Abby Innes,<sup>[88]</sup> Jiří Musil<sup>[89]</sup> or James Krapfl.<sup>[90]</sup> There are numerous publications about Czechoslovak history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in English, just to mention works of Mary Heimann,<sup>[91]</sup> William Mahoney<sup>[92]</sup> or Kevin McDermott.<sup>[93]</sup>

Czech and Slovak scholars dedicated ample attention to the events of 1989–1992. Certain regularity can be identified here: while the Slovaks were more interested in the relations between the two nations and the reasons for the division of the federation (and Slovakia's independence), the Czechs were more often concerned with the events related to the fall of the communist system. The best works on this period are e.g. those by Jan Rychlík,<sup>[94]</sup> Milan Otáhal,<sup>[95]</sup> Petr Husák,<sup>[96]</sup> and Jiří Suk.<sup>[97]</sup> Those interested may also turn to numerous published documents.<sup>[98]</sup> Memoirs of the principal actors of the events, like an extensive interview with Václav Havel, published also in English,<sup>[99]</sup> provide extensive factual information and anecdotes.

Websites with ample data on the communist system itself, its collapse and today's presence are a separate category of sources of information. The official sites of Czech Parliament<sup>[100]</sup> offer transcripts of all the sessions of the Federal Assembly from the years 1948–1989 and from after the Velvet Revolution. A lot of interesting information, documents and monographs have been uploaded to the website of the Slovak Nation's Memory Institute,<sup>[101]</sup> the Czech Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes,<sup>[102]</sup> and the site [totalita.cz](http://totalita.cz).<sup>[103]</sup>

Relatively many publications, mainly because of the extensive media exposure, have come out in Poland about communism in Romania and the December events. A book by Adam Burakowski is by far the most detailed study.<sup>[104]</sup> It is also worthwhile to read publications by Romanian authors: Pavel Câmpeanu<sup>[105]</sup> and Lucian Boia.<sup>[106]</sup> Józef Darski's book is interesting if a bit dated (in light of new documents and monographs).<sup>[107]</sup> Moreover, insights into the complexities of Romania's twentieth-century history are offered by Małgorzata Willaume's textbook.<sup>[108]</sup>

In Romania itself, a lot has been written about the history of communism, in particular about the December events. Regrettably, however, most of the works are of average quality and seem to be contributions to the political debate. History in Romania still evokes emotions, especially but not only among intellectuals. Despite the heated debates, many interesting publications have come out over the past three decades. The most important of them is most likely the report of the Presidential Commission dedicated to the study and moral assessment of the communist system in Romania; many eminent historians participated in the activities of this commission.<sup>[109]</sup> Of significance is also the work by the British historian Dennis Deletant.<sup>[110]</sup>

Many valuable texts were written on the December events and the fall of dictatorship. Suffice it to mention e.g. a monumental if very controversial publication by Alex Mihai Stoenescu<sup>[111]</sup> and works by émigré historian Radu Portocală,<sup>[112]</sup> film director and eyewitness to the events Sergiu Nicolaescu,<sup>[113]</sup> historian and renowned journalist Stelian Tănase,<sup>[114]</sup> and British historian Peter Siani-Davies.<sup>[115]</sup> We can also mention here the book by Dragoş Petrescu.<sup>[116]</sup>

The history of Bulgaria, especially the most recent one, has also been undeservedly left out in Polish publications. A noteworthy one is a text by Tadeusz Wasilewski, which covers, however, the time until the end of the Second World War and the take-over of power by the communists.<sup>[117]</sup> Publications by Jerzy Jackowicz are definitely a recommended reading.<sup>[118]</sup> Andrzej Nowosad's book about the media in Bulgaria is a very good text.<sup>[119]</sup> The Bulgarian question was discussed in Polish publications addressing the history of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and fragmentarily in textbooks on the world's history after 1945.

Texts about the history of communism and the 1989 developments in Bulgaria are relatively less numerous in comparison to the other countries of the region. Besides, many of those texts are mediocre content-wise and vent their author's extreme assessments. Still, a few valuable books have come out over the past thirty years, to mention works by Evgeniya Kalinova and Iskra Baeva<sup>[120]</sup>, Venelin Ganev<sup>[121]</sup> and many texts issued under the auspices of the Institute for Studies of the Recent Past.<sup>[122]</sup> A certain picture of the events, with analytical elements, is provided by the memoirs of Kostadin Chakarov, an aide of Todor Zhivkov's.<sup>[123]</sup> A great contribution to the study of communism in Bulgaria was made by the US Cold War International History Project. The Bulgarian historians taking part in it, e.g. Kostadin Grozev and Jordan Baev, have published many interesting documents. The fall of the totalitarian system is addressed in publications of Dimitar Ludzhev, an eyewitness and deputy prime minister in the early 1990s,<sup>[124]</sup> and in a series of documents, memoirs, and monographs published by the foundation of former president Zhelyu Zhelev.<sup>[125]</sup> The birth of post-communist Bulgaria is addressed moreover by US political scientist Albert P. Melone.<sup>[126]</sup> In 2018, a group of historians connected with the Institute for Studies of the Recent Past published a book titled *Bulgaria Under Communism*.<sup>[127]</sup>

The book we deliver in reader's hands is its fourth edition in the fourth language version. The first edition appeared in Poland in TRIO publishing house and it covered five countries only (excluding Poland).<sup>[128]</sup> After a few years and addition of the chapter about Poland, it was published in Romania<sup>[129]</sup> and Hungary.<sup>[130]</sup> The new edition is revised, updated, and extended with theoretical analysis and summarizing remarks.

Finally, all the three authors wish to thank Prof. Andrzej Paczkowski, Prof. Jan Kofman, Prof. Wojciech Roszkowski, Prof. Antoni Dudek and our colleagues from the Department for Central and Eastern Europe of the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, whose precious comments contributed immensely to the final version of this book. We owe our gratitude as well to the people, who contributed to consecutive editions of the book: translators – Vasile Moga (Romanian), Erzsébet Szenyán (Hungarian) and Marcin Turski, John Beauchamp and Judyta Fiedin (English) as well as promoters of the books: Maja Wawrzyk and Natalia Mosor, János Tischler and Gergely Kovács, Maciej Ruczaj and Jiří Padevět as well as Roland Chojnacki, Shashank Sinha, Grzegorz Tkaczyk and Rafał Rogulski. Besides, each of us would like to extend their thanks individually.

Adam Burakowski: My warmest thanks are due to my wife Agnieszka, daughters Julia, Marta and Maria, and son Antoni, who make my life and work truly worthwhile.

Aleksander Gubrynowicz: I want to extend my thanks to Mr. Grzegorz Pakowski for his patience in searching for the Gallup data which helped me reconstruct the changes in the perception of the transformation and its effects by the Hungarians themselves, which data I would not have reached myself (if only because of the strict deadlines). Finally, I wish to thank profusely my wife Kasia and my children, Asia and Dominik. Without your patience for my passion, I certainly would not have written a single word since there would have been no one worth my burning the midnight oil.

Paweł Ukielski: I would like to express my gratitude to all my Czech and Slovak friends, thanks to whom each of my visits to Poland's southern neighbours offers ever more insight into their identity and history. Special thanks are due to Juraj Marušiak and Dušan Segeš for their ongoing assistance during the creation of the part of the text related to Czechoslovakia. My family is a constant source

of comfort in all the aspects of my activity: I am thankful to my wife Magdalena and my children Julia and Wojtek for simply being there.

[1] Jadwiga Staniszkis, *Post-Communism. The Emerging Enigma*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 1999, p. 13.

[2] Timothy Garton Ash, *Refolution*, [in:] Timothy Garton Ash, *The Uses of Adversity. Essays on the Fate of Central Europe*, New York Random House 1989, pp. 309–312. See also: Keith Crawford, *East Central European Politics Today. From Chaos to Stability?*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York 1996, pp. 55–56.

[3] Friedrich Naumann, *Mitteleuropa*, G. Reimer, Berlin 1915.

[4] Oskar Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History*, Sheed and Ward, London 1950.

[5] One can also point out that those countries were often named “Eastern Europe”, as during the Cold War the Old Continent was divided into two parts only. It is not a coincidence that the above-mentioned definition proposed by Oskar Halecki remained the last one for many decades, as the term Central Europe disappeared from political dictionaries. Subordinated to the Soviet Union, Central Europe became a mere part of Eastern Europe.

[6] See e.g.: Elez Biberaj, *Albania and China: A Study of an Unequal Alliance*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO 1986.

[7] See e.g.: Dilip Hiro, *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran*, Overlook Duckworth, New York 2009.

[8] Of course, a more nuanced distinction must be made here: Slovenia and Croatia have become members of the EU, as have the three Baltic States; other post-Yugoslav republics started the process leading to opening membership negotiations. Those five, as well as Albania and Montenegro, have also joined NATO. However, in our opinion that does not provide sufficient arguments to extend our analysis. Keeping in mind that in this book the main emphasis is put on the developments that took place in 1989, there is no room to discuss the process of the transmission of power in Slovenia or Croatia (which only took place in 1991), as that process was strictly connected with the erosion of Yugoslavia and then the outbreak of the Balkan Wars. For similar reasons, we are not able to discuss the very interesting case of the Baltic States. Firstly, the process of the restitution of their independence had been preceded by the period of direct Soviet occupation (which makes the story of the three countries significantly different from the story of the Comecon and Warsaw Pact member states). Secondly, the process of the independence movements’ taking over power in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was part of a much larger process, namely the erosion and the collapse of the USSR itself. Because of the above-mentioned reasons, we decided to exclude those countries from our analysis, even if at the same time we are perfectly aware that between the Baltic states and in the case of Slovenia there are strong parallels in the political and economic transformation process which took place in the 1990s, and their road to NATO and the EU.

[9] Those arguments are not the only ones, which may be submitted for the support of this view. In the similar vein: cf. Steffen Kailitz, “Die Kulturelle Prägung macht den Unterschied! Zur regimeentwicklung postkommunistischer Staaten” (“The Cultural Stamp Makes the Difference!

Regime Development of Post-communist States”), [in:] Clemens Vollnhals (ed.), *Jahre des Umbruchs: Friedliche Revolution in der DDR und Transition in Ostmitteleuropa (Years of Change: Peaceful Revolution in the GDR and Transition in Central and Eastern Europe)*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen (Germany), Oakville C.T., USA, 2011. pp. 361–391 (notably, pp. 385–391).

[10] Ralf Dahrendorf, *After 1989. Morals, Revolution and Civil Society*, MacMillan Press Ltd., London 1997, p. 5.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[13] Padraic Kenney, *Carnival of Revolutions. Central Europe 1989*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 2002, p. 12.

[14] At times, 1989 is referred to as a “miraculous year” (Latin “annus mirabilis”).

[15] Ivan T. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe 1944–1993. Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery*, Cambridge University Press 1995, p. 254.

[16] Robin Okey, “Echoes and Precedents: 1989 in Historical Perspective”, [in:] Kevin McDermott, Matthew Stibbe (eds), *The 1989 Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe: From Communism to Pluralism*, Manchester University Press, 2013, p. 39.

[17] Vladimir Tismăneanu, “Rethinking 1989”, [in:] Vladimir Tismăneanu, Bogdan C. Iacob, *The End and the Beginning. The Revolutions of 1989 and the Resurgence of History*, Central European University Press, Budapest – New York 2012, pp. 15, 17.

[18] Dragoș Petrescu, *Entangled Revolutions. The Breakdown of the Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest 2014, pp. 17–19.

[19] Richard Saull, *Rethinking Theory and History in the Cold War. The State, Military Power and Social Revolution*, Routledge, London Portland 2001, p. 132.

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[21] Bartłomiej Kamiński, *The Collapse of State Socialism. The Case of Poland*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 1991, pp. 164–165.

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# Introduction

## The origins of communism after the WWII

Communism in Central and Eastern Europe followed the Allied victory over the Axis powers during WWII and the formation of a bipolar system in which the United States and the Soviet Union played leading roles.<sup>[1]</sup> At the same time, the Yalta and Potsdam agreements represented the actual acceptance by the US and (in spite of certain reservations) Great Britain of Moscow's hegemony over almost all Central and Eastern European countries, as well as the section of Germany which had found itself under Soviet occupation after 8 May 1945.<sup>[2]</sup> The above-mentioned geopolitical circumstances are worth reviewing, seeing as they affected the way in which Soviet influence in this part of the world was perceived by the people who had found themselves in territories occupied by Soviet military might. Essentially, the original reasons why Central and Eastern European nations became so closely connected with the USSR had nothing to do with their freedom to choose, but was the effect of a brutal conquest which followed the Red Army's pursuit of forces loyal to Hitler in 1945. As a result, all power bases secured by communists in Central and Eastern Europe were won illegally, even if the level of support for their ideology was relatively high in some countries, while in others the very opposite was true. Either way, the military occupation of these territories by the Red Army had many of the features found in colonial strategies, even if Stalin and his subordinates tried to claim falsely that the presence of Soviet-backed elements in this part of the world was with the overwhelming support of the local population.<sup>[3]</sup>

Until 1956, there was an attempt to shape the region directly according to the Soviet model, with a special Stalinist flavour. This strategy met with resistance across the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, both in terms

of legalities (in places where such resistance was tolerated by communists), as well as mass activities by partisan forces,<sup>[4]</sup> which in some cases fought on until the 1960s. In spite of this, as long as Stalin lived, the governments of Central and Eastern Europe loyal to him did everything in order to use radical changes correlated with mass police terror and administrative pressures to force systemic, economic, social and cultural conditions to resemble the model in place in the USSR, and so in absolute essence a totalitarian regime.<sup>[5]</sup> Trying to achieve Soviet standards, communist rulers did their best to remove any sort of variations existing in countries of the region and completely “Sovietise” the conquered nations.<sup>[6]</sup> How much the aim of this policy was “only” to completely subjugate the regions to directives emerging from the Kremlin, and to what extent it was an “introduction” to much more extensive activities (assimilation into the USSR empire itself), remains a question outside of the scope of this book. In any case, between 1945 and 1956, in the field of decisions being taken, the independence of communists ruling the countries of the Eastern Bloc from the directives issued by the Kremlin was radically limited. In addition, the economy of the whole region was exposed to the greedy expansionist tendencies of the USSR, which (regardless of whether a given country during WWII was part of the anti-Hitler coalition – such as Poland and Czechoslovakia – or else – like Romania or Hungary – were countries allied with Germany) ruthlessly exploited the natural and human resources of countries of the conquered region, which were also incidentally home to the stationed Soviet army units. It is in this period that the USSR called the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, or Comecon (1949) and the Warsaw Pact (1955) into being, allowing Moscow to operate an effective level of control over the markets and the military forces of their satellites.<sup>[7]</sup>

However, the USSR was never able to succeed fully in any country. In some countries introduction of Stalinist systems met with greater resistance, and less so in others. Consequently, in some of them the system was accepted to a greater and, in others, to a lesser degree. Explaining the causes for the above differences seems to be relatively simple. Before 1945, countries in Central and Eastern Europe did not form a singular entity, in a sense of politics or economy, nor in terms of culture. Hence, conditions for the reception of Stalinist dogma were also numerous: this is precisely why

in some countries communist ideology took stronger root, while in others decidedly less so. Even so, there can be no doubt that some influences could affect the positive reception of communism, while others could inhibit the establishment of this ideology. In general, Marxism-Leninism, which treated “the working classes” in categories of revolutionary avant-garde, was much more welcome in countries where factory workers represented before WWII the majority of the population. Seeing as the material wealth owned by this group depended mainly on the survival of their places of work (something which was in no way a given, as shown by the Great Depression in the 1920s and 1930s, in spite of it occurring in a free market economy), it was communism promising a job and stable living conditions for everyone which could in effect appeal to most members of the labouring and intellectual classes as an attractive (though essentially false) alternative. Communism could also be seen in a good light as a result of general sympathies towards the USSR, felt to various degrees in the countries in question before WWII. On the other hand, working against an uncritical reception of communist ideologies (based on a pseudo-scientific atheism) was also the level of religiousness of a given society and – of equal importance – the course of World War II. The belonging of a given country to the Allied forces (Poland, Czechoslovakia) in relation to those which were part of the Axis forces (Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and – of course – the regions which would become East Germany) and what that entailed, the degree to which fascist ideology was accepted by a given society during the period before invasions by the Red Army in 1945, keenness to collaborate with the Third Reich, as well as brutal persecution of those associated with the left (in this case the communist left) – these are all additional factors which largely decided “the field of play” open to those communists who wanted to take over power.<sup>[8]</sup> Where initial perimeters were constructed in this way, it becomes clear why in countries with a high level of industrialisation (Czechoslovakia, East Germany), where even before WWII the political influence wielded by communists was noticeable, fascination with Russian culture and sympathies with the USSR were high, and the level of religiousness was low, communists had a much easier job of introducing a totalitarian regime, which was met with a relatively small amount of resistance (if there was any resistance at all).<sup>[9]</sup> In fact, in these countries

conditions were close enough to conditions existing in some parts of Western Europe, such as France or Italy, where by the end of the 1940s communist parties could count on the support of some 30 per cent of the electorate even without the support of Soviet armed forces.<sup>[10]</sup>

This similarity undoubtedly eased the introduction of the Soviet model both to the organs of power as well as broad sections of society at the time. In other countries in the region, it proved to be much more complicated. Such factors as dominant influence of traditional farming, with lesser industrialisation in the inter-War period (and in consequence also a smaller number of factory workers, hence a much lesser influence of communists prior to the outbreak of WWII), or dislike of Russia and then the USSR (which was seen by all, except Bulgaria, as a threat to their own interests, and some, like Poland, even a threat to their very existence)<sup>[11]</sup> were of great importance here. The farming character and dominant rural component automatically created much better foundations for the religious institutions which had been in place for centuries, and whose influence – even if ultimately it was possible to limit them – turned out to be much harder to shift than in much more secularised states such as Czechoslovakia and East Germany. In the case of Poland, in which the dominant faith was Catholicism, with special roots as a basis of culture and tradition holder in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after 1978 closely connected with a pope who resided beyond its borders, this turned out to be completely impossible. It is also necessary to mention that even if in a given country the conditions, which the pre-War period produced, seemed to favour communism, like East Germany, then the absurdly ineffective economic policy turned out to be a sufficient impulse to cause mass protests in 1953. If these conditions were less favourable, then – as was seen in the example of Hungary – enforced Stalinisation could have resulted in a national uprising.<sup>[12]</sup> We should also note that, theoretically, the factor which communists could have used to win favour with the majority of rural communities, would have been effective and rapid introduction of land reforms, including the division and distribution of plots of land which before 1945 was mostly the property of the nobles or religious associations (ownership of land was something whole generations of peasants had dreamt of). In reality, Stalinist times did not facilitate this, mostly due to Marxist doctrine, which insisted the state was

the only possible owner of arable land. A logical consequence of the above dogma was the process of enforced collectivisation, which forced farmers to join production cooperatives run solely by the party and the government (so-called kolkhoz or sovkhoz). Because this process in Central and Eastern Europe was enforced through terror or administrative repressions, hence the reforms had the opposite effect to that intended: instead of gaining popularity, governments had to fight against resistance from farmers, who often organised anti-communist partisan units as the result of these new experiences.

Considering the above, in most of the countries the communists were forced to compromise, thereby agreeing not to instantly introduce at least some Marxist-Leninist doctrines. Their willingness to compromise was also strengthened by the death of Stalin in 1953, proving that the totalitarian model was unsustainable, even in the USSR. As a result, both Soviet and other communist parties realised that mass terror (which in its nature is impossible to be kept under full control) is not only a threat to large swathes of society, but also to the ruling elites themselves. Simultaneously, those who both ruled and were ruled realised that – in spite of widespread promises of a “better world” under communism, along with “equal distribution of wealth”, “civic justice”, etc. – Stalinism not only failed to produce better living standards, but in fact in some cases made life harder than it had been before WWII.<sup>[13]</sup> The reasons as to why, after 1956, some communist governments agreed to introduce certain compromises involving harsh communist doctrine can be found in this book. In the economic sphere, the central question, which was being discussed both in academic establishments and in party meetings was the question of increasing the economic output of state-owned industries.

In Stalinist reality, the above lack of structural effectiveness was made even worse by the fact that attempts at running the economy solely through administrative orders and restraints were supported by draconian penalty systems. This sort of policy made all employees (regardless of hierarchies) reluctant to take any sorts of investment risks and even more efforts at work, due to fears that striving to do so would not only be seen in a negative context by the party, but could also lead to those workers who in some way stood out being jailed. As a result, when faced with dramatically

reduced productivity (which was insufficient to meet the economic needs of the army and police corps, not to mention the rest of society), the party itself called out for solutions. The communist reformers proposed to link wages to economic performance, and also to limit central planning and thus increase the independence of local councils and management of various workplaces.<sup>[14]</sup>

In the social sphere, the compromises established after 1956 related to, among other things, allowing private persons to conduct very limited and clearly controlled business activities, some opportunity for travel abroad, less restrictive censorship, concessions in the national sphere, greater tolerance for religious practices, amnesty for political prisoners and the absorption into the party of certain members of pre-War political elites, allowing them access to greater privileges. And yet, it has to be stated firmly that not all countries saw the same level of loosened regimes and, even more importantly, the wave of these badly thought out, insufficient and irresolute changes remained in clear connection with development taking place in the USSR. As a consequence, as long as the leadership of the Soviet communist party was willing to tolerate certain experiments in their own territories (such as reforms delivered in the mid-1960s by prime minister Alexei Kosygin, or the experimental project carried out in the early 1970s by Ivan Khudenko, head of the kolkhoz in Akshi in Kazakhstan<sup>[15]</sup>), in countries outside the USSR, local communist parties could allow themselves to diverge from the canon established during Stalin's reign. A while later, however, after the fall of Nikita Khrushchev, and while Brezhnev's people slowly consolidated power, the friendly mood towards reforms ended not only in the USSR but in the whole of the Soviet Bloc.<sup>[16]</sup> Clear indications of this neo-Stalinist reversal were the aggressive actions by the forces of the Warsaw Pact in 1968 against Czechoslovakia. The late de-Stalinisation process began in Czechoslovakia in 1960s and peaked with the 'Prague Spring' attempt to reform communism towards 'socialism with human face'. Although no general principles, such as the leading role of the party or the alliance with Soviet Union were denied, the Kremlin decided that Czechoslovak reformists went too far and decided to send troops to suppress the Prague Spring.<sup>[17]</sup> Military intervention marked another turn in the history of communism in East-Central Europe.<sup>[18]</sup> It must also be noted, however, that – from a historical

perspective – the collapse of the Prague Spring represented only a segment of a much broader process (but also – triggered it). The process included the elimination from leading positions within the party (across Comecon and the Warsaw Pact) of anyone who was seen by Brezhnev as having gone too far in seeing some forms of accommodating change being deliverable within communist doctrine (especially needs imposed by economic realities), veering away from Marxist-Leninist doctrine (as this dogmatic doctrine was understood by the leaders of the Soviet communist party).<sup>[19]</sup> The fiasco of communist system reforms brought about many serious problems, which by the 1970s were felt not only in the USSR, but also in other Comecon and Warsaw Pact countries. This came about as a result of the removal from power of persons such as Dubček (or forcing those which had previously been in favour of reforms to change attitude, in return for being allowed to remain in influential positions – e.g. Alexei Kosygin), leaving unresolved the dilemma of why communist industries delivered such low effectiveness.

## The Disintegration of Communism

The crisis of the global communist system gained momentum from the mid-1970s in all possible spheres: economic, social, ideological, and political. Although it could still seem that the latter half of the seventh decade of the century was a time of prosperity for the Eastern Bloc, this was merely illusory. A number of events, which took place at that time in the long run had to lead to the collapse of the totalitarian regimes.

First and foremost, we must start with the chronically inefficient centrally planned and administered economy. The 1970s was a decade of unprecedented openness of the economies of the Comecon countries to international cooperation. This was a time of the ultimate departure from the early assumptions of Comecon, when each country of the Eastern Bloc was to aspire to a maximum economic autarky. An idea of “integration” (so far the term was not used as “capitalist”) was announced, replacing “assistance”, “cooperation”, or “harmonisation”.<sup>[20]</sup> However, neither the investment boom nor market supplies were based on wholesome market

principles, but reliant on credits obtained in the West. As we know, credit differs from charity in that, sooner or later, it has to be paid back – along with interest. In the case of the Soviet Bloc and the USSR itself, the question of repayments was highly dependent on whether the borrowed monies was invested effectively into projects, which would allow the production of goods to be sold across domestic and foreign markets. In practice, however, the prospect of modernisation within the economies of Comecon members with foreign capital ended with a complete fiasco.

Western democracies, in turn, were willing to provide credits, on the one hand fostering the policy of détente, while on the other assuming that the state could not possibly go bankrupt (the latter belief was disproved by the case of Mexico in the 1980s<sup>[21]</sup>).

Between 1971 and 1980, the countries under communist regimes took out loans for a total amount of 70 billion US dollars (USD).<sup>[22]</sup> This money, however, even if it prolonged the agony of the system based on faulty economic foundations, was insufficient for a bail out.

The structural inefficiency of the centrally planned economy is a complex and multifaceted issue. Its components made it impossible for the countries of the Eastern Bloc to compete successfully against the Western free market. An absence of market principles, free competition, and private ownership of means of production eliminated the indispensable stimuli of growth, in particular the struggle for the client. Enterprises were state-owned and therefore not forced to vie with one another or follow basic economic rules; any deficit was covered by subsidies from the central budget. The only concern was the struggle for resources, which led to an accumulation of supplies in a totally inefficient manner.

Attempts to fulfil plans and obligations, with little if any attention paid to the efficacy of the action taken, constantly exceeded optimum production costs due to excessive use of resources, materials, and electricity.<sup>[23]</sup> A wasteful use of natural resources, in particular during the oil crisis of the 1970s, was globally unprecedented, although it was caused by both the inherent features of the system and by the abundant natural resources of the Soviet Union. In the 1980s, this characteristic of the communist economy was aptly recognised by Jan Pietrzak, who would say during the performances of The Aegis Cabaret (*Kabaret pod Egidą*): “if you introduced our economic

model in the Sahara, the following week sand would become a coveted item". The doctrine of "full employment" (officially unemployment in a socialist economy was nonexistent) caused half-hearted involvement of the workforce and poor efficiency.<sup>[24]</sup> As was commonly observed at that time, "you make believe to be paying us; we make believe to be working".

Another factor that structurally burdened the communist countries was a low level of innovation. This was triggered by the conditions extremely inimical to technological progress, i.e. an absence of competition, the engine of all inventiveness, and a growing "technological divide" between the competing blocs.<sup>[25]</sup> A lack of competition in the field of technology was actually confirmed by a decree. In August 1949, during the second Comecon Session in Sofia, the Council states undertook to exchange free of charge any and all technological solutions. Under such circumstances, the "technological divide" grew ever wider and rampant economic espionage was not enough to bridge it.<sup>[26]</sup> In the 1980s, the problem grew more serious even in the arms sector, key for the Kremlin; the USSR was unable to catch up with the ongoing microchip revolution and lagged behind in conquering outer space. As Steven Saxonberg aptly put it: "For while a five-year lag in automobile technology would not be so devastating for a country's ability to compete internationally, a five-year lag in computers is a very different story."<sup>[27]</sup>

Military expenditures were a substantial burden on the centrally planned economies. The arms race of the vying blocs separated by the iron curtain greatly strained the economy of the communist countries. In 1983, the USSR spent as much as 35 per cent of its GDP on armaments, while the United States only 5.5 per cent (incidentally, less than the other countries under communism).<sup>[28]</sup> This element was markedly augmented in the 1980s as a result of US President Ronald Reagan's imposing on Moscow a technology and arms race, commonly referred to as the "Star Wars".

Another factor influencing economic situation of the Soviet Union was the 'oil glut' of the 1980s. The oil crisis of 1973, when prices grew rapidly, had a crucial and positive effect on Soviet GDP, one measured in hundreds of percentage points. However, power built on exports of crude resources is never stable. In the mid-1980s, the prices of oil fell dramatically, due to increases of supply by Saudi Arabia. The impact of this factor became

disastrous for the Soviet empire, which lost approximately USD 20 billion annually. It was one of the last nails in the Soviet Union's coffin.<sup>[29]</sup>

Exponentially growing costs of maintaining the external empire were yet another burden for the Soviet economy. In the 1970s, the USSR was unusually active internationally, trying to extend its zone of impact onto ever-new peripheral countries.<sup>[30]</sup> The successes in this field, i.e. the communists' takeover of power in countries such as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Nicaragua and numerous African states, generated additional costs, which were not offset by financial gains. While in 1970 the estimated military aid offered by the USSR and its European satellites to the communist movements worldwide amounted to 1.1 billion USD, in 1978 it rose nearly four-fold, totalling USD 4.2 billion.<sup>[31]</sup>

In this context, it is necessary to point out the economic interdependencies between Moscow and the Soviet Union's satellite countries. In 1983, two scholars, Michael Marrese and Jan Vanous, announced the results of their research on the USSR's subsidies for states in its external empire. Their calculations proved that between 1960 and 1984, the Kremlin supported its satellites in a two-fold fashion, selling them raw materials below market prices and buying their products at exorbitant rates.

Marrese and Vanous concluded that a loss of 120 billion USD for Moscow signalled automatic profits for Warsaw, Prague, and Budapest. While the loss of the above amounts by the USSR is indisputable, the other part of the hypothesis is unconvincing. Economy is not a zero-sum game whereby a loss of one entity consequentially denotes the profit of another. In fact, in the case under consideration, both sides incurred losses. Since the USSR subsidised its satellite states in the hope of political gains, the latter countries had to carry out foreign economic plans and did not follow economic principles, but were instead forced to engage in some specific, often unprofitable production.<sup>[32]</sup>

Interestingly, the Comecon was in no way an organisation to foster the exchange of trade between its member states. It was dominated by a radial model, with its centre in Moscow, where intense economic relations between the centre and the satellites were by all means welcome. The Kremlin was not overjoyed by the development of horizontal relations between two satellite states. Such a subjection of the economy to global and political

objectives, resulting in irrational economic behaviour, was another element of the chronic economic inefficiency of the Eastern Bloc countries.<sup>[33]</sup>

The economic crisis of the people's democracies became apparent – depending on the country – in the second half of the 1970s or at the turn of the following decade. In Poland, syndromes of market imbalances appeared as early as 1976, when food coupons were introduced, the first element of rationing.

Before long, a similar problem emerged in all the countries of the region. They were struck by an economy of scarcity, where rather than demand affecting supply, supply was far too meagre to meet the demand. Thus, for want of goods in shops, citizens were unable to spend their money. At that time in Poland, vinegar was the only item on shop shelves. The economy of scarcity generated both huge lines each time goods appeared in shops as well as widespread corruption, ubiquitous “favouritism” and reliance on connections. The countries where the economies were doing better than elsewhere – East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary – noted severe shortages and general falls in living standards, while worse off countries such as Romania or Poland were facing complete ruin, unable to so much as feed whole sections of its own populations.<sup>[34]</sup>

Reviewing the considerations above, readers will readily conclude that, in analysing the relations between the USSR and its satellite states, the main emphasis was placed upon economic aspects. At this point, doubts emerge as to whether poverty could be a sufficient cause for the process of erosion of communist regimes, but also its eventual and total downfall. Still, it is now clear that there are many countries across the world whose residents suffer chronic shortages, and yet they function without change or challenge for years, the sense of impoverishment not being enough to drive the kind of changes, which took place in 1989 in the Soviet Bloc. If this is the case, then we are faced with the question of how to explain the dramatically deteriorating civic moods, which have since become a “trademark” of the 1970s and the 1980s?

Before we attempt to answer this question, at first we have to present one extremely important proviso, which is closely connected with many Comecon and Warsaw Pact states belonging to the cultural sphere of Europe as a whole. Whether communists liked it or not, the Iron Curtain could

not completely hide the fact that for over 1,000 years countries conquered by the USSR had had close cultural ties with Western Europe.<sup>[35]</sup> In spite of this, it seems obvious that the acceptance of communism as imposed by the USSR after WWII was largely dependent on how much the living conditions in countries outside of the Soviet sphere of influence (and so places such as West Germany, France, or the USA) were to improve or deteriorate. And it is here that we should emphasise the massive role which was played in the erosion of Marxist-Leninist ideology by encroaching globalisation and changes in the way liberal democracies and economies were seen on a global scale, all taking place in the period between the fall of the Prague Spring and 1989 itself. As long as Europe was lifting itself out of the ashes of WWII, at first it might have seemed that the differences between some states which had found itself in orbit around the USSR and some other countries which eventually became allied with the US, were not as a whole large, or even show advantages in the draconian way Stalinists introduced changes in peace time. It is worth recalling that in 1970, East Germany was listed as one of the ten most advanced societies in the world, while the average quality of life in Czechoslovakia was much higher than that in not only Poland or Romania, but also Greece, Spain, Portugal and some southern regions of Italy. As a consequence, in the ever ongoing ideological debate about the superiority of communism over capitalism (and vice versa: on the subject of capitalism's superiority in relation to communism), both sides separated by the Iron Curtain involved their academic establishments, as well as incredibly well-developed propaganda machine, in arguments emerging from the world of trade and economy which for a long time did not have to convince everyone about the superiority of Western models of democracy. This was also true, because in the end of the 1960s in almost all Western countries, the level of government interventionism in the economy remained high, and J.M. Keynes' doctrine remained a sort of "economic bible" in key universities around the globe.<sup>[36]</sup> As a result, attempts at reform undertaken by the likes of Kosygin were, for many observers in the West, a (false) hope that in time the USSR economic model would eventually – based on the idea of convergence – reach the effectiveness and standards of those in the West. Keeping in mind that, until the early 1970s, arguments which contrasted the economic effectiveness of higher standards

in the West with communist ideology, we should not forget that in initial periods in the name of popularity of phrases promoted by Soviet propaganda, there were other factors which related to – paradoxically – the ideologies of laws and civic freedoms. As long as the colonial French-English system existed, in the US the same was true of the remains of racism (and until 1976 the US was involved in the Vietnam War, something which led to international protests), Spain was ruled by Franco until 1975, Greece by a junta of “black colonels” and in West Germany – even though democrats had taken over power in 1945 – Nazis were still hiding in administrative and legal positions of influence,<sup>[37]</sup> hence arguments about the superiority of Western civilisation based on a catalogue of rights and civil freedoms were not convincing everyone, or could even sound false. In the eyes of many critics, they undermined the moral legitimacy of Western politicians who tried to criticise the USSR and its satellite states.

Along with the onset of the 1970s, the above situation began to improve in the West – in every notable respect. The massive global shock that was the founding of the OPEC cartel and the drastic rise in oil prices (1973) instantly caused criticism of the ideas behind Keynes’ ideologies. The Nobel prize awarded to Milton Friedman (1976) gave further ammunition to those who wanted less government interference in economy, a reduction in bureaucracy and reduction of regulations which limited unhindered domestic and international trade, lowered taxes, free foreign trade, while leaving untouched the unparalleled freedoms enjoyed by private enterprises.<sup>[38]</sup> The above changes automatically caused a visible failure of belief in the reality of convergence and simultaneously highlighted the difference between the Western and Eastern economic models. At the same time, the ideological climate which was established after 1968 in the US and Western Europe clearly helped all systemic changes which were on the side of eliminating all forms of discrimination due to nationality, gender or faith (and thus giving equal status to people who had previously been unequally treated *via facti* or *de iure*), and clear strengthening of mechanisms which protected the rights of the individual from being influenced by arbitrary regime decisions, especially through the legal expansion of judicial control over the legality of governmental activities (and this includes both governments and parliaments). By the end of the 1970s, European colonial empires

had been finally dismantled, while numerous new member states from Asia, Africa, and Oceania had been added to the UN. This reminder about the above transformations, which Western states were introducing allows us to better see why the end of the 1970s saw Marxist-Leninist doctrines losing ground. Communism, even though from the very start it had to be received by many with some honest disgust as a result of how it had worked in practice, could still remain popular for many years, both among the working masses as well as intellectual circles, mostly because it skilfully (though deceitfully) presented itself as an alternative to the *status quo* existing in Western Europe or the US (not to mention their former colonies in Africa and Asia). According to Soviet propaganda, this alternative was based mostly on a utopian vision, which saw everyone given a job, free education, and healthcare, as opposed to the joblessness, racism, discrimination, and colonialism, which were said to have been essential characteristics of the capitalist system.

We can state then that the next component that contributed to the fall of the communist system in the region was its ideological failure.<sup>[39]</sup> The suppression of the Prague Spring was a milestone there, both in terms of western perception and of the beliefs of the societies of the eastern bloc's countries.<sup>[40]</sup> Communists tried to "bribe" their people with better economic development based on loans in the 1970s, but due to the above-mentioned shortcomings of command economy that ended rapidly. Widespread social apathy and economic crisis of the 1980s went hand in hand with a total lack of faith in communist ideology, which differed from the real effects of the communist party rule. Additionally, in time the iron curtain was becoming less and less tight, in turn having a significant impact on the citizens of the communist countries. The residents were able to see for themselves that their efforts, which were supposed to pave the way for a better future, were being squandered away and the world to the west of the River Elbe was more prosperous, friendly, and, ultimately, more colourful. Between 1960 and 1984, actual pay increased by an average of 216 per cent in Spain, 189 per cent in Italy, 174 per cent in Japan, 142 per cent in France, and 134 per cent in the Federal Republic of Germany, while, by comparison, wages rose by a mere 87 per cent in Bulgaria, 56 per cent in Czechoslovakia, 49 per cent in Hungary, and 46 per cent in Poland.<sup>[41]</sup>

In the second half of the 1980s, living standards in all countries with communist authorities hit rock bottom. Bitterness not only among the people of the said region, but also among the administration and the party apparatus reached top level. In time, as the living conditions of those lucky enough to live beyond the sphere of Soviet influence continued improving, all those in Central and Eastern Europe clearly realised that the difference in living standards at both ends of Europe was separated by an ever-growing chasm. Clearly, this growing awareness took time to develop. In some countries, it happened more quickly than in others.<sup>[42]</sup> In the end, however, even the highest echelons of the party ceased to believe in the official ideology.<sup>[43]</sup> Observing the changes taking place in the West, the residents of Soviet Bloc countries had to become more and more convinced that there had to be a clear connection between liberal democracies and rising living standards, something which had to trouble communist governments. This simple difference between living standards had to lead eventually to questioning the absolute whole of Marxist-Leninist ideologies, and demands for reforms, which would reduce the yawning gap between East and West.

As Thomas Simmons described it: “Through the long, hard Cold War years the West held high the banner of freedom, democracy, and prosperity through the market. This was partly by subtraction. In the first hard Stalinist decades, holding the ideological banner high was all the West could do, because the Soviets and their client rulers permitted no other form of action. But in those decades the West made its ideology work at home. Western Europe stayed free and largely democratic and became prosperous. So over the time it came to provide an example to the East, a working alternative model, as well as an inspiring set of slogans. Meanwhile, beginning in the late 1960s, Communist ideology began to lose its political potency in the East, and a new generation of Stalinist rulers was driven back more and more on economic performance to justify their rule. They came to see economic and political interaction with the West not just as a threat but also as a help to themselves, and finally even as a crutch for their crumbling system of governance.”<sup>[44]</sup>

A crucial role played here was the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), signed in 1975 in Helsinki. The document, also signed by people’s democracies, was one of the major developments

of the détente policy. Still, the Kremlin saw it as its own success since it legitimised the Soviet gains in the wake of the Second World War and allegedly peaceful intentions of the empire.<sup>[45]</sup> It was instrumental also for Poland and Czechoslovakia in that it indirectly confirmed the international post-war legal *status quo*. The communist leaders failed to consider, however, the potential effects of the inclusion in the final Act of the so-called third basket dedicated to “Cooperation in humanitarian and other fields” and of a chapter related to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and beliefs.<sup>[46]</sup>

The Soviet planners, who regarded the propaganda benefits of signing the Final Act to be well worth the concessions with respect to human rights, most probably believed that in this respect it would remain another dead document with no real value.<sup>[47]</sup> Contrary to the above expectations, however, it proved a significant instrument of action for opposition activists in the Eastern Bloc countries, who as of that moment were able to back up their claims of respect for human rights by a legal instrument adopted at the international level. This paved the way for the emergence of organised opposition, albeit scant in most countries except Poland. The provisions of the Final Act of the CSCE were invoked by the Polish Workers’ Defense Committee (*Komitet Obrony Robotników*, KOR), set up after a brutal dispersal of protests in Radom and Ursus in June 1976, and by the Movement for Defence of Human and Civic Rights (*Ruch Ochrony Praw Człowieka i Obywatela*, ROPCiO), set up in 1977 and invoking the “third basket” by its very name. In Czechoslovakia, these provisions were quoted by Charter 77, established in the late 1976 and early the following year.<sup>[48]</sup>

The emergence of organised opposition in the communist countries was a major turning point. Obviously, the scope and operational potential in individual countries varied significantly, from meagre in the GDR, Romania and in particular in Bulgaria, through substantial in Poland. At the threshold of the 1980s, Poland was unique within the entire Eastern Bloc as it was the first communist country to see the emergence of a ten-million-strong mass social movement opposing the regime. The Polish strikes of August 1980, concluded with the signature of the so-called August Accords and legalisation of the Solidarity Independent Self-Governing Trade Union, were a milestone on the way to the fall of the regime, despite the ruthless

putting down of the freedom movement by the authorities, who introduced martial law and outlawed Solidarity in December 1981.<sup>[49]</sup>

Poland's unique status under communism was enhanced also by the unusually strong position of the Catholic Church, unvanquished even during the Stalinist period. In 1978, the Polish Church, led by the charismatic Millennium Primate, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, gained a further powerful impetus when Cardinal Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope on 16 October. The pontiff's first pilgrimage to his homeland was not only an extraordinary religious experience for millions of Poles, but a "germ" of the subsequent birth of Solidarity. The faithful who took to the streets to meet the Polish Pope realised that there were a lot of them and that they were a real power, as witnessed later by the August of 1980.<sup>[50]</sup>

The election of a cardinal from a communist country to the chair of St. Peter was the first of the many political defeats incurred by the Kremlin. Naturally, the Soviet authorities did not have influence on all the political events leading to the decomposition of the system. During the night of 25–26 December 1979, the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan, but the planned swift military action dragged out into many years of position warfare and proved the ultimate failure of the *détente* policy in relations with the West.<sup>[51]</sup> The United States imposed economic sanctions on the Soviet Union and in his State of the Union Address, US President Jimmy Carter announced readiness for an armed reaction in the event of attempted capture of the Persian Gulf coast (the Carter Doctrine).<sup>[52]</sup> The August Accords and the birth of Solidarity in Poland in 1980 dealt another heavy political blow, which shook the Kremlin. Moreover, the aforementioned imposition of martial law by Wojciech Jaruzelski proved of little effect, since the United States imposed successive economic sanctions on Poland.

The latter decision was taken by the new resident of the White House, President Ronald Reagan. The victory of the Republicans in the 1980 US elections and the rise to the UK premiership by Margaret Thatcher in 1979 comprised yet another element to the puzzle that undermined the position of the Eastern Bloc. Not only did the changes result in a serious revision of the economic policies of Washington and London, which helped overcome the recession after the oil crises of the 1970s, but also in a significant reassessment of international policy and rhetoric. Unlike his predecessor,

Reagan had no qualms calling the Soviet Union the Empire of Evil or setting a clear goal of emerging victorious out of the cold war. The Kremlin gerontocracy was unable to effectively counteract the US ideological offensive. The Reagan administration gradually took over the initiative in the wrestling match of two blocs, both in the area of propaganda (the Americans edged out the Soviets as the initiators of disarmament processes and moreover smartly used anticommunist rhetoric), and in the military field (the Star Wars programme, which ultimately toppled the Soviet economy, was announced in 1983).<sup>[53]</sup>

The economic and ideological crises were directly linked to the social one. Ever-worsening living conditions, demoralisation of factory management and workforce, growing apathy, increased crime rates, and rampant alcoholism were only some of the factors that indicated ever more acute social problems. In the USSR exclusively, around 200,000 people annually died as a direct or indirect result of alcohol abuse, while in 1985 alone, 4.5 million addicts were treated clinically.<sup>[54]</sup> The deterioration in the quality of life was reflected in a declining average life expectancy.<sup>[55]</sup> These problems were accompanied by a dramatic crisis of the family. Nearly half of marriages in the Soviet Union broke up and 90 per cent of first pregnancies ended in an abortion. Social sentiments were moreover dampened by the destruction of the natural environment, a consequence of the doctrine of harnessing nature, according to which the hostile natural element was to be subjugated and its resources exploited. This brought about negative developments not only in the economy, but also in society, mainly due to growing morbidity rate, which reflected the pollution of the natural environment.<sup>[56]</sup>

The global factors, which contributed to the ultimate collapse of the system had their spectacular episodes that demonstrated that communism was at the end of its tether. These were events that strongly undermined the prestige of the Kremlin (and indirectly of the entire Bloc), and brought to light the complex processes operating within the system. The Olympic Games held in Moscow between 19 July and 2 August 1980 were a disaster for the Soviet Union's political image. As many as 55 countries boycotted the games in protest of the invasion of Afghanistan, truncating the prestige of this sporting event.<sup>[57]</sup> Although official propaganda resounded with the ideals of the Olympiad, the absence of many of the world's leading

athletes unambiguously diminished the importance of the successes attained by the people's democracies. Technical, technological, and military problems were poignantly demonstrated by successive failures and disasters, such as the drowning in August 1983 of a Soviet nuclear submarine with 90 people on board near Kamchatka and an explosion at the Severomorsk base in June 1984, which took a heavy toll of close to 200 lives.<sup>[58]</sup> The above events were unbeknownst to the general public, yet the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear plant (26 April 1986) could not possibly have been swept under the carpet. As a result, large areas of Central and Eastern Europe were contaminated, thousands of people died (members of the rescue teams and residents of nearby towns and villages), and the reaction of the authorities was delayed and inadequate.

All of this tarnished the image of the USSR not only in the West, but also among the inhabitants of the outer and inner empire, who could not be left in the dark about the disaster. An additional blow for the Kremlin was a flight of the nineteen-year-old German amateur pilot, Mathias Rust, who landed on Moscow's Red Square on 29 May 1987, uninterrupted by the air defence. Flying a small plane, Rust laid bare the weak territorial control of the Soviet Union and caused the dismissal of the minister of defence, Marshal Sergey Sokolov, and commander-in-chief of the air defence forces, Alexandr Koldunov.<sup>[59]</sup>

In the mid-1980s, the economic, social, ideological, and political problems drove the Soviet Union and its satellites to the defence lines. Following Leonid Brezhnev's death, power in the Kremlin was for a short spell taken over by successive representatives of ossified gerontocracy, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, both unable to react rationally to the challenges faced by the Eastern Bloc. Only the election of Mikhail Gorbachev, the youngest Politburo member, as the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on 11 March 1985 led to a significant change. After a year in power, at the 27<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, he masterminded the adoption of a programme of *perestroika* (reconstruction) and *glasnost* (openness and transparency).

## Perestroika

The grand transformations which affected the collapse of communism worldwide (with the exception of isolated North Korea and Cuba, or special cases of Vietnam and People's Republic of China)<sup>[60]</sup> began in the very heart of the system, i.e. in the Soviet Union. From Poland's perspective, this may have been hard to notice, since communism had been defeated a few years previously and merely dragged on in a hollow form. However, in all other countries it still ran strong and only attempts at reforms revealed its terminal disease. In every other country of Central and Eastern Europe, perestroika was treated not as a response of the Soviet leaders to real problems (the way it was seen in Poland to some extent), but rather as an imposed idea.

Perestroika, however, attempted to answer the actual difficulties which communism worldwide was facing. Only in Moscow, where information was gathered from the entire empire and where exact analyses of this information were carried out, did they realise the magnitude of the system's inefficiency and unmanageability. Leaders of Central and Eastern European countries, if they wished to know (which was not a rule), were able to learn exclusively about the situation in their own countries and derive consolation from the fact that only their own links in the chain are less than perfect. The leaders at the Kremlin were aware, however, that not only the individual elements but also the entire construction was fraught with problems and on the brink of a disaster. Interestingly, the Soviet Union, besides China, was the only truly sovereign communist state. A decision to commence reforms was, then, a deliberate action of party leadership.

The awareness of economic disaster reached the Kremlin in stages, or was perhaps deliberately suppressed, for a long time. During Leonid Brezhnev's last years in office, inertia reigned supreme at all administration levels. When, in 1982, Yuri Andropov (born in 1914) came to power, some attempts at reforms were made, yet this took only one and a half years. His successor, Konstantin Chernenko (born in 1911), was more conservative, but himself ruled for only one year.<sup>[61]</sup> Within a few years, high-level communist activists took part in three Soviet leaders' funerals, which were watched on the TV screens by the citizens of the people's democracies. It dawned upon everyone that a time of new people and new ideas had come.

The memoirs of the former Kremlin leaders indicate that as early as 1984, serious discussions were held on the need for changes; opinions were aired to the effect that “all is rotten” and “we cannot live like that any longer”.<sup>[62]</sup> It was at that time that a reform camp emerged which soon took the helm. In December 1984, Mikhail Gorbachev delivered a speech entitled: “The Perfecting of Developed Socialism and the Ideological Work of the Party in the Light of the Decisions of the June (1983) Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU”, in which, for the first time, he made extensive use of the term which was to become the motto of the entire transformation process. The term was perestroika – “restructuring” (перестройка).<sup>[63]</sup> Ever since Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, opinions were aired that he was in fact nothing but a puppet of some mysterious interest groups. From the perspective of East European capitals however, the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union appeared to be a real leader of the reform camp.

The Gorbachev administration realised that there was no time to lose, and right from the get-go, they put forth a very ambitious reform project supposed to strengthen the USSR and the entirety of global communism.<sup>[64]</sup>

In the first half of the 1980s, the arms industry demanded huge outlays, which in line with the ideas of the new leadership could be used to regulate the economy and raise the living standards of the population. Hence the emergence of peace and disarmament initiatives. The USSR tried to pose as the initiator of the trend (e.g. in early April 1985, deployment of medium-range missiles in Czechoslovakia and the GDR was terminated), which was favourably received by the Western world.<sup>[65]</sup>

Reagan, who had been demonised earlier by Soviet propaganda,<sup>[66]</sup> proved a tough yet credible partner for talks on disarmament. The first Gorbachev-Reagan summit, a major event not only in propaganda terms, was held in Geneva in November 1985.<sup>[67]</sup> Later on, contacts became – at least relative to the preceding period – quite frequent, as did Gorbachev’s meetings with other influential Western politicians.

The gradual liberation from the pressures of the arms race helped shift the Soviet economy towards light industry and services, but it quickly transpired that these were both half-hearted and belated reforms. However, they did offer some respite to society as well as to the party and power apparatus, which was to be used for the necessary political reforms. These

were introduced during the 27<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party held on 25 February – 6 March 1986, just short of a year since Gorbachev had come to power. “Brezhnevism” (*брежневизм*), red tape and other aspects of the overall situation were criticised. Instead, profound transformations were advocated, as were the “socialist democracy” and a return to Lenin’s ideals, commonly taken as a harbinger of political liberalisation. The Congress, likewise, put forth the idea of *glasnost* – “transparency” (*гласность*), which was to help democratisation come true. This, in turn, was read as a prophesy foretelling a liberalisation in both culture and the media.<sup>[68]</sup>

As Thomas Simmons interprets it, “The Soviet leadership under Gorbachev was driven by its own imperatives. It wanted a breathing space in international affairs to pursue its domestic objectives. To get that breathing space it sought to change the Western image of the Soviet Union as an aggressive, expansive, militarised great power. The intermittent spectacle and constant threat of Soviet tanks rolling through East European capitals had been the core of the image. To eliminate it the Gorbachev leadership was willing to gamble that it could preserve the essentials of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe without the threat or use of the tanks, that it could count on Eastern Europe’s deep economic dependence on Soviet raw materials and Soviet markets, and on political reform that would force the area’s ruling parties to become competitive in more open and legitimate political systems, just as those in the Soviet Union had to. At critical moments the Gorbachev leadership was even willing to connive, to exert direct pressure, to push Eastern Europe in the approved direction.”<sup>[69]</sup>

However, only a month and a half following the 27<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, party leaders were faced with an unprecedented problem. Initially, and seemingly setting aside the previously-hailed *glasnost* for a moment, the authorities tried to keep the news of a nuclear catastrophe under wraps. However, it soon turned out that even totalitarian control of a society could not bring the flow information to a halt completely: the Chernobyl disaster sped up change. Reforms announced during the 27<sup>th</sup> Congress were now being implemented with a vengeance. The meaning of the word ‘perestroika’ was extended in 1986, which made it recognisable all over the world.<sup>[70]</sup> This implied that the reforms would be profound and would rock the very foundations of the system. And this

was what actually happened. The Soviet media started to address previously taboo issues and many books were published as part of the thaw, the most famous of them being Anatoly Rybakov's novel *Children of the Arbat* (*Дети Арбата*).<sup>[71]</sup> Written back in the 1960s and dedicated to Stalinist times, it was published only in 1987.<sup>[72]</sup>

Initially, political liberalisation meant mainly personnel changes (as much as 95 per cent of the Central Committee composition, more than during the 1930s purges, was replaced during the Gorbachev administration).<sup>[73]</sup> This was coupled with an extension of the topics discussed during party meetings and similar forums. Another token of political liberalisation was the gradual release from jail of opposition activists and dissidents, who in some cases were even allowed to pursue some activities. The most famous of them, Andrey Sakharov, was, in December 1986, no longer forced to move to the town of Gorky, and upon his return to Moscow was given the green light to resume work at the institute at which he had been previously employed. In late 1988, Sakharov set out on a trip across the West, where he met with local politicians and tried to win them over to the idea of perestroika. The following year he was elected to the First Congress of People's Deputies, the new highest legislative body created as part of Gorbachev's constitutional reforms, but did not play a major role, as he died on 14 December 1989. Besides Sakharov, others also began a new stage of activity or commenced it in the first place. The dissidents' impact on society, at least in Russia itself, was negligible, but the West favourably received the discontinuation of open persecution.

The year 1987 saw the emergence of informal clubs of the intelligentsia and of more active social and party activists. In the following year, they joined hands (especially in the Soviet republics) to set up mass organisations. The Estonian Front for the Support of Perestroika (*Rahvarinne Perestroika Toetuseks*) began its activity on 13 April 1988. On 3 June 1988, the Lithuanian Movement for Perestroika (*Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sąjūdis*) was set up, later known as the Movement, more commonly under the Lithuanian name *Sąjūdis*. Subsequently, on 8 October the Latvian National Front (*Latvijas Tautas fronte*) was established. While initially these fronts limited themselves to following the ideas espoused by the Gorbachev administration, later their positions evolved to support the autonomy of the republics and

subsequently their independence and rejection of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact provisions. Further on down the line, subsequent movements also began to spring up in the other Soviet republics.<sup>[74]</sup>

The establishment of the fronts, along with the now official promotion of glasnost, paved the way for expressing national demands in the individual Soviet republics, not only European. Furthermore, the Soviet leadership underestimated the power of these nationalisms and the interests of local party bosses who backed them up. The devolution, which started thanks to the national fronts and the generally looser ties between the peripheries and Moscow gained momentum, which started to pose a threat to the continued existence of the empire. With its limits pushed back ever further, glasnost facilitated the uninhibited mention of national heroes, Soviet crimes (as in Belarus, for example, where excavations were carried out in the site of mass executions in the Kuropaty forest on the outskirts of Minsk) and other issues, previously banned and thus arousing a substantial interest of public opinion. In the political sphere, this fostered further centrifugal tendencies. The process of growing national awareness applied also to previously reticent communities such as the Crimean Tatars, driven out of their homeland during the Stalinist period, but who, in the late 1980s, began to return *en masse* to Crimea. Thousands of recruits, mostly from the Baltic and Caucasian republics, refused to report at recruitment centres.<sup>[75]</sup>

In 1989, the USSR was in a state of political turmoil. The Soviet republics increasingly opted for independence. Nationalisms were at their most intense in the Caucasus, where the ethnic situation was extremely complicated and some conflicts did not really concern the relation with the Kremlin. In February 1988, national upheavals broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian enclave in Azerbaijan. Faced with growing violence, Moscow decided to take direct control over the province, which turned out to be a tentative solution: arguments over Nagorno-Karabakh continued also after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and in principle, no solution satisfactory to all the parties concerned has been worked out to date.<sup>[76]</sup> In April 1989, upheavals erupted in Georgia, with a rally raising anti-Soviet slogans and demands of national independence taking place in Tbilisi. The regime dispatched troops armed with heavy weapons to disperse the protesters. A massacre ensued; the official, most probably underestimated, death toll

was 19 people.<sup>[77]</sup> Despite the personal involvement of the Georgian Eduard Shevardnadze, the USSR's Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the restoration of peace, the Georgian independence movement broke out with fierce intensity. Similar demands were put forward more and more boldly in the Baltic states; they were favourably received by the local administration, which saw in them a chance to break free from Moscow's control.

Wide-ranging political transformations took place at the centre, too. During the 19<sup>th</sup> party conference of May-June 1988, a constitutional reform of the USSR was launched which was geared towards the devolution of some competences to newly established republican parliaments known as soviets of people's deputies. Elections to the aforementioned First Congress of People's Deputies took place in March 1989. It aimed at being a kind of parliament, and somewhat independent of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The names of many people associated with the previous regime were crossed off electoral lists, with many of Gorbachev's men included instead, with Congress ultimately voting in Gorbachev himself as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Elected as a deputy from Moscow was Boris Yeltsin, who initially backed up perestroika but then sided with Gorbachev's opposition and demanded more comprehensive reforms. He found allies in the party and state structures of the Soviet republics, which considered him a politician capable of diminishing the role of the centre for the sake of that of the peripheries.<sup>[78]</sup>

In March 1990, the Congress of People's Deputies appointed Mikhail Gorbachev President of the USSR. The creation of this position was one of the constitutional reforms. In May that year, Yeltsin became Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federative Republic, which further intensified his conflict with Gorbachev.

In 1989, then, the Soviet Union was not only a political promoter of comprehensive reforms but also a paradigm to be emulated by the communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>[79]</sup> In early 1989, it may still have seemed from the Kremlin's perspective that perestroika would strengthen rather than topple global communism; the latter became evident only at the end of that year. Until the situation got completely out of hand and they themselves became embroiled in domestic conflicts, the Soviet authorities promoted the reconstruction of the system in the satellite states and

tried to strengthen in this spirit the local tyrants and their party and power apparatus. Let us return, however, to 1985, when the process began.

The system of governance in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, masterminded by Stalin and continued by his successors, was exceptionally centralised. Implementing novel ideas had had its long tradition, with the implementation of communism in each of the countries following a similar scenario. When after Stalin's death, for reasons arising exclusively from the division of power in the Kremlin, "collective" governance started in Moscow, copying the Soviet model was ordered in all the Eastern Bloc countries. In each case, possibly with the exception of Bulgaria, where Chervenkov and Zhivkov vied for supremacy, this did not make much sense. The local authorities relied on the centre for guidelines and directives, which were followed neither in earnest nor at least partially. In time, the USSR offered more and more autonomy to the satellites, naturally within a set of limits and excepting questions of key import for the empire.<sup>[80]</sup> Party apparatuses of individual countries were less and less prone to change and therefore autonomy was taken advantage of, including also in order to delaying the introduction of Moscow's new ideas. The systems of Eastern Europe, carbon copies of one another during Stalin's time, managed to evolve in different directions, although the taproot of scant existence of private ownership and the omnipotence of a single party backed up by special forces remained the same everywhere.

Mikhail Gorbachev, as the new leader of the Soviet Union, was not favourably received by his counterparts in the particular countries of Central and Eastern Europe. First and foremost, each of the latter feared changes that might lead to their loss of power and replacement by new people (as it turned out later, these were well-grounded, legitimate fears). None of them was aware of the overall economic situation of the system and thus was not fully convinced that the profound changes, already expected in 1985, were an absolute must. Another factor, usually underrated in relevant analyses, was Gorbachev's age, far lower than that of any other satellite country leader. Born in 1931, Gorbachev was a generation below Todor Zhivkov (born in 1911), Erich Honecker (born in 1912), János Kádár (born in 1912), Gustáv Husák (born in 1913), and Nicolae Ceaușescu (born in 1918), and was furthermore eight years younger than Wojciech Jaruzelski (born in 1923). The Second

World War and ensuing Sovietisation was one of the major “formation” experiences for all of the above, bar Gorbachev, who was just a child.<sup>[81]</sup>

The above factors made the leaders of the satellite states see perestroika as a threat to both their own position and the entire system. Paradoxically, they had a clearer picture of the situation since at the end of the day Gorbachev’s actions led to the dismantling of the system. It remains unclear when they realised that perestroika would lead to the collapse of communism, but the more conservative individuals among this group sensed this inevitability, and the view was shared by some of the party apparatus in the countries of the region.<sup>[82]</sup> Consequently, Gorbachev was greeted with distrust right from the start, and this only intensified later. Interestingly, in all the languages of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe the two major terms of the new political line, *perestroika* and *glasnost*, were used in their Russian or similar form (in Hungarian: “peresztrojka” and “glasznosztjy”); terms such as “reconstruction”, “restructuring” or “transparency” were less frequent. Bulgaria was an exception; here Zhivkov promoted the term “reorganisation” (*нрестројцмво*), mainly to fake and delay reforms. This means that all the countries considered perestroika, quite appropriately, as something foreign rather than local.

Poland was the only state where perestroika was supported wholeheartedly by both the leaders and the lower tiers of administration. There was no way out of the crisis, which had begun in the early 1980s. While the introduction of martial law and its subsequent lifting brought about certain temporary political gains (weakening the opposition and discouraging Polish society from opposing the authorities), it in no way managed to foster an expected economic upturn. In the 1980s, communism in Poland was totally deprived of any ideals, which devastated the morale of the ruling party. Perestroika was seen, then, as a completely natural reaction of the Soviet leadership to the crisis, which was far more apparent in Poland than in the other countries of the bloc. This contributed to a better understanding of Gorbachev’s ideas.<sup>[83]</sup>

In the other countries, the situation was totally different, with Hungary being the most similar to the Polish model. Kádár, who did not want to lose power and fought for it to the last, supported perestroika as a chance to further economic reforms, a kind of “new economic mechanism”. Zhivkov was next in line, and because of his officially proclaimed love for the Soviet

Union, he simply had to go into raptures over every novel trend originating in Moscow. In Zhivkov's case, however, he only paid lip service to the Soviets and tried to feign reforms, delay them or divert in a direction he found safe for himself, hence warping their underlying sense. The Soviet secretary and perestroika were received even less favourably in Czechoslovakia and the GDR, where his ideas were little understood and seen as generally inimical to and hazardous for the communist system. Romania and its megalomaniac leader Nicolae Ceaușescu, invariably mistrustful towards the USSR, lagged behind. During his two decades in power, he earned himself a nickname as the *enfant terrible* of the Soviet Bloc, which allowed him to openly oppose, within limits, Gorbachev and perestroika.

“Spring is approaching from the East, spring is coming for good,” sang Andrzej Rosiewicz in a song which almost became a battle cry for Polish adherents of the new Soviet ideas. In fact, it was Moscow, which triggered the events leading to the collapse of communism, with the Kremlin accelerating change while simultaneously trying to exert control over it. Soviet leaders promoted reforms in a host of different ways. Initially, these were official meetings of the new Communist Party secretary general and his closest aides with leaders of the satellite countries. Such talks were attended by an unprecedented number of people, evident during Gorbachev's visits to particular countries. During the debates, the Soviets encouraged their Eastern European vassals to a speedy implementation of perestroika as well as sought reliable people among the local regimes (Rosiewicz sang that, “we should finally air the wax figures museum”; in another version a “military figures museum”). The ultimate – if for some leaders of the satellite states – daunting proof of the inevitability of change was a total rejection of the “Brezhnev doctrine”,<sup>[84]</sup> instigated still back in 1988, and whose formal and official scrapping was formally and officially announced on 6 July 1989 during a forum of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.<sup>[85]</sup> It was a fundamental change, as Wojciech Roszkowski points it out: “During his visit to France in November 1989, Gorbachev said that the contemporary world was no longer divided into two mutually excluding civilisations and that there was only one civilisation based on human values and freedom of choice. For a Communist leader this was a revolutionary statement forcing Western leaders to reconsider their strategic concepts.”<sup>[86]</sup>

Propaganda offered another method to impact the countries of the region. The Soviets went out of their way to promote the ideas of perestroika and glasnost. They used both their own tools, such as the media or cultural institutions, and as well as those of their local counterparts; at least where this was not blocked by the local authorities (as was the case in Romania, for example). Where Soviet television was popular (mainly in Bulgaria), it became one of the main conveyors of new ideas. The Soviet press, especially the “thaw” titles, were read by an increasing number of citizens of in Central and Eastern Europe. Since most countries of the Soviet Bloc still applied Brezhnev’s censorship patterns, paradoxically the system’s peripheries at the time proved less liberal than the centre. This was especially evident in a comparison of Romania and the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>[87]</sup> while Ceaușescu was still busy with self-aggrandisement, the neighbouring Moldavia led a relatively agitated political debate. The Soviets deliberately promoted the dissidents in individual countries via their communications mass media. A case in point is Mircea Dinescu, a famous Romanian dissident aired by a Soviet radio station broadcasting in Romanian. Another, if more indirect example from the same country may be László Tőkés, a Romanian of Hungarian origin, whose involvement in the opposition movement was widely promoted by Hungarian television (in a country far more advanced than Romania in the implementation of perestroika).

A significant role in the promotion of perestroika was played by the Western media, far more credible for the inhabitants of Central and Eastern Europe than the local outlets. When it turned out that the new Kremlin leader was a genuine reformer, the Western media, at least some, gave him extensive coverage and treated overtly approvingly, seeing him as a chance for overcoming the cold war impasse.<sup>[88]</sup>

This was also the view of some local politicians, even those less inclined to harbour any warm feelings towards the USSR. The peak achievement of this tendency was Mikhail Gorbachev’s receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990, after the Tbilisi massacre.<sup>[89]</sup> The Kremlin’s policy allowed unencumbered visits of Western journalists to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which in turn enhanced a global interest in this region. Not all news and commentaries were overly optimistic, but this did not matter as providing information about the position of the communist countries

was a driver of change in the region as the social and economic situation in all of them was invariably bad.

The communist activists of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the dissidents (and to a lesser extent opposition activists unrelated to the communist party), regarded Moscow as a major factor and often personally sought its approval, even or actually sometimes most intensively after their taking over of power. Ideologically, perestroika breathed life into the seemingly defunct hopes for a certain version of “socialism with a human face”, while in personal terms it was simply a chance for career advancement. However, when the USSR started to increasingly swaying bend under its own weight, such individuals began to limit their relations with the Soviet regime, and after the collapse of the Soviet state in most (but not all) countries, former communist activists focused on the West and rarely fostered their old allegiances.

The Soviet authorities attentively followed the developments in the region. In February 1989, the Institute of Economy of the World Socialist System of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR prepared a *Report on the Inner Situation of the European Socialist States*, which proffered all kinds of plausible scenarios. Similar documents were drawn up in the International Department of the CPSU Central Committee and in the Soviet ministry of foreign affairs.<sup>[90]</sup> The document makes it plain that Moscow continued to opt for the liberalisation and transformations in those countries, believing them to be of benefit to it in the long run. Similar documents were no doubt written but remain classified to date.

In the autumn of 1989, it became apparent to nearly everyone that perestroika would lead, at least in the countries of the region, to the collapse of the system. Little did they know what would happen later, however. One thing was certain: the communist party and other centres of power would not survive in their old form. The more aware and active functionaries of the communist regime concluded that both their manner of operation and slogans had to change quickly lest they themselves should be thrown into the dustbin of history. Those who failed to comprehend that and remained totally passive or even tried to stop change – were deposed.

[1] The division of the world into two opposite political-economic blocks was the predominant factor in the entire period from 1945 to 1989. The most popular terms to describe this division were the Cold War (a state of war led by all but military means) and the Iron Curtain (the border dividing both blocs), as Winston Churchill stated in his famous speech in 1946: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an 'Iron Curtain' has descended across the continent". Other terms just pointed out the existing division. See e.g. the title of the concise history of post-WWII world: David Reynolds, *One World Divisible. A Global History Since 1945*, Penguin Books, 2000.

[2] See Wojciech Roszkowski, *The Shadow of Yalta. A Report*, Warsaw Rising Museum, Warsaw, 2005.

[3] Polish historian Wojciech Roszkowski distinguishes between three models of communist takeovers in Central Europe: incorporation (the Baltic states and eastern Polish, Czechoslovak, and Romanian territories); export of communist revolution (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria) and local communist revolution (Yugoslavia and Albania). Wojciech Roszkowski, *East Central Europe. A Concise History*, Instytut Jagielloński – Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN), Warsaw 2015, pp. 289–290 and 292–302.

[4] In Lithuania, for example, in years 1944–1953 about 50,000 people were active in the armed resistance movement, while in the whole resistance there were about double that number of participants. More see: Arvydas Arnušauskas (ed.), *Lithuania in 1940–1991: the History of Occupied Lithuania*, Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, Vilnius 2015, pp. 270–320.

[5] See e.g.: George Kolankiewicz, Ray Taras, "Poland: Socialism for Everyman", [in:] Archie Brown, Jack Gray (eds), *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States*, Holmes and Meier Publ., New York 1977, pp. 104–105; George Schöpflin, "Hungary: An Uneasy Stability", [in:] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

[6] Well known sovietologist, Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone called that period "cohesion": a complete adherence to the Soviet model. Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, *Reluctant Clones. Moscow and the "Socialist Commonwealth"*, Collegium Civitas, Warsaw 2014, p. 34.

[7] Comecon was established as a sort of communist alternative to the Marshall Plan and the Warsaw Pact as a response to the rearmament of the West Germany. Geoffrey K. Roberts, *The Soviet Union in World Politics: Coexistence, Revolution and Cold War, 1945–1991*, Routledge, London and New York 1999, pp. 15 and 24.

[8] See e.g. comparison of Poland and Czechoslovakia in: Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: the Inner History of the Cold War*, Oxford University Press, New York – Oxford 1995, p. 168.

[9] The specificity of the Czechoslovak case in comparison to those of Poland, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria led Archie Brown to put it into one basket with the Albanian and Yugoslav cases as indigenous paths to communism, rather than export of revolution (although with reservations). Having in mind all of the above-mentioned circumstances, the authors do not share that point of view. See: Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 1<sup>st</sup> US ed., Ecco, New York 2009, pp. 148–160.

[10] Geoffrey K. Roberts, *The Soviet Union...*, op. cit., p. 19.

[11] Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone distinguishes between three anti-Russian states (Hungary, Poland and Romania), two Russophile countries (Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia – the latter only until 1968) and one ambiguous (GDR). Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, *Reluctant...*, op. cit., pp. 37–40.

[12] John Gaddis Lewis points out one more factor that influenced negatively the attitude of nations in the eastern bloc towards the Soviet Union: if the Soviets had absorbed entirely the Baltic States and carved off great portions of Germany, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia,

how could they expect cordial attitudes then? John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, Clarendon Press, Oxford – Oxford, N.Y. 1998, p. 18.

[13] That was not only in contradiction with Soviet propaganda, but also with Stalinists' convictions: they believed that in the long run the Soviet command economy was able to compete and put pressure on western-style market economies. Geoffrey K. Roberts, *The Soviet Union...*, op. cit., pp. 36–37.

[14] More detailed analysis of shortcomings of command economies: Wojciech Roszkowski, *East Central Europe*. op. cit., pp. 348–373.

[15] Khudenko's experiment proved to be "too much successful", as productivity of his kolkhoz was 20 times higher than neighboring ones. Soon the kolkhoz was closed, and he was imprisoned and died in corrective labour colony. See: Alexander Shtromas, "Dissent and Political Change in the Soviet Union", [in:] Erik P. Hoffmann, Robbin Frederick Laird (eds), *The Soviet Polity in the Modern Era*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York 1984, p. 730.

[16] Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change*, Routledge, London-New York, 1998, p. 566.

[17] See: Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: the State That Failed*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2009, pp. 211–242.

[18] Dana H. Allin proposes an interesting and controversial thesis that the Cold War *de facto* ended in the second half of 1960s. Western nuclear superiority was obvious by then, the borders of the spheres of influence were settled and economic success had proved the liberal system to be more effective than command. Communism was visibly weaker, also because of the Soviet-Sino schism. The greatest problem was perception: the West did not realise the dominance it had (mainly due to overwhelming pessimism and the Vietnam War). See: Dana H. Allin, *Cold War Illusions: America, Europe and Soviet Power*, First published 1994, Macmillan Press LTD, London 1998, pp. 23–25.

[19] See: Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, *Reluctant...*, op. cit., p. 36.

[20] Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe*, op. cit., p. 564.

[21] About the Mexican crisis, see: Koen Brinke, *The Mexican 1982 debt crisis. Economic Report*, <https://economics.rabobank.com/publications/2013/september/the-mexican-1982-debt-crisis/> [accessed: 31.01.2017]

[22] Jan Kofman, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Transformacja i postkomunizm (Transformation and Post-Communism)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN), Warsaw 1999, p. 15.

[23] See: János Kornai, *Niedobór w gospodarce*, transl. Urszula Grzelońska, Zofia Wiankowska, Warsaw 1985, pp. 362–399.

[24] Jan Kofman, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Transformacja...*, op. cit., pp. 13–15.

[25] Interestingly, the Comecon countries spent at least as much on R&D as Western countries, which indicates that the Soviet-type economies were not organised in a manner that could incorporate their results efficiently into the productive process. See: Steven Saxonberg, *The Fall: A Comparative Study of the End of Communism in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary and Poland*, with a foreword by Seymore Martin Lipset, Routledge. Taylor & Francis Group, London – New York, 2001, p. 87.

[26] At the beginning of the 1980s, technological espionage became also less effective. After discovering the scale of the practice in 1981, “the Americans injected misleading data into the Soviet collection system which ultimately caused so much damage and chaos that Moscow began to distrust its own sources”. Jonathan Haslam, *Russia's Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT – London 2011, p. 329.

[27] Steven Saxonberg, *The Fall...*, op. cit., p. 84.

[28] *Britannica Book of the Year 1986*, pp. 619–819, quotation after: Jan Kofman, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 25.

[29] Yegor Gaidar, “The Soviet Collapse: Grain and Oil”, American Enterprise Institute, April 2007, [https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/20070419\\_Gaidar.pdf](https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/20070419_Gaidar.pdf) [last accessed on 7.01.2020].

[30] Soviet Union suffered from “imperial overstretch”. Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union...*, op. cit., p. 91.

[31] *Communist Aid Activities in Non-Communist Less-Developed Countries* (US CIA, National Assessment Center, 1978), p. 2, quotation after: Jan Kofman, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 24.

[32] Józef Biskup, Marian Guzek, “Handel Rosji z krajami CEFTA” (“Russia's Trade with CEFTA Countries”), [in:] Paweł Bożyk (ed.), *Rola CEFTA w integrującej się Europie (The Role of CEFTA in Integrating Europe)*, SGH, Warsaw 1999, pp. 169–172.

[33] One must also remember about imbalance between the Soviet Union, which in 1983 accounted for 88 per cent of the Comecon territory and 60 per cent of its population and smaller countries of the bloc. Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe*, op. cit., p. 564.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 572.

[35] They belonged to the “Western civilisation” according to Huntington's model. Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilisations?”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, p. 30.

[36] Thomas Palley, “From Keynesianism to Neoliberalism: Shifting Paradigms in Economics”, [in:] Alfredo Saad-Filho and Deborah Johnston (eds), *Neoliberalism. A Critical Reader*, Pluto Press, London, Ann Arbor, MI 2004, p. 21.

[37] For example, Heinz Reinefarth, a German SS commander who was responsible for mass executions of civilians during the Warsaw Rising 1944 was never convicted of war crimes and from 1951 to 1967 was the mayor of the city of Westerland on Sylt island. See: Philipp Marti, *Der Fall Reinefarth: Eine biografische Studie zum öffentlichen und juristischen Umgang mit der NS-Vergangenheit (The Reinefarth Case: A biographical Study on the Public and Legal Handling of the Nazi Past)*, Wachholz, Neumünster/Hamburg, 2014.

[38] Thomas Palley, *From Keynesianism to Neoliberalism...*, op. cit., p. 21.

[39] Steven Saxonberg calls it “the loss of legitimacy” and discusses in a detailed manner how the regime lost its ideological influence and monopoly on truth, and how dissidents, society and ruling elites became more critical towards the Soviet-type system. See: Steven Saxonberg, *The Fall...*, op. cit., pp. 143–164.

[40] Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism...*, op. cit., p. 173. The Prague Spring also marked the final division of Soviet and western communists and establishment of “Eurocommunism”. See: Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia...*, op. cit., p. 282.

[41] *Rocznik Statystyczny 1979 (Statistical Yearbook of the Polish People's Republic 1979)*, p. 490 and *Rocznik Statystyczny 1986 (Statistical Yearbook of the Polish People's Republic 1986)*, p. 547, quotation after: Jan Kofman, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Transformacja...*, op. cit., pp. 29–30.

[42] The circulation of Western goods and services, and their liberal ideas, was not the same in all of the countries of the region. In the 1980s Poland, a key element influencing how people imagined life in the West turned out to be the VHS recorder, while in Czechoslovakia and East Germany people were easily able to watch West German or Austrian television channels; however, the same things were not so easily accessed by the people of Bulgaria or Romania (due to geographical distance and the political ideology present among the ruling elites), although even there the idea of life beyond the Iron Curtain being better was ever-more present.

[43] A measure of the fever which towards the end of the 1970s overwhelmed both societies and the party apparatus / administrative workers was a wave of trips abroad (some legal), as well as more or less dramatic attempted escapes to the West, which included some officers of the state police (I. M. Pacepa, Matei Pavel Haiducu, Werner Stiller, Ladislav Bittman, Jerzy Sumiński, Jordan Mantarov, Valdimir Kostov et al.), diplomats (Jerzy Bahr, Romuald Spasowski and Milan Švec), and even Politburo members (such as S. Olszowski), even though in theory – as the communist system could be understood – these people should be perceived as having come from a materially privileged group.

[44] Thomas W. Simons, Jr., *Eastern Europe in the Postwar World*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 1991, p. 219.

[45] Archie Brown, *The Rise...*, op. cit., p. 461.

[46] Stanisław Parzymies, *Stosunki międzynarodowe w Europie 1945–2004 (International Relations in Europe 1945–2004)*, Dialog, Warsaw 2004, pp. 151–152.

[47] However, many of high-ranking Soviet apparatchiks (e.g. Yuri Andropov and Mikhail Suslov) realised the danger of the “third basket”, and, on the other side, some Western politicians (such as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan) underestimated its possible role and criticised the entire Helsinki process. Archie Brown, *The Rise...*, op. cit., pp. 462–463.

[48] See e.g.: Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism...*, op. cit., pp. 177–189.

[49] Wojciech Roszkowski, *East Central Europe...*, op. cit., pp. 328–329.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 327.

[51] The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had a significant impact on West-East relations. Zbigniew Brzeziński, Carter's national security advisor, called it “the Soviet Union's Vietnam War”. Jonathan Haslam, *Russia's Cold War...*, op. cit., p. 326.

[52] Wojciech Roszkowski, *Półwiecze. Historia polityczna świata po 1945 roku (A Half Century. Political History of the World after 1945)*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 1997, pp. 299–301.

[53] See: Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia and London 1997, pp. 16–29.

[54] Wojciech Roszkowski, *Półwiecze...*, op. cit., p. 330.

[55] Dana H. Allin, *Cold War...*, op. cit., p. 175.

[56] Wojciech Roszkowski, *Półwiecze...*, op. cit., p. 330.

[57] *Ibid.*

- [58] *Ibid.*, p. 316.
- [59] Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, Oxford University Press, Oxford – New York 1996, p. 82.
- [60] For an interesting analysis of the countries that remained communist, see: Steven Saxonberg, *Transitions and Non-transitions from Communism: Regime Survival in China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2013.
- [61] Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, op. cit., pp. 482–485.
- [62] Martin Malia, *Sowiecka tragedia. Historia komunistycznego imperium rosyjskiego 1917–1991*, transl. Magdalena Hułas, Elżbieta Wyzner (original title: *The Soviet Tragedy: A History of Socialism in Russia, 1917–1991*), Philip Wilson, Warsaw 1998, p. 450.
- [63] Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, op. cit., pp. 79–80.
- [64] Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union...*, op. cit., p. 87.
- [65] *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- [66] In fact, it was not only propaganda – Soviet leaders were really afraid of America and nuclear war, which was surprise for Ronald Reagan when he learned about that. Jonathan Haslam, *Russia's Cold War...*, op. cit., p. 332–334.
- [67] Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan...*, op. cit., pp. 46–49.
- [68] Archie Brown, *The Rise...*, op. cit., pp. 488–494.
- [69] Thomas W. Simons, Jr., *Eastern Europe in the Postwar World*, op. cit., p. 219.
- [70] Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, op. cit., p. 123.
- [71] Анатолий Наумович Рыбаков, *Дети Арбата: Роман*, Москва: Советский писатель, 1987; English translation: Anatoli Rybakov, *Children of the Arbat*, translated by Harold Shukman, Little, Brown, Boston 1988.
- [72] Interestingly, most historical commentaries stress the low literary value of the novel.
- [73] Włodzimierz Marciniak, *Rozgrabione imperium. Upadek Związku Radzieckiego i powstanie Federacji Rosyjskiej (A Looted Empire. The Fall of the Soviet Union and the Creation of the Russian Federation)*, Arcana, Cracow 2001, p. 128.
- [74] Wojciech Roszkowski, *East Central Europe*, op. cit., pp. 376 and 388–390.
- [75] *Ibid.*, p. 389.
- [76] More see: Michael P. Croissant, *The Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict: Causes and Implications*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, Connecticut, 1998.
- [77] Wojciech Materski, *Gruzja (Georgia)*, TRIO, Warsaw 2000, p. 226.
- [78] Archie Brown, *The Rise...*, op. cit., pp. 514–521.
- [79] Still unanswered remains the question of whether Gorbachev himself actively and directly supported the changes in the satellite countries or only remained passive. See for analysis Steven Saxonberg, *The Fall...*, op. cit., pp. 137–143.
- [80] Jonathan Haslam, *Russia's Cold War...*, op. cit., p. 367.

[81] It also means that leaders of the bloc countries were from the same generation as Gorbachev's three predecessors, who were born before the Great October Revolution. See: Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, op. cit., p. 25.

[82] In Romania, for example, most the highest-ranking officers believed that in reality Gorbachev was a Western agent. See: Adam Burakowski, *Geniusz Karpat. Dyktatura Nicolae Ceaușescu 1965–1989 (The Genius of the Carpathians: Nicolae Ceaușescu's Dictatorship 1965–1989)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN) – Trio, Warsaw 2008, p. 306.

[83] Wojciech Roszkowski, *East Central Europe*, op. cit., p. 378.

[84] The Brezhnev doctrine was put forth in 1968 to legitimise the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies on Czechoslovakia. According to it, in the event of a threat to socialism in any of the Eastern Bloc countries, the other countries are allowed to take military action, which is not aggression but self-defence against the interference of enemy ideology.

[85] Wojciech Roszkowski, *Półwiecze...*, op. cit., pp. 391–392.

[86] Wojciech Roszkowski, *East Central Europe*, op. cit., p. 388.

[87] The Moldavian SSR used Russian and Romanian, the latter in Cyrillic script. A return to the Latin alphabet was one of the demands put forth by the Moldavian People's Front (*Frontul Popular din Moldova* – unlike the other organisations of this kind from the Soviet republics, the Moldavian front was a “people's” front rather than a “national” one).

[88] Geoffrey Roberts, *The Soviet Union...*, op. cit., p. 92.

[89] Some commentators coined the term “Gorbism” to denote an unprecedented interest of the media in the general secretary of the Soviet communist party.

[90] The documents were published in Poland. See: Antoni Dudek, Andrzej Friszke (eds), *Polska 1986–1989: koniec systemu. Materiały międzynarodowej konferencji, Miedzeszyn 21–23 października 1999 (Poland 1986–1989: the End of the System. Materials of the International Conference, Miedzeszyn 21–23 October 1999)*, Vol. 3: *Dokumenty*, Trio – Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN), Warsaw 2002, pp. 215–252.

# Poland.

## It all started there

*As Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin was supposed to have said, “It is easier to saddle a cow than to introduce communism in Poland”.*

The host of the Kremlin was right. Indeed, the conditions for building communism were hardly as unfriendly anywhere else as they were in the People’s Republic of Poland. In Poland, the position of party leader turned out to be an extreme ‘hot seat’, and seven persons occupied the position of first secretary: Bolesław Bierut (1948–1956), Edward Ochab (1956), Władysław Gomułka (1956–1970), Edward Gierek (1970–1980), Stanisław Kania (1980–1981), Wojciech Jaruzelski (1981–1989), and Mieczysław F. Rakowski (1989–1990). In the entire Soviet bloc, the highest number of mass protests against the authorities took place in this country straddling the Vistula river (1956, 1970, 1976, 1980–1981),<sup>[1]</sup> and smaller opposition groups were active for practically the whole 1945–1989 period. The party, especially later on, was dominated by opportunists and careerists, whereas very few were interested in ideology. For the 44 years of the People’s Republic of Poland, the authorities enjoyed a varied degree of popularity among its citizens, but prevailingly it was rather a passive acceptance, combined with resignation, than an outright honest inclination to support the Polish United Workers’ Party (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* – PZPR). The people in power could not find any remedy for this ‘allergy to communism’, and various forms of protest essentially lasted for the whole 1944–1989 period.<sup>[2]</sup> Consequently, while the authority imposed by Moscow had to apply ‘stopgap measures’ in order to remain in power, they did not bring about a desired result. The failure of communism as a utopian ideology became evident

in Poland quite quickly, so it was not accidental that it was in Poland where the process, which eventually led to the fall of the Soviet empire, began.

## On the Way to Power

The complicated situation for the communists in Poland stemmed from the historical legacy of relations between Warsaw and Moscow. Since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Russia occupied most of the Polish territory, violently suppressing all Polish national uprisings throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>[3]</sup> Poland's regaining of independence in 1918 coincided with the Bolshevik coup in Russia (1917). The Polish-Bolshevik war of 1920 revealed that the Soviet Union did not consider that an independent Poland should exist on the map of Europe, and this discredited communist ideology and those who subscribed to it in the eyes of Poles.<sup>[4]</sup> In light of a policy position which clearly defied the Polish *raison d'état* (the idea of changing the borders to the disadvantage of the Polish state, to name an example), the Communist Party of Poland (KPP) remained a marginal political force which was dissolved in 1938 by Moscow (!), while most of its leaders and activists were ordered by Stalin to be murdered. Those few who survived, such as future PZPR first secretary Władysław Gomułka, were activists of lower rank who owed their life to... serving time in Polish prisons.<sup>[5]</sup>

WWII added insult to injury. The Hitler-Stalin (Ribbentrop-Molotov) Pact signed in August 1939, mass reprisals against Polish citizens living in the territory subsequently incorporated into the USSR<sup>[6]</sup> and against ensuing prisoners of war, proved that reaching any agreement with Russia (embodied by the USSR) was consistently out of the question. In the Katyń Massacre alone, the NKVD murdered over 21,000 Polish citizens from society's élites. Furthermore, almost 450,000 people were deported to the East between 1939 and 1941.<sup>[7]</sup> One must not forget the drama of the Warsaw Uprising, and about mass reprisals, which affected Polish underground soldiers who fought against the Germans in the period of 1944–1945. One must also bear in mind the westward shift of Polish borders after 1945, which enforced displacements of Polish people who had lived for hundreds

of years in the Polish eastern borderlands, annexed by the USSR under the Yalta Conference agreement.

When capturing Poland, Moscow could not rely on experience acquired in other Central European countries. Social support for communism before the war had been much weaker here than in Czechoslovakia or Germany,<sup>[8]</sup> where, furthermore, the USSR was not perceived as a lethal threat. On the other hand, in Hungary or Romania, hostility towards communism was as extensive as in Poland, but Budapest and Bucharest had supported Hitler during the war. These countries had strengthened Wehrmacht military potential, they had used violence against various categories of people considered as opponents (Jews, communists, free masons, liberals and sometimes – as in Romania – the radical right wing under the banner of the Iron Guard). At the end of the war, massacres of rival groups became dramatically widespread, which led to the situation in which the communists could count on the support of the opponents of the pro-German regimes, in turn strengthening their legitimacy to wield power. On the other hand, many functionaries of the old regime, for whom it was the only chance to avoid punishment, supported the new communist authorities.

In Poland, Hitler never decided to appoint a substitute of a pro-German government. Omnipresent occupational terror, which was actually a threat to the survival of the nation,<sup>[9]</sup> forced the political parties to consolidate and mitigate party disputes. This unity would result in the establishment of the Polish Underground State (*Polskie Państwo Podziemne* – PPP) and the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa* – AK) who fought against the German occupiers (the Army consisted of almost 400,000 officers and soldiers).<sup>[10]</sup> Later on in the war, it would lead to an unsuccessful attempt to free the country from the Nazi occupation, culminating in the Warsaw Uprising.

The tragedy of the Warsaw Uprising, organised by the AK, and which was supposed to liberate Warsaw from German occupation, turned out to have extremely far-reaching consequences. The Red Army, despite being in physical proximity of the fighting city, did not provide any aid<sup>[11]</sup> (and even prevented it), and practically turned a blind eye to the unprecedented and mass extermination of the residents of Warsaw carried out by the Nazi troops.<sup>[12]</sup> This only deepened the chasm which divided the Poles and the communists appointed by the Kremlin to govern post-war Poland.

Another important effect of the events from 1944–1945 was that they took the wind out of the sails of Soviet propaganda officers who claimed that the AK had supposedly been collaborating with the Germans. The scale and momentum of the Uprising (the fight lasted for 63 days) and ample information about it in the global media limited the possibility of efficient propaganda attack on alleged ‘Polish fascism’.

Eventually the communists entered Poland in 1945 with a ruined reputation. Deprived of its eastern lands, Poland, whose borders were moved to the line of the Oder and the Neisse rivers, became a uniform nation in terms of ethnicity, which coincided with a high degree of denominational homogeneity. Society in the Polish People’s Republic remained 90 per cent Catholic<sup>[13]</sup> with a dominating rural component, among which the Church enjoyed a great authority. The memories of conspiracy from 1939–1945, and of the Warsaw Uprising became a token cherished in the national memory. It became a link, which bridged the generational gap and played an important role in establishing role models and shaping the attitudes of a whole generation of opposition activists, but was also an effective ‘vaccination’ against communist propaganda. As such, the communists had to face the challenge of governing a nation, which as a rule did not accept them.

Initially, the most significant instrument of power was mass terror. Gigantic exhaustion, resulting from the war’s toll of death and destruction, as well as the awareness of military failure, were the reasons that people most of all wanted peace. Thus, probably every authority that would not entail physical extermination could have been passively accepted. Therefore, even though the communists blatantly rigged the election in 1947, and with all real and alleged opponents of the ‘authority of people’s democracy’ either imprisoned or murdered, the process of taking over power concluded in December 1948 by ‘uniting the workers’ movement’ (subordinating the remaining independent left wing to the authority). Poles were not able to retaliate through yet another uprising.<sup>[14]</sup> Although after the war there were some Polish anti-communist underground army movements,<sup>[15]</sup> with time, the support given to them gradually faded. The last underground soldier, Józef Franczak, was murdered in 1963.<sup>[16]</sup>

On the one hand, those supporting the communists in Poland were those whose careers took off rapidly thanks to the coup; they worked

in the uniformed services, apparatus of repression, or the administration. On the other hand, there was a group of society members supporting the communists, who believed that the new Poland could be better and more just than the pre-war Second Polish Republic. Finally, representatives of ethnic minorities and Poles of Jewish origin, terrified by the increased nationalist resentment resulting from the war, supported the new Poland. Overall, it was far too modest a social basis in relation to the planned changes. The data showed that the PZPR had relatively small membership numbers relative to the population (in 1948 the party membership ratio in Poland<sup>[17]</sup> was merely 1:8, whereas in the remaining countries of the Bloc it was about 1:6), even though the communists initially set themselves maximum goals, trying to instil in Poland a communist ideology almost strictly patterned on the Soviet experience. Consequently, the party's monopoly to wield power in Poland was forcefully imposed, and any legal opposition was gradually eliminated. Brutal repressions were also directed against religion, the institutional Church and its faithful, while the youth was indoctrinated by atheist ideals and the artistic canon soon followed the rules of socialist realism.<sup>[18]</sup>

As there was no faith in ideology, such solutions had to be imposed forcefully, yet the terror could not be used for a long time as it not only affected the opponents of the regime but also the party itself. The above factors led to the first big social riot in June 1956, and the subsequent liberalisation of the system in October the same year. In the face of the Poles' open rebellion, a sharp factional conflict within the PZPR,<sup>[19]</sup> and the additional de-Stalinisation which brought a political 'thaw' in the USSR, it became evident that terror as a political instrument must be diminished. Under the circumstances, the authorities had to 'reach an agreement' with society in order to gain its passive acceptance. On the other hand, remembering the tragedy of the Warsaw Uprising, the society was willing to compromise. As the Polish western border was uncertain, (its shape remained dependent on Moscow's position),<sup>[20]</sup> the Polish Church did not want a conflict, and neither did numerous Polish emigrants who were decidedly against the regime. All this resulted in a relatively moderate – 73 documented victims<sup>[21]</sup> – course of the 1956 events.

From that moment on, the leaders of the PZPR were between a rock and a hard place when it came to relations with the Kremlin. On the one hand,

they had to maintain social calm, sometimes making partial concessions; while on the other hand, they had to be very careful not to cross ‘the thin red line’ of Moscow’s approval. Such conditions shaped the nature of compromise between the society, the authorities of the People’s Republic of Poland, and the Kremlin.

## Concessions

The most important concession that the authorities were forced to accept was the strong position of the Catholic Church, which maintained its organisational and ideological independence, thus remaining a demanding partner and a difficult opponent for the regime.

The basic factor, which conditioned the role of the Church in Poland, was a close connection between religion and belonging to the Polish nation. The word-cluster ‘Pole-Catholic’ undoubtedly played a crucial role in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; as the Polish state did not exist, the Catholic Church took part in shaping the identity of Poles, being a ‘refuge of Polish values’. In the conditions of enslavement after 1945, it automatically returned to that role. Moreover, it returned to it under conditions of an exceptional confessional unity, strengthened by a steadfast attitude of numerous priests and nuns who had helped the faithful during the Nazi occupation, often putting their own lives at risk.<sup>[22]</sup> In the face of the increased authority of the Church, the range of anti-clerical slogans definitely diminished, although they could have counted on some social response in the pre-war times. The detention of Stefan Wyszyński, the Primate of the Church in 1953, defeated its very purpose. In the eyes of millions, he became a martyr for the faith, and his stately and steadfast stance led to success. After three years, in autumn of 1956, the authorities not only released the primate but also signed an agreement with the Episcopate. Under the agreement, the decree on appointing Church posts by the authorities was revoked, religious education returned to schools and the rules of pastoral care for the sick and prisoners were established.<sup>[23]</sup>

However, the authorities never forgot that these concessions were extorted by the society in 1956<sup>[24]</sup> and, despite the period of decline for

the People's Republic of Poland (1986–1989), the relation between the Church and the state remained tense. The communists never came to terms with the humiliation brought about by the triumphant return of Primate Wyszyński to the Archbishop's Palace in 1956, not to mention that the successive first secretaries of the party's Central Committee had to account for this concession in Moscow.<sup>[25]</sup> Hence, although the PZPR never returned to the scenario of a crackdown on the Church, the 1960s especially provided a scene of constant tensions provoked by the party and the administration of the People's Republic. These provocations aimed at the secularisation of society and the limiting of the Church's influence on citizens. An important role was played by coercive measures such as fines, searches, detentions,<sup>[26]</sup> or the calling up clerical army companies.<sup>[26]</sup>

Still, mass support for the Church forced the authorities to make an array of concessions. For example, the Catholic University in Lublin, a refuge for rebellious academics, was active for the whole period of the existence of the People's Republic of Poland, whereas in 1961, when religion was removed from schools, the Church maintained a network of halls for teaching religious education to children. The PZPR also had to accept the activity of the Church-affiliated infrastructure. It included mostly legally issued (albeit censored) press, with such titles as the *Tygodnik Powszechny* – TP weekly and the *Więź* monthly occupying prominent positions. The former was published in Cracow by members of the Catholic intelligentsia led by Jerzy Turowicz, whereas the latter appeared in Warsaw under the supervision of Tadeusz Mazowiecki (in times of the People's Republic of Poland they were in opposition to the imposed system). Periodically (1956–1976), the circles connected with Clubs of Catholic Intelligentsia also created a sanctioned opposition group which sat in parliament – the 'Znak' parliamentary group, whose members were Mazowiecki (who became prime minister in 1989), Stefan Kisielewski, a pungent critic of the system's absurdity, Stanisław Stomma, a lawyer, and Jerzy Zawieyski, among others (the last one as a member of the State Council also tried to mediate the conflicts between the authorities and the Church).<sup>[27]</sup>

Despite complex relations between *Znak* and the Church hierarchy<sup>[28]</sup> (which resulted from the rather disobedient character of the group which had called for some reforms within the Church for a long time), a relative

independence of the circles associated with *Znak* and *TP* from the authorities was too precious an advantage to be underestimated by such an experienced strategist as Primate Wyszyński (supported by the Cracow Archbishop Karol Wojtyła – later Pope John Paul II). He noticed the benefits stemming from the cooperation with these circles for Poland and the Church. The primate realised that although the position of the Church in rural areas was unquestionable, the support of intellectual elites was much weaker as they had been experiencing rapid secularisation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (similarly to other European countries). An attractive programme was needed to halt (or possibly reverse) this process and the circles of *TP* and *Znak* had the answer. Since the mid-1960s, Mazowiecki and his colleagues could rely on the teachings of the Second Vatican Council which, through the words of two popes: John XXIII and Paul VI, accepted parliamentary democracy, attracted attention to poverty, and placed emphasis on ecumenical dialogue. Rome increasingly demanded the rights for the persecuted all over the world, which facilitated the view that the Church probably was not (against the common opinions of already secularised intellectual elites) a refuge of ‘obscurantism’, ‘backwardness’, and nationalism.

The new post-Council dynamics of the Church started its ‘ideological counter-offensive’ on the social ground that had been previously unavailable. It coincided with the party’s loss of authority among the intelligentsia, which led to a significant change in the relations between the Church and the authorities. In the 1970s, closer relations between a part of lay intelligentsia, circles around Mazowiecki, and the hierarchy of the Church became evident (with the significant participation of Cardinal Wojtyła). Attempts by the regime to drive a wedge between these two circles (the authorities in contacts with the Church hierarchs emphasised e.g. ‘hostile attitudes’ of former party members towards the Church during the years of Stalinism, the Jewish origins of some of them, and their radicalism, which might lead to bloodshed), were too obvious for the Episcopate to break off these relations. The PZPR was not a trustworthy partner after all: up until the end of the People’s Republic of Poland, there was a special department within the Ministry of Internal Affairs dealing with the surveillance and disintegration of the clergy (it had an exceptionally sober dossier, including murders of disobedient priests). Maintaining some pro-regime organisations, such

as the PAX (whose members were often in opposition to the changes introduced by the Vatican Council), additionally stimulated the Church to open up to liberal and lay circles, which embraced the changes introduced by the Council with hope and sometimes even with enthusiasm.

The approach of the Church towards the nascent anti-regime opposition was reserved. The Church wanted to see its mission as one of conveying faith and Christian values, not as being a political power. Having a vested interest in the re-Christianisation of the largest number of Poles possible, after 1956, the Church was not eager to put forward any demands of changing the political system in Poland. Primate Wyszyński demanded from the authorities mainly respect for Church independence, which was often infringed by administrative activities, but he refrained from criticising the basis of the system. Thus, the Church demanded that the authorities obey the law, defended the persecuted, beaten and imprisoned, and every now and then (after 1976 more and more explicitly) it sharply criticised the authorities, but it did not mean lending support to the opposition. In hindsight, this reserved policy of the Church (resulting from fear of possible bloodshed)<sup>[29]</sup> turns out to have been correct. On the one hand, the Episcopate soothed emotions and accepted the systemic reality of the People's Republic of Poland, and thus gradually gained the respect of the authorities, which started to perceive it not as an enemy but as a partner in talks. On the other hand, it consistently defended the persecuted and gained respect in the eyes of the opposition, which did not feel completely deserted in its struggle.

The above circumstances caused the authority of the Church to gradually increase from the mid-1960s onwards. As a result, even members of the uniformed services often secretly got married in church, sent their children to religion classes (perhaps to avoid being denounced, they went to other parishes) or attended church services fairly regularly.<sup>[30]</sup> Religious celebrations, Holy Masses or pilgrimages helped to overcome the barrier of fear: the participants quickly found out that they were attended by a much bigger group of people than was shown on television and thereby, mass religious celebrations (Primate Wyszyński placed a great emphasis on their festive setting) revealed the lies of the official propaganda. These struggles of the Church, which 'responded to the mass ideology with the masses

of believers',<sup>[31]</sup> culminated in the election of Karol Wojtyła as the Pope and the pilgrimage of John Paul II to Poland in 1979. Millions of people who attended the services felt their power and the famous sentence of the Pope: "Let your Spirit descend and renew the face of the earth, the face of this land", became a significant breakthrough, which directly preceded the wave of strikes in 1980 and the establishment of the 'Solidarity' trade union. At the same time, to quote Adam Michnik, Poland gained "a King without a crown". The words of John Paul II many times raised panic among party leaders and his subsequent pilgrimages to Poland, despite their religious dimension, were significant political events whose consequences were feared by the authorities. In the years 1978–1981, the authority of the Church reached its peak, sealing the ideological defeat of the PZPR. The voice of the Church turned out to be decisive in many matters, both for the opposition and (which became increasingly difficult to hide) for the communist regime, which, without the neutrality of the clergy, had more and more difficulties in governing the country.

Abandoning collectivisation modelled on the Soviet Union was another significant concession on the part of the authorities. After 1956, the Polish communist authorities decided that, in the face of social resistance, it seemed unfeasible. This decision undoubtedly gained Gomułka a lot of acclaim, yet it raised serious objections in Moscow, which precisely understood that a landowning farmer would not be as vulnerable to threats as a state farm worker would, because the former would never be under threat of being fired. Hence, accepting the right to property in the People's Republic of Poland explicitly narrowed the range of arbitrary action by the authorities and empowered most of the inhabitants of Poland to a much greater degree than it was the case in any other countries of the communist bloc.

However, on the other hand, the PZPR – so as not to irritate Moscow – only in 1983 ultimately admitted that there would be no return to collectivisation. Such a dilatory approach could not bond rural areas with the party, and the latter never came out with a decent programme aimed at millions of farmers. Furthermore, the agrarian United People's Party (*Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe* – ZSL) which was authorised by the authorities – did not help in this matter.

Simultaneously, the *status quo* in relations with rural areas, barely tolerated by Moscow, proved to be fatal for the country's economy. Individual farms were usually very small, due to the land reform carried out in 1944–1945, which entrenched the archaic property structure. Farm owners could provide food only in modest amounts, barely sufficient for their nearest family, whereas food production on a scale that would satisfy the demand in cities was out of the question. It stemmed from the authorities' approach according to which farmers were a 'necessary evil', so the government introduced an unpredictable tax policy, blocked access to capital and modern technology, and discriminated against private property for the benefit of big state-owned farms.<sup>[32]</sup> As a result, the countryside, up until the end of the People's Republic of Poland, remained hugely overpopulated and the property structure cleverly covered the problem of unemployment.

The third concession made by the authorities was the private sector. As it was impossible to satisfy domestic demand, private businesses could function legally, albeit in a strictly defined scope which was gradually extended from 1956 onwards. In the 1960s, any person running their own business could employ only one worker in their company, but with time this limit was increased to three. In manoeuvring between the ideological condemnation of 'capitalists' and the need to supply the society with goods and services, the authorities permitted the activity of the strictly authorised Alliance of Democrats (*Stronnictwo Demokratyczne* – SD) which represented craftsmen, small business persons, and liberal professions. On the other hand, absurd regulations often pushed businesses into the 'shadow economy' as the authorities could always use their secret weapon, the 'surtax'. Such a policy, relying on stopgap measures, somehow eased social frustration caused by market deficits, but it was not able to solve structural issues.

Another concession of the authorities after 1956 concerned national symbols. The failure of Stalinism revealed an ideological void, which had to be filled with something. As the communists were always treated as Moscow's agents, subsequent governments bent over backwards to convince their fellow countrymen that the People's Republic of Poland was indeed a Polish state and the alliance with the USSR was in its best interest.<sup>[33]</sup> The 'German factor', on the other hand, brought the communists closer to their biggest pre-war enemies – i.e. to some radical right-wing activists who had fascist

inclinations, and to nationalists. The communists were interested in such an 'alliance' for three reasons. Firstly, every ally was important in the tough struggle for power; secondly, they wanted to achieve rehabilitation in the eyes of people who perceived them as Kremlin puppets; and thirdly, they expected that pro-regime Catholics would open new possibilities to exert pressure on the Church. This idea resulted in the founding of such organisations as the PAX, led by Bolesław Piasecki, who before the war had been the leader of the pro-fascist National Radical Camp (ONR).

Giving permission for legal activity to some politicians of the former radical right wing meant accepting a 'lesser evil'. Both the PZPR and the Kremlin realised the risk involved, but they decided to opt for it, as they wished the corrupt version of nationalism to prevent the ongoing liberalisation of the system, which the headquarters in Warsaw and Moscow were most afraid of. However, concessions in the policy regarding symbols and an attempt to win over a proportion of the nationalists led to the intensified malfunctioning of the whole system, and instead of stabilising it, they only generated additional conflicts, even within the PZPR itself. The programme of the nationalist faction was attractive for a group of people from the party apparatus, army or the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but it was not well received by economic circles, let alone by the academia and artistic groups. Friction within the PZPR culminated in the events of March 1968, when mass student protests against censorship broke out. In the atmosphere of an anti-Semitic campaign, the nationalist faction tried to remove advocates of the reforms from the PZPR and administration. Rubbing shoulders with nationalism and the anti-Semitic campaign paralysed the reformatory wing of the PZPR for years to come, widening the gap between the authorities and intellectuals who became disillusioned about the possibility of reforming Marxism.<sup>[34]</sup>

March 1968 also proved to be a great disappointment for the supporters of 'national communism'. It turned out that while they were useful for Moscow, the nationalists were tolerated by the USSR only within strictly defined bounds, and crossing them ended in failure. The PAX was never accepted as an equal partner of the PZPR, expressing too openly the support for the idea of 'national communism' (as the fate of the leader of this trend General Moczar revealed) involved being pushed aside.<sup>[35]</sup>

Playing the national card did not bring about as many benefits as the authorities had counted on. Firstly, since 1970 after the treaty with Western Germany was signed, the German deterrent became less important as the crucial approval of Poland's western border on the Oder and Neisse was obtained from Bonn. Secondly, the remembrance of the crimes committed by the USSR during the Second World War was too vivid to be eradicated by some moderate successes in the foreign policy, whereas Piasecki's change of stance was too radical and hence lacked legitimacy for most of the activists of the pre-war right wing. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the attempt to antagonise the faithful and the Church hierarchy, a kind of 'ideological sabotage', ended in failure. The PAX often joined the media attacks against Primate Stefan Wyszyński and the Church, which stood against the basic tenet of Polish nationalism that had strictly linked the nation with the Catholic Church since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The conflict with the Church hierarchy discredited Piasecki in the eyes of millions of Catholics in Poland.<sup>[36]</sup>

## Disintegration. The Opposition is Established

The Gierek regime (1970–1980) was the time when the primacy of the party membership over competence (due to the division between the party and intelligentsia in 1968) was clear for everyone. Moreover, Gierek started taking foreign loans on a massive scale, which allowed him to maintain social calm and even a little affinity of the society, at least for a short while. However, the oil crisis which broke out in 1973, the increase of oil prices by the USSR, investments in heavy industry imposed by Moscow, enormous corruption (which during the Gierek regime became the very core of the power system), and, finally, omnipresent chaos intensified by the spreading plague of alcoholism, buried all hopes for catching up with the West as Gierek had promised.<sup>[37]</sup> Poles knew exactly what life in the West looked like, both from visits of relatives or acquaintances and from their own experience. In the People's Republic of Poland access to a passport was

strictly controlled by the authorities, which often used giving someone permission to go abroad (or not) as leverage. However, contrary to citizens of other countries in the bloc (except for Hungary), Poles usually managed to obtain such permission. Hence, Poles knew that nowhere in the West did people queue for several hours to buy ham, or wait several years to be allocated a cramped flat in a small apartment block; that hospitals were clean, clerks were polite, and toilet paper was not a luxury good...

Deteriorating living conditions in the People's Republic of Poland brought about two different approaches – constant emigration from Poland, and petty business activity abroad. Since the 1970s, the global press published information about 'tourists' from Poland who conducted illegal trade trying to earn a few dollars on the side to replenish their meagre salaries. This raised resentment and strengthened anti-Polish stereotypes (often inherited after the time of Poland's partitions), showing Poles as dishonest, dirty scammers inclined to break the law and ethical norms in order to earn money. Poles, who went not only to the West, but also to the GDR and Hungary, found out that even in some communist countries the standard of living was far better than in Poland. Additionally, party members going abroad could learn first-hand that the benefits, which they received in Poland were nothing compared with the standard offered by the state to an ordinary pensioner, let alone the standard of European elites. Therefore, an attorney, a member of the PZPR, even if he or she conducted a lucrative business in his or her office in Polish conditions, could only dream about the income of earned by counterparts in West Berlin, Vienna, or Paris. Simultaneously, information about the 'Byzantine luxury' in which Gierek and his circle (including family members) lived, the corruption scandals, the phony flat allocations, the taking of exhibits from museums and transporting scarce cultural goods left after the war to villas of spoilt apparatchiks, evoked increasing irritation not only among citizens but also among average members of the PZPR who had the impression of being stigmatised by the rest of society.

Old party comrades often anxiously observed that what they had achieved in their lives did not convince their children, who either decided to emigrate or joined the opposition, which was gaining momentum. The condition of the People's Republic of Poland forced some of them to change their outlook, which often led to lending active support to the opposition.

The collapse of the party authority, the power of the Church, and the tradition of the fight for independence in Poland were conducive to anti-regime opposition. Already in 1957, in the wake of ‘the October thaw’ a clandestine group known as National-Democratic League was created and then disbanded in 1960 by arrests made by the Security Service. In 1965, a group of young people established a decidedly anti-communist conspiracy organisation called *Ruch* (‘Movement’), which had almost 100 active members by 1970. However, a wave of arrests followed a denunciation, which in effect crushed the organisation. <sup>[38]</sup> *Ruch*, which had its roots in the Polish independence movement traditions, aimed for liberating Poland from the domination of the USSR and turned out to be a crucial experience, as a great number of activists continued their anti-regime activity after being released from prison. <sup>[39]</sup>

The year 1968 was a turning point in the history of the opposition in the People’s Republic of Poland. Before that year, the opposition activists had originated mostly from the pre-war intelligentsia, landowners, and industrialists whom the People’s Republic of Poland closed the path to a career. This influenced their uncompromising anti-communist attitudes. They rejected the People’s Republic of Poland as an illegal state (as it took power by force in 1945), and their only goal was a restitution of the independence of Poland, which meant breaking free from the USSR. <sup>[40]</sup>

The post-Marxist opposition, which pulled away from the PZPR by the events of 1964–1968, originated in another approach. For these persons (Jacek Kuroń, Jan Lityński, Adam Michnik, and Karol Modzelewski), who were rooted in the reality of the People’s Republic of Poland through their family connections or professional work, rejecting the communist state built by their parents was an unreasonable demand, and their faith in Marxism was something natural. <sup>[41]</sup> The aim of this group was initially a reform of the People’s Republic of Poland; hence, the first target group of this faction (known as the ‘commandos’) was the PZPR and the authorities. Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski addressed them in an open letter assessing the situation of the state and containing an improvement plan for the People’s Republic of Poland. As the result of activities publicising the open letter, they were both imprisoned. <sup>[42]</sup> After 1968, the circles of former Marxists started to revise their outlook gradually, carefully examining the intellectual offer of the Catholic Church.

Initially, scepticism prevailed on both sides. Left-wing intellectuals were afraid of the right-wing nationalism and they blamed the Church for 'backwardness' of the nation. The Episcopate in turn was very reserved about former Marxist activists who even in the 1950s had actively supported the authorities fighting against the Church, and was afraid of a radical approach, which might lead to bloodshed. However, part of the Catholic intelligentsia clearly sought contacts with party members who doubted in Marxism. The first impulse to make both milieus closer was the resolute stance of the 'Znak' parliamentary group and a strong voice of Cardinal Wyszyński and the episcopate in defence of the protesting young people in 1968.<sup>[43]</sup> In 1971, Bohdan Cywiński published a famous book *Rodowody niepokornych*<sup>[44]</sup> (*Origins of the Disobedient*) which, taking the perspective of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reminded that the Church in Poland had always been sensitive to poverty, and that intellectuals always had had their place in it, even before the Second Vatican Council, and that the cases of conversions among crucial representatives of the left wing had not been rare.<sup>[45]</sup>

The left wing responded with a book, published by Adam Michnik after the 1976 strikes and social riots, entitled: *Kościół. Lewica. Dialog* (*The Church. The Left. Dialogue*, later translated into English as *The Church and the Left*<sup>[46]</sup>), in which the author quoted official Church documents, arguing that it did not have to be a 'backward' and 'insular' institution. He further maintained that such views were a sign of 'anti-Church obscurantism', which made the fight against the communist dictatorship even harder.<sup>[47]</sup> Michnik's book had not only a significant influence on the "rapprochement" between Catholic and lay intelligentsia, but also, by accelerating the process of opening of some non-Catholic circles to the Church, it contributed to many conversions.

In 1976, another workers' riot broke out, this time in Radom and Ursus. It was directly caused by an increase in prices and was repressed using drastic measures, including beatings, arrests without due trial, expulsions from work of those found 'guilty', and of those who were only 'suspects'. These events shook the country, yet were met with an organised response of the opponents of the regime, this time in an institutionalised and newly established form: the Workers' Defense Committee (*Komitet Obrony Robotników* – KOR). It consisted of people of differing ages who represented various views, as well as varying political or professional experience. Despite

the fact that the KOR was perceived as a leftist initiative (next to socialists such as Ludwik Cohn, Antoni Pajdak or Waclaw Zawadzki, it included such activists as Jacek Kuroń, Jan Lityński or Adam Michnik), it was also comprised of representatives of the *Ruch*, which was seemingly more right-wing (Emil Morgiewicz, Joanna Szczęsna). Besides, an important role was also played by such activists as Antoni Macierewicz (then a left-winger, after 1989 a right-wing activist and later a radical right-winger), Wojciech Ziemiński or Piotr Naimski. Moreover, Zofia and Zbigniew Romaszewski or Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński cooperated with the Committee as well. The KOR was the first successful example of agreement between the intelligentsia and workers. This time, the workers were not left on their own, and they received legal and material help through channels developed from the bottom up by the KOR circles, while their persecutions triggered a whole avalanche of protests.

The KOR was the first opposition organisation, which abandoned traditional conspiratorial methods. Despite aggression from the authorities, the activists used their own names and the flat of Kuroń became an informal centre for the movement. The KOR could not be broken, and as such, it turned into a signal sent to other opponents of the system, who after 1976 started forming opposition groups. At the time, there were already various independent sources of information for society other than the Radio Free Europe, which was broadcasting outside the People's Republic of Poland. The NOWA publishing house, founded by Mirosław Chojecki, started publishing illegal *samizdat* copies of works, which were prevented thanks to censorship, and with a large circulation at that. Soon, the so-called 'Flying Universities' were established. These were cycles of lectures held in private apartments, which presented censored topics. The authorities of the People's Republic of Poland fiercely fought them and tried to crush them by sending specially trained karate fighters to beat the participants and lecturers. Free Labour Unions, independent from the authorities, started emerging spontaneously at the end of the 1970s. Lech Wałęsa gained his first political experience in such unions.<sup>[48]</sup>

When the state's monopoly on information was overcome, the censors had to make incredible concessions, hitherto unknown in the Eastern Bloc. It was in this atmosphere that the 'cinema of moral anxiety' emerged, dealing with contemporary social and political issues. In 1977, Andrzej Wajda's

film *Człowiek z marmuru* (*Man of Marble*) was released as an attempt to settle accounts with Stalinism. A much sharper attack against the cynicism and life of the elites in the People's Republic was expressed by Feliks Falk in *Wodzirej* (*Top Dog*), and Krzysztof Zanussi drew his attention to the struggles of 'disobedient' academics in his film *Barwy ochronne* (*Camouflage*). The rebellion against the communist reality flourished in prose, poetry (Zbigniew Herbert with *Pan Cogito* (*Mister Cogito*) who could not come to terms with the surrounding reality, or the New Wave including the works of poets such as Stanisław Barańczak and Ryszard Krynicki), in theatres, where Polish romantic repertoire enjoyed particular popularity (created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the time of partitions, thus originally anti-tsarist, which in the People's Republic of Poland was understood as anti-Soviet) and in cabaret, where ridiculous government orders were often derided. Furthermore, the short stories of Sławomir Mrożek were very popular as he taunted the absurdity of life in the People's Republic of Poland.

Activities of the KOR not only provoked the anger of the authorities as well as the sympathetic interest of the Western media, but also stirred controversy among opposition circles in the country. In particular, its attitude towards the sovereignty of Poland evoked mixed feelings. Officially, the KOR did not address this issue in its programme, which for some circles was utterly incomprehensible: in the view of such people as Leszek Moczulski, who – along with some other former *Ruch* members – started to set up opposition structures separately from the KOR. According to these activists, the most important activity against communism in Poland should be directed at the restitution of the country's real independence, and the lack of such a demand in the Committee's programme was perceived as a sign of procrastination or even as some kind of acceptance of the *status quo*. However, in hindsight these accusations seem somewhat exaggerated. For some KOR members (those of Marxist origin), participation in the actions organised by the Committee was a form of compensation for their former support for Stalinism (by their parents or themselves). However, it did not imply their eagerness to support the restitution of Polish independence, if Poland was supposed to take the same political and social shape as it had had before 1939. Some activists expressed fear that such Poland would have to be *ipso facto* intolerant, anti-Semitic, chauvinistic, conflicted with all

neighbours and possibly even wanting to regain its eastern borderlands by force. Such convictions grew even stronger after the experience of March 1968, when the authorities, cynically using nationalism as a tool, fired hundreds of people and received significant social support in doing so. As a result, a large number of KOR members were convinced that Poles were not mature enough to accept democracy. Only persistent 'grass root work' (such as providing aid for the victimised workers) might enlighten them and facilitate building Polish democracy modelled on the West. The ideal of Poland pursued by KOR members was supposed to be a completely different type of the Polish statehood, probably a version of democratic socialism, although with time, left wing aspects were replaced by liberal views.

A partial affirmation of the People's Republic of Poland, *en bloc* criticism of the right wing and no postulate of Polish independence raised objections of some independence-oriented circles. They reacted in 1977 by setting up the Movement for Defence of Human and Civic Rights (*Ruch Obrony Praw Człowieka i Obywatela* – ROPCiO), although it ended in failure. Establishing yet another organisation (by a group of activists such as Andrzej Czuma, Karol Głogowski, and Leszek Moczulski) from the start was more difficult in organisational terms, and it was even harder to reach out to public opinion with its ideas. Moreover, the banners under which the KOR acted (such as the fight for the rights of workers) were much better perceived by the youth and they were better suited for the ideological climate of that era, in which Willy Brandt promised "more democracy"; Jimmy Carter placed emphasis on human rights, and freedom of the individual was climbing up the ladder of values. Simultaneously, such notions as a nation understood as an ethnic community were becoming less significant. This was a problem for the traditional right wing. It was not able to fall back on the national ideology as it had been discredited after 1968 and it did not have a monopoly on defending religious values after the Vatican Council, so essentially it had to 'reinvent the Right from scratch'. One way to do this was to appeal to the concept of the real independence of Poland, which was the unspoken desire of millions of Poles, and by fusing many ideological trends in pro-independence circles.

KOR's victory in the ideological dispute was brought about by several factors. Firstly, at that time the idea of independence seemed for most Poles

a cherished yet unrealistic notion. Secondly, the tactics of open activity was a much better solution, as it was then possible to avoid being suspected of 'conspiracy against the People's Republic of Poland', and the experiences of the *Liga* and the *Ruch* showed that such activity was bound to be crushed by the security services. Supporters of the ROPCiO also had less chance to be active propaganda-wise. Kuroń and Michnik had more influence in Western media than their pro-independence opponents (who had acted in conspiracy since the 1970s), not to mention the contacts with more or less liberal activists of the PZPR, which they kept. Moreover, the Security Service, skilfully fuelling personal ambitions, drove towards a breakup within the ROPCiO. Eventually, some of its members, led by Andrzej Czuma, decided to support the KOR, whereas the rest of them remained with Leszek Moczulski as leader and set off to establish a legally active political party. Thus, in 1979, the Confederation of Independent Poland (*Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej* – KPN) was founded, which demanded the breaking of the country's dependence on the USSR.<sup>[49]</sup>

The above processes put the authorities in a difficult position. Since the acceptance of the Helsinki Accord (the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) in 1975, using repressions became harder and cases of beating up an opposition activist or, in a worst case scenario, causing fatalities (such as with the death of Stanisław Pyjas in 1977), automatically generated a new wave of social protests which were immediately publicised. This in turn made it difficult to obtain new loans in the West, which were indispensable for the survival of the regime. Such events as the election of Cardinal Wojtyła to the papacy and his first pilgrimage to Poland in June 1979, as well as the earlier takeover by Carter administration, in which the key role in shaping America's foreign policy was played by Zbigniew Brzeziński, a Pole, went hand in hand not only with the activity of numerous Polish emigrants but also with the erosion of the communist bloc, where the primacy of the USSR was more and more often thrown into question.

The above remarks help to better understand why an unprecedented event like the formation of the Solidarity could occur in the People's Republic of Poland as early as 1980.

## The 'Carnival of Solidarity' and Martial Law

In summer 1980, the atmosphere in the country was very tense, mostly because of the increasingly bad economic situation. Under the circumstances, merely a spark would be enough to trigger a rebellion. The increase in meat prices introduced on 1 July turned out to be just such a spark, with many factories going on strike in response. The authorities took an ambivalent and anticipating stance, which only encouraged the protesters. On 14 August, the Gdańsk Shipyard went on strike demanding the reinstatement of Anna Walentynowicz and Lech Wałęsa, who had been dismissed for their trade union activity. On 16 August, the Inter-factory Strike Committee was established, which united workers from various factories; it was led by Wałęsa.<sup>[50]</sup>

The authorities were divided into two groups, with supporters of a more hard-line policy on the one side and those who were more geared towards finding a compromise: as such, they were not able to undertake any effective action. In the meantime, already on 17 August the Inter-factory Strike Committee put forward a list of 21 demands, mainly of an economic and social nature. However, the first of them demanded the establishment of independent trade unions. The following day, a similar strike broke out in Szczecin. The KPN, the KOR and other opposition circles were initially startled by the range of the protests, but they quickly supported the strikes and joined the workers as representatives of the Polish intelligentsia.

Facing a united opposition and with a lack of unity in their own ranks, the authorities were forced to make concessions. On 31 August, the Inter-factory Strike Committee signed an agreement with government representatives. This document, which became historically known as the 'August Agreement', gave consent to establish independent trade unions. Throughout the following weeks, they were set up in many places nationwide; most of them then united to form one Polish union known as the Independent Self-governing Trade Union (*Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy – NSZZ*) Solidarity. The period called the 'Carnival of Solidarity' started.<sup>[51]</sup>

The emergence of Solidarity, which had almost 10 million members by October 1981, thus making it the greatest mass movement in the history of Poland, was a phenomenon on a scale of the whole communist bloc. The rebellion spread into all social strata; even the Citizen's Militia tried

to set up Solidarity organisations, but it was prevented from doing so by the authorities. The efficient leadership of Lech Wałęsa, who was media-savvy and ideally fit the era, being of both rural and of worker origin with a strong devotion to Catholic tradition, gave these events the character of almost a national uprising: practically all trends of the then opposition were represented in Solidarity except for the KPN. The heritage of the Polish Underground State and the Warsaw Uprising once more allowed for the avoidance of any ideological conflicts. The organisation which emerged in 1980 united all Poles, gained unprecedented media publicity all over the world, and ultimately rebelled against the authorities, which were rapidly losing support. Simultaneously, the name Solidarity became imprinted in the minds of millions of Poles, and created once again a myth of a united society fighting for higher moral values and using ethically justified means.

For many months, news from Poland instantly reached international opinion, which on the one hand positively influenced Polish national pride (it was practically the first time since the beginning of the Second World War that such a success had been achieved), on the other hand, it impeded taking more serious measures by the authorities, at least to a certain point. The time of the 'Carnival' was remembered later in the dark years of martial law and the following years as an experience that united the whole nation in the fight against communism.

Acting legally, Solidarity, by its very existence, questioned the power monopoly of the PZPR. The leadership of the union was afraid of the implementation of the Brezhnev doctrine, so its members did what they could to adjust their actions to the reality of the system in the People's Republic of Poland. Not only was society in flux, having experienced this unusual 'carnival of freedom', but the PZPR was affected too, as a great number of its members simply abandoned it: between August 1980 and the 9<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 1981, the number of members dropped from 3 to about 2 million, with the majority of those turning in their party cards being workers. The reaction of the allies to the impact of Solidarity and the situation of the PZPR was one of anxiety. As the new first secretary of the Central Committee of the party, Stanisław Kania (and in the opinion of some of the allies, Wojciech Jaruzelski as well) was rather passive, the external pressure exerted on the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland

increased, sometimes by suggesting a possibility of intervention and sometimes by pressuring them to solve the situation by using 'Polish forces'.<sup>[52]</sup>

In Gdańsk, over the course of September and October 1981, the First National Congress of Solidarity Delegates was held. The meeting may be regarded as a symbol of the legality and legitimacy (almost 9 million members of Solidarity elected the delegates), as well as strength of the trade union.<sup>[53]</sup> The most famous document adopted by the Congress was the "Message to Working People of Eastern Europe", in which the delegates called upon the peoples of Soviet bloc countries to organise themselves in independent trade union movements. It triggered negative reactions from the Kremlin and Polish communists.<sup>[54]</sup> Soon after, Wojciech Jaruzelski, who replaced Stanisław Kania in the post of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the party, decided to crack down on Solidarity by force.

Jaruzelski's introduction of martial law on 13 December 1981 was extremely costly. Cracking down on Solidarity by force ended up impeding the union's vitality – almost 10,000 people were detained and twice as many were sentenced for 'crimes against the decree on martial law'. However, the crack-down on the strikes in coalmines in Silesia, which led to bloodshed and the deaths of nine workers at the Wujek mine became an efficient moral weapon, and the use of 70,000 soldiers, 30,000 militia forces, 1,750 tanks and 1,900 combat vehicles and helicopters<sup>[55]</sup> was a strong analogy with classic coups d'état in other parts of the world. As a consequence, the global media's image of a Poland dominated by military forces was disastrous.

Thousands of people lost their jobs.<sup>[56]</sup> The purges that took place among journalists were particularly painful, as these circles had undergone a healing process throughout 1980–1981 only to be struck down by the violent intervention of the authorities during martial law. However, it should be remembered that being summarily sacked from work as a method of reprisal was used against all professional groups, thus the country suffered losses beyond repair. Most of these people were actually forced to emigrate from Poland, which limited the country's 'human capital' and contributed to more difficulties during the 1989 transformation process.

As a result, society remained frustrated, and so did the PZPR. After 13 December 1981, the party was so hated that some voices appeared that it should be dissolved and a new political power established in its place.

Eventually, Jaruzelski did not decide to do so, as he was afraid of Moscow's reaction; this could have been perceived as an attempt to gain too much independence. Although the Kremlin received the decision about martial law with relief and persistently emphasised that Jaruzelski was a good choice, it was not satisfied with the achievements in the party's fight against the Church and opposition.

A characteristic and significant change was the shifting of power from the PZPR to the army.<sup>[57]</sup> In the first years after the introduction of martial law, only generals played key roles in the circle closely cooperating with Jaruzelski (Czesław Kiszczak, Michał Janiszewski, Florian Siwicki, and Tadeusz Hupałowski). At the same time, Jaruzelski appointed officers who had learned to follow orders in a blind manner to key positions in the civil administration, economy, and media. The process went hand in hand with the propaganda promoted by Jaruzelski, according to which the army once again saved Poland from great disaster, of a Soviet intervention, and also suggested a clear division between the army and the discredited PZPR.

The threat of criminal charges or repressions became an important element of inner party games. Jaruzelski successfully used investigations to eliminate enemies and 'uncertain' people. Gierek and those who cooperated with him were demonstratively put in internment camps and criminal proceedings were filed against some of them. No one intended to end their careers as Maciej Szczepański, the former head of Polish state television, had done: he was sentenced to eight years in prison and was ordered to pay massive fines (he was imprisoned for almost four years). Also the seemingly omnipotent security service, subordinated to then-minister of the interior Czesław Kiszczak, was not free from such threats. General Mirosław Milewski, one of the most important operators of 13 December 1981, found this out the hard way. The murder on 19 October 1984 of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, the opposition's chaplain, by security officers, and revelations of the 'Iron' Affair<sup>[58]</sup> were efficiently used by Kiszczak to expel Milewski from the Politburo and send the murderers to prison.<sup>[59]</sup> As a consequence of the above, the 1980s could be described, without any exaggeration, as a period when the full civil and military power in Poland rested in the hands of one person: General Jaruzelski.<sup>[60]</sup>

However, Jaruzelski's situation was not good, mainly due to the economic conditions, which were extremely unfavourable, but also as a result

of the incompetence of the general's team. Not only groceries or petrol, but even shoes were rationed. In 1982, the average citizen's meagre income dropped even more, by as much as 30 per cent, and GDP in 1985 was lower by 20 per cent than it had been in 1979.<sup>[61]</sup> The inflation rate in the mid-1980s fluctuated around 15 per cent.<sup>[62]</sup> The situation was even more complicated due to the sanctions introduced by Ronald Reagan immediately after 13 December 1981 and the inability to obtain loans in the West. This led to further protests in 1982–1983; despite the detention of most opposition members, several thousands of people, or more, took part in them. The sight of the paramilitary-police Motorised Reserves of the Citizens' Militia, which dispersed demonstrators using batons and water cannons, became one of the symbols of the era.

Relations with the world of culture were already disastrous, but after 13 December 1981, some artists' associations adopted an openly hostile attitude, with cases of actors officially announcing a boycott of television and cinema. For the few who did not conform, there was an awareness that they might be ostracised by colleagues in the trade and by the public, who by jeering them off the stage let them know that blacklegs were unwelcome guests in the theatre.<sup>[63]</sup> As a consequence, when cinema all over the world was flourishing, the authorities of the Jaruzelski regime could not present their opinions in the form of artistic expression. The fact that it was exactly then, that Stanisław Bareja directed his series *Alternatywy 4* (4, *Alternative St.*), which presented the absurdity of the People's Republic of Poland in a distorted way, remains a peculiar paradox. Bareja got permission of the underground Solidarity to film the series and the consent of the authorities stemmed from the need to put on at least some appearances of 'normality'. Thus, Bareja created a work, which is now perceived as an iconic series in Poland, a biting satire of the Polish reality in the 1970s.<sup>[64]</sup>

Directly after the introduction of martial law, only 35 per cent of citizens declared that they understood Jaruzelski's decision, whereas as many as 62 per cent had a negative attitude towards it. More importantly, the 35 per cent were mostly elderly people who were more vulnerable to the propaganda that spread the fear of foreign intervention. The young were much more critical, all the more so because they were perfectly aware of the discrepancies between the standard of living in the People's Republic

and in the West. In the meantime, martial law froze the process of political changes, but did not offer any improvement to the quality of life by at least to catching up with the neighbouring Czechoslovak Socialist Republic or with Hungary. Jaruzelski succeeded only in convincing some Poles that he had had no choice.<sup>[65]</sup>

Poverty and the need to let off social steam caused more and more Poles to start working in the private sector. The law of the People's Republic of Poland provided for the establishment of companies, and although it was a relatively difficult procedure, the omnipresent chaos and corruption created loopholes, which allowed for more than was legally permitted. Consequently, Poles started to engage in trade on a larger scale. Graduates of such faculties as history or sociology, instead of finding a job in their profession, spent time travelling between Warsaw and Bangkok or Istanbul, as they found out that working on their own was much more lucrative than being employed full-time anywhere else. In just the period 1981–1985, the production level in the private sector increased by 13 per cent, whereas in the state sector it fell by 0.2 per cent.<sup>[66]</sup> Theoretically, trade in the People's Republic of Poland was not entirely safe, as public prosecutors would not find it very difficult to prove in court that such an 'inexperienced businessman' infringed upon the law. In 1982, during the Central Committee meeting, Jaruzelski scolded the 'elements of the new economic policy' and in 1984 the Security Service alarmed that the private sector took over, in great numbers at that, the most valuable employees of state companies and that it also supported the illegal actions of the 'underground'.<sup>[67]</sup> However, with time, the eagerness to persecute private entrepreneurs decreased significantly as officers preferred to become part of the process by extorting bribes, placing their agents in strategic positions in banks and key enterprises, or even secretly setting up their own businesses, even if the price to pay was leaving their job in the ministry.<sup>[68]</sup> Currency exchange, although formally forbidden and punishable by several years of prison time, developed on a great scale. However, the authorities practically ceased prosecuting people engaged in it, and the black market moneychangers (*cinnciarze*) standing in front of Pewex stores (the hard-currency retail chain with Western goods or Polish goods that were in shortage or rationed)<sup>[69]</sup> became an inseparable element of the Polish landscape at that time. The military force ruling Poland tolerated

the budding market that spread upwards because it channelled social energy and drew people away from the initiatives of the underground opposition.<sup>[70]</sup>

A lack of any kind of reforms enhanced the decline of social faith in a constructive role of the state.<sup>[71]</sup> Consequently, the expectations of nascent Polish businesses boiled down to introducing privatisation and limiting the role of the state to the minimum. Thus, the climate in Poland was favourable for sympathising with the views of those pertaining to the ideas of Friedrich von Hayek, Robert Nozick, or Milton Friedman.<sup>[72]</sup> These sentiments were additionally enhanced by observations of the international reality; for example, the USA, with its conservative and liberal model of economy proposed by Reagan who ostentatiously defied Jaruzelski, attempted to encourage the opposition and went hand in hand with the media and diplomatic offensive. American propaganda, which was facilitated by the increased access to the Western pop culture (a crucial role was played by video recorders which shaped a certain video boom in the 1980s) led to significant generational changes: the young opted for freedom of activity and free access to consumer goods, attaching less weight to traditional values such as hierarchy or support for the poorest.

Many opposition activists who were fired from work in the state sector ended up opening their own businesses. Thus, Jan Krzysztof Bielecki (prime minister in 1991), who was expelled from work in the Ministry of Machinery Industry in 1982, set up his own business called *Doradca* (*Advisor*), where he employed such people as Donald Tusk (later the prime minister) and Janusz Lewandowski (later a member of the European Commission). Having encountered the market rules in practice, these circles, known as ‘the liberals from Gdańsk’, would place great emphasis in 1989 on introducing pro-market reforms and would criticise the ideas of the welfare state. Thus, Jaruzelski, by his persistence in economic issues and high level of repressiveness, managed to discourage Poles not only from leftist ideology but also from seeking a third option, which contributed in the Polish Third Republic to the failure of creating a left-wing party which did not have a communist background.

Nascent entrepreneurship was not only an overt defiance of ideology, but also contributed to a decrease in the number of people joining the PZPR. Pragmatists more and more often reached the conclusion that

party membership would not bring them any benefits. As a result, in 1986 only 6 per cent of PZPR members were below 30 years of age, with the average age set at 46. Although the number of 'nomenklatura' party members in the administration returned to a level last seen in the 1970s, fewer and fewer people decided to join the PZPR.<sup>[73]</sup>

A feeling of hopelessness and a lack of faith in the authorities, who could do barely anything more than simply be a threat, encouraged the next generation of young Poles (particularly the urban intelligentsia) to engage in conspiracy or contesting activities whose programmes were often much more radical than the one of the de-legalized Solidarity. In 1982, some Solidarity activists led by Kornel Morawiecki rebelled against Wałęsa and started gathering weapons, thus forming the Fighting Solidarity (*Solidarność Walcząca*).<sup>[74]</sup> Although an uprising never broke out, Morawiecki was the most wanted person by the Security Service until his arrest in 1987, because he rejected the possibility of any agreement with the communists. He also proclaimed the need of spreading such activity across Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>[75]</sup> Rebellious sentiments also spread among students, with some of the activists from the Independent Students' Association (*Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów – NSZ*), established in 1980, becoming more radical and setting up a group known as the Federation of Fighting Youth (*Federacja Młodzieży Walczącej*).<sup>[76]</sup> The Security Service knew about these discrepancies and tried to use them for their own purposes.<sup>[77]</sup>

While not entirely defeated, Solidarity was now on the defensive, and acted in conspiracy. In 1982, a group of activists who managed to escape the police and the Security Service (Zbigniew Bujak, Władysław Frasyniuk, Władysław Hardek, Bogdan Lis and Eugeniusz Szumiejko), established the Temporary Coordination Committee (*Tymczasowa Komisja Koordynacyjna*) whose task was to continue the work of Solidarity underground.<sup>[78]</sup> The options were limited, but the range of its activity expanded, with a greater number of *samizdat* publications and even some radio broadcasts. The candid support which Solidarity received from President Reagan was welcomed heartily by millions of Poles. Wałęsa's authority did not diminish; on the contrary, it increased greatly thanks to his steadfast attitude during detention and after he had received the Peace Nobel Prize in 1983, which was publicised by the world media.

Jaruzelski's propaganda tried once again to strike nationalist chords by establishing an organisation known as the Patriotic Movement for National Rebirth (*Patriotyczny Ruch Odrodzenia Narodowego* – PRON) at the beginning of martial law (its members were writer Jan Dobraczyński, academic Janusz Reykowski, among others). However, its membership became a source of failure, as these were mostly elderly people with Catholic and nationalist views, and sometimes discredited due to their active support for the anti-Semitic purge in 1968. They could not find any common ground with the post-Council Church, and what is more, the main authority figure for Poles – John Paul II.

The last card played by the regime was to return to the concept of an agreement with the Church. Jaruzelski had a difficult task as Wałęsa had the full support of John Paul II, who knew Polish reality all too well, which in turn made it difficult to play the 'Church card'. However, the reaction of Józef Glemp, the successor to Cardinal Wyszyński who died in May 1981, to martial law was cautious: the primate appealed for peace, which was unacceptable for a large portion of the radical opposition, and many people understood it almost as if the Church had supported the authorities. The appeal of the primate resulted from fear that the nation might retaliate against violence with violence, not from his eagerness to support martial law. The Church consistently demanded that the authorities respect human rights. On Glemp's initiative in December 1981, the Primate's Committee for Helping Persons Deprived of Freedom was established, with parishes organising aid for the interned and members of the opposition serving prison sentences.<sup>[79]</sup> Frasyniuk, Bujak, or Barbara Labuda (the latter conflicted with the Church), who were active underground, frequently found refuge in monasteries or rectories. The Church was also the centre of independent cultural life (with the periodical organisation of Christian cultural weeks) – thus it became a place of legal meetings which were not only of religious character. John Paul II took a decidedly negative stand to the actions of the authorities; he sent a letter personally addressed to Jaruzelski on 14 December, just after the introduction of martial law. Additionally, the authorities' attitude did not facilitate dialogue with the Church as they were not able to refrain from propaganda attacks, the most infamous of these being the atheist newspaper *Argumenty* and the government spokesman Jerzy

Urban. Right up until the demise of the People's Republic of Poland, Department IV played a significant role within the Ministry of the Interior, its duty to disintegrate the Church from the inside. In October 1984, its officers murdered the Solidarity chaplain, Father Jerzy Popiełuszko. Under such a situation, dialogue between the Church and the authorities was heavily impaired for several years, although it never completely died out.

In the mid-1980s, Poland was in a peculiar stalemate. Solidarity's activity was limited but the organisation was not crushed. The economic situation meant that another social riot was only a matter of time, whereas foreign help was out of the question because the West was not interested in supporting Jaruzelski's regime, and the USSR, entering a major crisis, was not powerful enough to help anyone. As the authorities were not able to solve economic problems, young people turned to the black market or opposition groups, and relieved stress by drinking alcohol or attending rock concerts in Jarocin.

In fact, rock music in Poland was booming in the early 1980s. It was a simple medium which carried explicit social messages as well as a critical view on the surrounding reality, and it was well-received by the youth. Some phrases became a kind of manifesto (for example 'We want to be ourselves' by rock band *Perfect*, replaced during concerts with the words 'We want to beat ZOMO' (paramilitary security service, with fitting rhymes in the original Polish), or 'Freedom, why do we need freedom' sung by *Kult*). Sometimes, the whole song was like that (such as 'Adult children' by *Turbo*, who sang: 'They taught us wisdom, they got some rules and dates into our heads, nothing was overlooked, but we still do not know how to live', or the metaphorical 'Continuous Tango' by *Republika*: 'Don't shoot the orchestra, when these die, better ones will come'). Undoubtedly, the social and political engagement of music groups in the 1980s had some influence on making the young aware of several issues, which were important at that time.<sup>[80]</sup>

On the other hand, the activity of the opposition was not understood by most of the citizens. Street riots did not produce any significant results so with time the appeals of the Solidarity leaders to go out onto the streets were not met with any response. What was even more dangerous for Poland was that after 1985, the authorities increasingly liberalised their passport policy. As a result, instead of staying in Poland, numerous Poles emigrated: in the period 1981–1989, almost 1.2 million citizens left the country for good.<sup>[81]</sup>

As it would turn out later on, the decrease in natural potential of each liberal and pro-reform party (those who emigrated were mostly young people, well educated and not necessarily religious) significantly prolonged the Polish political transformation, as the forces supporting free market policy lost a significant number of their potential voters.

## Towards the Round Table

Electing Gorbachev as the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, along with signals from Moscow, which indicated the possibility to increase independence of other countries in the bloc as well as the limiting economic support, were received in Warsaw with mixed feelings. On the one hand, it was a great relief that the Kremlin finally stopped criticising the People's Republic of Poland for 'shortcomings' in the process of introducing the communist utopia. Glasnost and perestroika were such innovative ideas in the USSR that they should have been introduced with great caution, and turning Poland into some sort of 'testing ground' was a frequent topic addressed in talks between the leadership of the PZPR and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The clear rapprochement between Moscow and Warsaw included such issues as cooperation between the Ideology Departments of the respective Central Committees, and the special services in the USSR started treating the Polish Security Service on more equal terms than before.<sup>[82]</sup> On the other hand, limiting Soviet aid was a blow for Jaruzelski, particularly as economic improvement could have increased support for the regime when Solidarity's activity was limited.

Despite the above, the years 1985–1986 were not that bad for the authorities. The wave of protests and support for Solidarity was gradually dropping, and after the removal of Stefan Olszowski and Mirosław Milewski from the Politburo, the position of Jaruzelski in the PZPR was safe.<sup>[83]</sup> However, Jaruzelski realised that this was merely a temporary silence, as there were no economic perspectives and the power ministries were diminishing in numbers and loyalty. The authorities proudly announced a 'second stage of reforms' in 1986, which was intended to be an antidote to the country's

economic problems. The new concepts were presented in the publication “Theses on the matter of the economic reform”, prepared by the Commission for Economic Reform.<sup>[84]</sup> It did not, however, bring about the desired results, and the reform itself was actually much more limited in scope than had been originally planned.<sup>[85]</sup> Social sentiments remained very bad and, what was even more dangerous for the authorities, they went from bad to worse. This, in turn, was combined with a feeling of ‘unreality’ and absurdity coming from the pitiable organisation of work conjoined with hidden unemployment, inflation and poor supply, whose effects were astronomical queues or simply an omnipresent coarse reality.<sup>[86]</sup> A lack of faith in the ability of those in power to improve the economic situation of the country, and the aversion towards the authorities, were mixed with an increased feeling of resignation and apathy.<sup>[87]</sup> This was visible between the autumn of 1986 and spring of 1988, when stagnation in civic society linked to the opposition became clear, participation in the Solidarity manifestations was stable or decreasing, and patriotic events organised by the Church lost their appeal. On the other hand, groups of people placed somewhere in between the opposition and communists became more dynamic.<sup>[88]</sup>

Under such circumstances, the authorities decided to make a few gestures – Jaruzelski began to appear in a suit more often than in military uniform, and in 1984, in order to counterbalance the influence of Solidarity, new unions were established in state enterprises, namely the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (*Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych* – OPZZ). The leader of the new organisation was Alfred Miodowicz. The OPZZ received material and organisational support of the authorities which gave it relative freedom, even allowing for criticism towards the government, which, since 1985, was led by Zbigniew Messner, completely subordinated to Jaruzelski.

In September 1986, all political prisoners were finally released,<sup>[89]</sup> and although *samizdat* printers were still liable to prosecution, they were punished pursuant to the Minor Offences Code. The authorities clearly cared about international opinion and wanted to show that the regime intended to obey the law. Some institutions appeared in the legal system of the People’s Republic of Poland, which were supposed to defend citizens’ rights and impose checks on the authorities. This included the establish-

ment of the Constitutional Tribunal in 1985, the State Tribunal in the same year, and the Citizens' Ombudsman in 1987.

Nevertheless, from 1987 onwards, Solidarity started to regain lost ground. A crucial impulse was the pilgrimage of John Paul II, during which he met Wałęsa and in his homilies often directly referred to the heritage of Solidarity. The pilgrimage may be perceived as a "pilgrimage of an awakening of hope, a nation's dignity, and of human rights".<sup>[90]</sup> Thus, the hopes for strengthening the regime thanks to the pilgrimage failed.<sup>[91]</sup> At the end of 1987, the Security Service anxiously observed a constant increase in the number of people engaging in the activity of the union, which remained underground. Most disturbing for the authorities was the fact that it became attractive for yet another generation of Poles, who in 1980 were too young to participate in the 'Carnival of Solidarity'.

Estimating the situation in the country as extremely bad and with any chance of Solidarity's return as practically non-existent, Wałęsa decided to set on compromise. In 1985, Adam Michnik had already prepared the ideological background for dialogue with the authorities by publishing his book *Takie czasy...: rzecz o kompromisie* (*Such are the Times...: the Thing About Compromise*),<sup>[92]</sup> which clearly appealed to the government for some sort of settlement. A month after an amnesty was proclaimed, Wałęsa expressed his readiness to start talks with the authorities on the condition that Solidarity was to be re-legalised. The leader of Solidarity went so far as to appeal to Reagan for lifting sanctions against the People's Republic of Poland before he received any response from the authorities.

For some Solidarity activists, such a change of tack was unacceptable. Firstly, they thought that reaching a compromise with such a partner was immoral and constituted a betrayal of the ideals of August 1980. Secondly, they considered it risky, as the communists were not to be trusted and such a compromise might turn out more beneficial for the PZPR nomenklatura than for workers, whose interests Solidarity, as their union, should have represented. Arbitrary decisions made by Wałęsa, who a month after the amnesty appointed the Temporary Council of NSZZ Solidarity, added insult to injury. The Council consisted solely of people who shared the opinion that there was a necessity to reach a compromise with the PZPR, regardless of whether they had previously supported the KOR or belonged to other

circles. Activists who opposed Wałęsa, led by Andrzej Gwiazda, demanded that the structures of the union should be recreated to function as in 1981 and that a decision should be taken with regards to its tactics, but they were unable to enforce their opinion. It is worth noticing that as a result of these activities, the role of the Wałęsa's closest circles also increased. Most of them were advisors who belonged to the KOR (Bronisław Geremek, Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuroń, and Lech Kaczyński, among others) and Catholic activists from the Warsaw Club of Catholic Intelligentsia (Andrzej Stelmachowski, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, and Andrzej Wielowieyski), who had considered the left-wing circles as their allies since the 1970s.

In November 1987, the authorities made a serious mistake. Jaruzelski was advised to announce a referendum, in which the authorities were to gain approval of their ideas. That move was at best risky, although theoretically the responses to the posed questions seemed obvious. The questions were as follows:

1. Are you in favour of the full implementation of a programme of radical restoration of the economy presented to the parliament, which aims at marked improvement of living conditions, being aware that it requires a difficult two – or three-year transition period of rapid change?
2. Do you support the Polish model of deep democratisation of political life, which aims at enhancing self-government, extending civic rights and citizens' participation in governing the country?

Despite the clearly biased questions, the result of the referendum turned out to be a complete failure for the authorities. Due to a high voter threshold (the referendum would have been binding if more than half the people who were entitled to vote had answered positively, not just half of the ballot's participants), the referendum turned out to be non-binding. The results were a serious problem, not only related to the country's image: the economic situation was becoming increasingly worse and inflation picked up speed, mainly as a result of Messner's government raising salaries in order to maintain social calm. Despite this, however, the government was becoming less and less popular. At that time Jaruzelski became aware that without sharing

power with the opposition, which had been pushed aside until then, overcoming the crisis was impossible.<sup>[93]</sup>

The increasingly bad economic situation put the OPZZ in a very awkward position, as they had to take an anti-government stance under the circumstances. In February 1988, the government drastically increased prices of food, cigarettes, and alcohol, by about 40 per cent, and petrol by about 60 per cent,<sup>[94]</sup> which immediately caused social riots. In April 1988, the plants in Nowa Huta and the Gdańsk Shipyard went on strike. The OPZZ organised a strike in Bydgoszcz so as not to be outweighed by the opposition. However, when the strikes broke out, the government reaction was not consistent. The authorities were more lenient towards the workers in Gdańsk, whereas in Nowa Huta the strikes were suppressed by police using force and the Minister of the Interior, Czesław Kiszczak began to consider introducing martial law again, although this turned out to be impossible.<sup>[95]</sup>

The events, which took place in April, did not lead to a breakthrough. The opposition had to admit that the strikes did not herald the comeback of a revolutionary spirit and the atmosphere of August 1980.<sup>[96]</sup> They were limited only to dozen-or-so enterprises, and in mid-1988, the authorities concluded that no new initiative was necessary. As a result, Jaruzelski continued negotiations from the position of power and tried to intensify contacts with the Episcopate (Jaruzelski intended to organise a Round Table with the Church and Catholic activists – in fact, the ‘Round Table’ term was first used by him during his speech, delivered on 13 June 1988, at the 7<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR), although the Ministry of the Interior had already warned back in May that this was merely a first wave of strikes and that the activity and number of opposition groups was increasing, so another social protest was highly likely as a new generation emerged, which did not remember martial law and hence was not so afraid to stand up to the authorities. Another document claimed that the Security Service was only able to limit the activity of the opposition, but its elimination as a political factor was out of the question.<sup>[97]</sup> On the other hand, changes at the top of the party ladder should be noted. The activists known as the party’s reactionary hard-liners were replaced by people who supported reforms.

In August 1988, another wave of strikes began in Poland, which this time spread to the regions of Silesia and Pomerania. Solidarity's structures were this time much better prepared and more visible, and re-legalisation of Solidarity was an absolute priority among the postulates. Moreover, the demands more often started to include the postulate of reorganisation of the national territorial administration with an emphasis on the strengthening of the position of local people's councils. The authorities were particularly bothered by the fact that those strikes were organised only by the emerging structures of Solidarity. Moreover, when the generations of activists changed, the Security Service clearly observed a more radical approach. Wałęsa and his circles had for two years indicated the necessity to conduct talks with the authorities, whereas young activists were much less compromising. For many of them, talks with the government might concern only the 'unconditional surrender' of the communists, not a division of power.<sup>[98]</sup>

Under the circumstances, General Jaruzelski opted for a political turn. During a meeting on 21 August 1988, the Politburo for the first time supported the idea of negotiations with Wałęsa about re-legalising Solidarity with a simultaneous exclusion of using force. The leaders of Solidarity, in their letter addressed to the leadership of the PZPR, specifically emphasised that the sine qua non condition was re-legalisation of the union and the right to set up political clubs and associations. At the same time, the issue of economic reforms, which was of primary importance for the government, was treated with a big reserve.

In a televised speech to the nation on 26 August 1988, Kiszczak announced (although as a proposal, not a decision) the summoning of the Round Table. However, since this idea was proclaimed on the eve of the meeting of the Central Committee of the PZPR, many CC members did not hide their irritation that the party leadership actually presented them with a *fait accompli*. The fact that the Minister of the Interior wanted to talk with Wałęsa, who for the past seven years had been portrayed as merely a 'private citizen' came as a shock to party members. Undoubtedly, talks with the opposition, which only a month previously had been threatened with sanctions by Kiszczak, constituted a clear concession on the part of the authorities, and even an actual propaganda defeat. In Jaruzelski's intent, appointing Kiszczak as leader of the negotiating team was supposed

to reassure those comrades who were afraid that more flexible negotiators (such as Politburo members Stanisław Ciosek or Kazimierz Barcikowski) could be too compliant.<sup>[99]</sup>

Finally, on 31 August, in the villa belonging to the Ministry of the Interior on Warsaw's Zawrat Street, a meeting between Wałęsa and Kiszczak took place. The meeting was also attended by Bishop Jerzy Dąbrowski and Stanisław Ciosek. The conditions of the government remained tough. The talks were supposed to be conducted without any promise of Solidarity's registration, and a rule which allowed for only one union to act in one enterprise was unquestionable. The preliminary condition of the talks was extinguishing the strikes, which exposed Wałęsa's authority to great risk. There was no guarantee that the government conducted talks only for the sake of tactics, and they would withdraw from their promises after the strikes were over. Despite all that, Wałęsa took the risk after some hesitation and, contrary to the clear stance of some people from his immediate milieu, he appealed for ending the strikes.<sup>[100]</sup>

At first, this seemed to have been a mistake. The authorities hardened their position, rejecting the postulate of the re-registration of Solidarity before starting the talks, and connecting the negotiations related to this issue with economic matters. In addition, under the pressure from the OPZZ, the authorities insisted on the rule: 'one union in one enterprise'. The adamant approach of the authorities stemmed mostly from the resistance of the majority of party members to conduct any talks with the opposition. Already at the beginning of September, during a teleconference with heads of the Regional Offices of the Interior, Kiszczak reassured hardliners that negotiations with the opposition are undertaken for purely tactical reasons, and they would never lead to the legalisation of Solidarity. According to Kiszczak's own words, what he actually wanted to achieve, was to divide the opposition by exploiting the increasing divisions within the opposition movement, especially the pressure exerted on Wałęsa by his opponents within the still illegal "Solidarity" movement. Thus, according to the same source, his final political target was to separate Wałęsa from "extremists elements" and pushing him towards pragmatic and conciliatory Church circles.<sup>[101]</sup>

The tactics of the government jeopardised Wałęsa's authority and undermined his position as leader of the opposition. His opponents (Andrzej

Gwiazda, Marian Jurczyk, Jan Rulewski, and others) could argue that those talks with the authorities were a mistake, as they had predicted, that the decisions were taken against the directives of the National Executive Committee of Solidarity and the effects were basically non-existent. Moreover, in the concluding announcement following a meeting, which took place on 15–16 September in Magdalenka, there was no declaration about the re-establishment of Solidarity.<sup>[102]</sup>

The authorities also had problems. Jaruzelski could not be certain of his allies. In Magdalenka, the satellite Alliance of Democrats (SD) representative Jan Janowski announced that the registration of Solidarity was a necessary condition of further talks.<sup>[103]</sup> On the other hand, Alfred Miodowicz, the chairman of the OPZZ, was offended by the suppression of the April strikes, and he repeated several times that despite being a member of the Politburo of the PZPR Central Committee, he felt first and foremost a union member. On 19 September 1988, Messner's government tendered its resignation. Officially, the reason was Messner's 'health condition', but in fact it was an open rebellion of MPs belonging to the PZPR against the head of the government, who was not necessarily 'inspired' by Jaruzelski, even though the general actually did have in mind another candidate for this position. Empowering Mieczysław F. Rakowski, who was perceived as liberal, by making him the prime minister, was probably along the expectations of most PZPR members. However, it also revealed a conflict within the party, which would significantly influence the future course of events.

Rakowski's ascent to power did not translate into the acceleration of talks with the opposition, however. On the contrary, endowing him with the mission of forming a new government was not enthusiastically received by society, which perceived the move as yet another shuffling at the top. Rakowski himself was against the talks and rather in favour of liberalising the economy and ignoring the political opposition.

Rakowski's government proclaimed the 'Consolidation Plan for the National Economy' (consisting of four fields: abolishing limitations and promoting economic activity; effective use of resources; strengthening the currency, balancing the economy; opening to the world and overcoming debt barriers), which was a dramatic attempt to introduce economic changes.<sup>[104]</sup> The law on economic activity passed on 23 December 1988, known further

as the 'Wilczek Act' (from the name of the Minister of Industry), brought revolutionary changes and many economists still consider it to be the regulation giving the greatest economic liberty to entrepreneurs in Poland. The new law gave a lot of freedom in terms of conducting business activity, as it limited the necessity of receiving permits or licences to only 11 fields.<sup>[105]</sup> This law, combined with the legislation on business activity conducted with foreign entities, as well as the new currency and banking laws, brought revolutionary economic changes, breaking many taboos with regards to the structure of ownership, the licensing system, and foreign currency trade. However, at the same time the government maintained ration books, a non-market dollar rate, and no strict budget criteria for state enterprises.<sup>[106]</sup>

Nevertheless, the activities of Rakowski's cabinet, bold in terms of abandoning basic rules of a centrally planned economy, did not prevent economic disintegration. While enormous resources of entrepreneurship were activated, which so far had been suppressed by the state, the party apparatus and enterprise management boards simultaneously started the process of misappropriation of state property. It was possible thanks to the consolidation law, which enabled private persons to take over state property by leasing it, renting it, or incorporating it as a contribution in kind into a semi-private company. At the end of 1989, the general prosecutor's office estimated that such a procedure led to the creation of at least 1,593 of the so-called *nomenklatura* companies, which became a source of wealth for top – and mid-level officials working in the economy.<sup>[107]</sup> At any rate, these figures were underestimated because they did not account for companies, which were established by relatives of directors of state enterprises. This process was observed with outrage, not only by the opposition, but also by a major part of the party's more conservative members, including general Jaruzelski who was a man of principles and called it banditry;<sup>[108]</sup> nevertheless, the process was not prevented.<sup>[109]</sup>

Miodowicz was the archenemy of Rakowski's economic programme. The OPZZ leader rightly considered it an aberration from the official ideology and was afraid that it might result in closing down those plants, which were not profitable.<sup>[110]</sup> The conflict between Rakowski and Miodowicz, who was supported by the party hardliners should theoretically have led to a rapprochement between the supporters of the prime minister and

Solidarity. However, it did not happen in autumn 1988 as the authorities once again became adamant in negotiations as to who, on the part of the opposition, should participate in the talks at the Round Table. Lack of consent for participation in the negotiations of such activists as Jacek Kuroń, Adam Michnik or Janusz Onyszkiewicz led to a deadlock. At the beginning of November, Jaruzelski had the round table dismantled and sent into storage.

It is not known how long society would have had to wait for changes if not for an unexpected initiative put forward by Miodowicz. He felt that the policy promoted by Rakowski could not be reconciled with the interests of the OPZZ, and feeling threatened by a possible agreement with Solidarity, he decided to destroy Wałęsa's media image. As he was certain of his intellectual advantage over the Solidarity leader, he decided to force Jaruzelski to give consent for a television debate between himself and Wałęsa. Miodowicz had a clear plan. Winning the debate would strengthen the position of the OPZZ at the expense of Solidarity so negotiations with the latter would not be necessary anymore. This in turn would help block the market reforms introduced by Rakowski, which in a further perspective might translate into a bigger influence for the opponents of changes in the People's Republic of Poland. Therefore, the victorious debate on television would have given Miodowicz a chance to obtain a position of a strong conservative-faction leader in the PZPR and perhaps even a chance to go into competition with Jaruzelski for the position of the first secretary.

The PZPR leadership did not approve of the plan devised by Miodowicz. Rakowski was the most fervent opponent of the idea. The key counterargument was the fear that Wałęsa's sheer appearance on television would only strengthen his position. Despite the above, Jaruzelski agreed to announce the plan as well as the time of live broadcast of the debate in the *Trybuna Ludu* newspaper.<sup>[111]</sup>

On 30 November, Miodowicz, who had convinced the party leadership that he would crush Wałęsa as the latter 'was a fool', suffered complete defeat.<sup>[112]</sup> Wałęsa appeared in the TV studio perfectly prepared and he defended the role of union pluralism. Thus, not only did he win the debate, but he also ruined two years of work of the communist propaganda specialists who showed the Solidarity leader as an irresponsible troublemaker. Wałęsa presented himself as a moderate politician and, even worse for the authorities, as someone who

had an alternative vision of Poland, which strongly contrasted with a lack of ideas on the part of the authorities.<sup>[113]</sup> Therefore, after the debate Kiszczak was supposed to have said, “the former *status quo* between the opposition and the authorities was shaken”.<sup>[114]</sup>

The situation of the authorities was additionally worsened by Wałęsa’s successful visit to Paris where he met President François Mitterrand; it enhanced his position in the eyes of international public opinion.<sup>[115]</sup> Meanwhile, the economic situation in Poland was very badly perceived by society, the morale in the PZPR broke down (the views of rank-and-file party members coincided with social sentiments), the necessity of paying back enormous debt was a daunting perspective and the number of resignations among the uniformed services rapidly increased, so under the circumstances the leadership of the party and the government (Jaruzelski, Kiszczak, Rakowski) made a decision to start preparations for the Round Table talks. Besides the necessity to pay off foreign debt, the economic breakdown of the whole country remained another huge problem, which generated another wave of strikes that started in December 1988. The strikes were more and more frequently led by committees which were not controlled by Wałęsa; sometimes they were connected with ‘Fighting Solidarity’, sometimes with the KPN, so they were not inclined to talk with the party about the division of power, perhaps only about capitulation of the regime. On the part of the authorities there was growing anxiety that Wałęsa, feeling nagged by the radical wing, would have to adopt some of their ideas and become more radical himself, which would in turn force them to make further concessions, reaching far beyond the mere re-registration of Solidarity.

Theoretically, the last card that the authorities could play was the USSR, yet it remained uncertain at best, and the issue concerned not only the inability to obtain Soviet economic support. It is most probable that Gorbachev, who wanted to maintain the *status quo* of the USSR, could give a lot in return for peace in Poland. The Kremlin started sending signals that could signify that they wanted a rapprochement with Lech Wałęsa and his closest milieu. Already in the summer 1988, the editors of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (Литературная газета) asked Wałęsa for an interview,<sup>[116]</sup> Adam Michnik was invited to Moscow at least twice, and director Andrzej Wajda was also delegated to Russia by the opposition for similar purposes. The Soviets did

not criticize in any way the idea of negotiations.<sup>[117]</sup> At the end of December, the head of the Radio Committee, Jerzy Urban, travelled to the USSR where he complained to the officials of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union about this two-faced approach. He was treated with meaningful silence, which Jaruzelski understood as a suggestion that his further political career was rather uncertain and Moscow, if assured by the opposition that the People's Republic of Poland would not try to change the status quo in Europe, could consider sacrificing the general and resigning from the services of the PZPR whatsoever.<sup>[118]</sup>

Despite the circumstances, the 10<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Central Committee, which took place in December 1988 and January 1989, was a success for Jaruzelski. However, this victory did not come easily; at a critical moment, generals Jaruzelski, Kiszczak, Siwicki and prime minister Rakowski threatened to step down.<sup>[119]</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup> Plenum accepted the pluralism of opinions, which was to be manifested in the freedom to establish associations and trade unions (which Solidarity had emphasised most). The resolutions adopted during the Plenum explicitly stipulated that the PZPR could see some space for 'constructive opposition' in the future parliament.<sup>[120]</sup>

The opposition had its problems as well. Due to conflicts regarding the composition of the negotiating team and mounting pressure from an increasingly strong radical wing, Wałęsa's milieu decided to finally institutionalise their activity, and in December 1988 formed the 'Citizen's Committee with Lech Wałęsa as the leader of Solidarity.' Its informal chairman was Bronisław Geremek and the secretary was Henryk Wujec.<sup>[121]</sup> Wałęsa's policy line from the outset was very sharply criticised both by radical groups and by the Working Group set up by Andrzej Gwiazda, whose members included a number of former activists from the KOR and the ROPCiO. However, the reasons for criticism varied (from questioning the concept of talks about the division of power with 'the Reds', to rejecting the composition of the delegation). Wałęsa decided not to carry out talks, which would aim at uniting the whole opposition. His actions supposedly contributed to the creation of 'a black legend' surrounding the Round Table, presented as a conspiracy of elites manipulated by the Security Service.

In parallel, in January 1989, the authorities and the Solidarity leadership, along with the participation of Church mediators, started talks about

the final arrangement of the Round Table. These sessions took place behind closed doors in Magdalenka, a village near Warsaw. Public opinion was not informed about the talks, which immediately fuelled speculation about their outcome, particularly since ordinary union members were very sensitive to any secret moves which were not democratically approved. The intuition of the union members was undoubtedly right. These extremely important negotiations were indeed conducted behind closed doors, although any rumours of 'treason', supposedly committed there by the elites and still discussed to this day, are at best exaggerated.

Prime Minister Rakowski, who was at first seemingly against any talks with the opposition, finally changed his opinion. He made it clear that he was mostly interested in participation of Solidarity in making difficult economic decisions. In his opinion, the 'road to democracy' was supposed to be not so much the outcome of the Round Table, but a political process that the latter was to trigger. The prime minister did not hide (and in light of other opinions, actually threatened) that the interests of the army and the Ministry of the Interior were an insurmountable obstacle for talks, and they had to be excluded from the negotiations as 'their reactions were uncontrollable', and as such he demanded that the re-legalisation of Solidarity should take place not earlier than two years down the line.

Simultaneously, the authorities tried to secure themselves in the case of an unpredicted result of the Round Table, and planned to take some decisions in Magdalenka, which would determine the outcome of the Round Table talks. Stanisław Ciosek put forward specific proposals concerning how many seats in the future Sejm would belong to the opposition, recommending that Solidarity and the party should support the same candidate for the president (i.e. Jaruzelski). However, the most striking fact was an attempt to negotiate the pre-defined outcome, according to which Solidarity, hand-in-hand with the party, would participate in some activities aimed at 'healing' the People's Republic of Poland. This meant, for example, that candidates from the PZPR and Solidarity would run from the same list during the election. The opposition rejected these demands, although it practically agreed that the Round Table would not introduce democracy in Poland immediately, and for the sake of the transition period, it was willing to accept particular decisions concerning the division of seats

in the Sejm or the procedure of the presidential election. The legalisation of Solidarity remained a pre-condition before the election could take place.<sup>[122]</sup> In the face of an upcoming wave of strikes, the authorities had no other choice but to accept the stance taken by Solidarity.<sup>[123]</sup>

## The Round Table

At 2.20 p.m. on Monday 6 February 1989, the Round Table talks started in the Presidential Palace. The event was already dubbed the 'Polish Rubicon', with the term being used both in official comments as well as behind the scenes. All the participating parties in the talks were aware that they were bearing witness to something, which could change the situation not only in the People's Republic of Poland, but in the entire Soviet Bloc. The settlement between the authorities and the opposition, as the aim of the Round Table, was to thrash out a common standpoint, although this had its limitations. It is certain that the authorities were all the more aware of this, although the opposition also realised that not all demands could be met. For example, the dependence of Poland on the Kremlin seemed utterly untouchable. The rest, including general premises of the economic policy, could be subject of discussion.

The national and foreign media, especially those from the Soviet Bloc, covered the Round Table talks with great attention (in the event, it was calculated that 177 press conferences were held, on top of everyday coverage). The interest of Soviet Bloc societies in the events taking place in Poland was relatively high.

The media coverage shaped a picture according to which two sides, the opposition and the authorities, sat at a round table made especially for the occasion by the furniture factory in Henryków. Actually, neither the government nor the opposition were monoliths. The latter consisted of representatives of only some organisations which were against the communist system, so their right to represent the society was in many ways questioned already during the talks, which in consequence led to contesting of the whole idea of the Round Table as a settlement between the communists and the non-representative part of the opposition.

The key piece of furniture was used during the negotiations only twice: for the inauguration and closing of proceedings. The real talks took place in groups, with the workgroups known as so-called 'little tables' and sub-workgroups known as 'little sub-tables'. The meeting on 6 February was attended by 29 representatives of the authorities, and 26 representatives of the opposition, but on the whole the negotiations were attended by 344 persons on the side of the government, and 245 persons on the side of the opposition, supported by 14 assistants and 24 members of technical staff (taking care of printing or in the press office). Additionally, there were some observers from the Catholic Church and other denominations.<sup>[124]</sup>

Both sides were not homogenous. Paradoxically, the government coalition side was more divided because, firstly, it was represented by people from different backgrounds, who started to play more independent roles in the situation of increasing disintegration of the communist regime, and secondly, it was divided due to personal animosities and the eagerness to make a career by taking advantage of this historical breakthrough.<sup>[125]</sup> The opposition side, was more homogenous since it included the representatives of only some organisations, even though it was also divided in terms of ideology and tactics.

This trend became visible already during the first session of the Round Table. The opposition, led by Lech Wałęsa, arrived at the Presidential Palace some 20 minutes late, but they marched in a close-knit group, applauded by Warsaw residents, from the Institute of Sociology of the University of Warsaw, which was in the vicinity of where the Round Table talks were held. The arrival of 'Wałęsa's team', as they were called at that time, was perceived as a manifestation of unity and power that the authorities seemed to lack.

The main task laid before the participants of the Round Table was to work on an agreement as to the further fate of the country. Initially, the issues involved the following matters: introducing pluralism in politics and unions, developing new regulations of parliamentary and presidential elections (the new position of the President was planned to be created), determining the competence of newly elected legislative and executive powers, introducing people from the opposition into the media, connected with the above, and last but not least, economic reforms which were supposed to lift the country from deep recession.

The opposition was invited to the negotiations, but they had to share the responsibility for the costs entailed by the reforms, which were bound to affect huge swathes of society. The communists tried not to share the real power if possible, but they wanted the opposition to bear the brunt of responsibility for any unpopular decisions. The leaders of the opposition side were aware of this danger and attempted to oppose it in every possible way, which for various reasons did not always work (first and foremost, fears about the USSR's position should be mentioned here). From the perspective of time, it is clear that such inhibitions occurred quite frequently and led to concessions on the part of the opposition, which were sometimes difficult to understand. However, it should be borne in mind that what we know at present about those days, particularly that the collapse of the communist system in the Eastern and Central Europe was imminent and inevitable, was not so obvious for the actors of those events. It was frequently considered that the only thing, which could be won was some form of independence and the abolition of the most severe manifestations of communist ideology in practice, such as censorship, economic deficits or the absolute power of the PZPR. The leaders of the government coalition had a greater awareness about the events in the region, and although the news from Moscow and other capital cities of the Soviet Bloc was not too optimistic for their perspective, they still used their advantage of having access to information. A Soviet intervention was used as a deterrent many times in a direct or indirect way. However, as was obvious for General Jaruzelski, it was not real at that time. Nevertheless, in using this imaginary threat the authorities managed to force the opposition to make some concessions and to soften their position during the negotiations.

There were also some fears of the reaction from the hard-line wing of the PZPR. Bronisław Geremek characterised it by saying: “the decisions outlined by the Round Table are so far rather unimaginable for the party apparatus. When the consequences of these decisions become clear for the power apparatus, it may cause its rebellion”.<sup>[126]</sup>

The advantage stemming from the uncertainty concerning the reaction of the Kremlin and of the ‘hard-liners’ was counterbalanced by an obvious lack of unity within the government coalition side. ‘Wałęsa’s team’ was rather well-integrated and had a clear hierarchy, so it was not torn by inner

conflicts. It allowed them to take the conflicts in the enemy camp to their advantage. The assets of both sides were balanced to a certain extent, which made it possible to lead talks based on partnership.

It turned out several times, during the two-month negotiations, that working out a common stance on particular issues was out of the question. It was then that subsequent meetings were held in Magdalenka (name of the village near Warsaw, but also the diminutive of the female name Magdalena) – as was jokingly put at the time, “she was the most hard-working woman at the Round Table”<sup>[127]</sup> – and thus a smaller group decided what course of action should be taken further. As a result, the main actors of the events questioned to some degree the transparency of the Round Table, but it prevented the negotiations from breaking down, which seemed to be a real danger.

From what we know about the sessions of the Round Table and the events accompanying them, it was not, as was presented later, merely a theatre aimed at justifying some decisions made by a smaller group. Had this been the case, the negotiations would have been far less fervent and would have brought results that could have been less satisfying for the opposition. However, in two months of talks, a far-reaching compromise was achieved, which was acceptable not only for both sides involved, but also for society. Probably the statements of people involved would also have been less spontaneous.

Already during the first session on 6 February, there were some addresses unforeseen by the government coalition side. After an inauguration speech made by general Czesław Kiszczak, attorney Władysław Siła-Nowicki suddenly took the floor (who appeared at the Round Table following a motion of Kiszczak; he was a member of the Consultative Body for the Chairman of the Council of State i.e. for General Jaruzelski) and demanded that the present commemorate one minute’s silence for Stefan Niedzielak and Stanisław Suchowolec, two priests killed in January 1989 by ‘unknown perpetrators’. The present accepted the motion but it was censored in the television coverage.<sup>[128]</sup>

The floor was then taken by Wałęsa and subsequently by the OPZZ Chair Miodowicz, who took the assembled by surprise by making a speech in which he emphasised his independent function. Thus, he broke the taboo which was accepted by both sides. Among others, he demanded completely free

elections: “We support the view that the approaching parliamentary election should be held in a democratic way. We do not have any reason to play unfair. We are in favour of open and honest competition. We support fair play in the fight for seats between representatives of various interests and opinions. In order to ensure freedom of opinion we suggest abolishing censorship. And thus we support freedom of speech and transparency”.<sup>[129]</sup> The programme outlined by Miodowicz, one of the most significant representatives of the government coalition side, went further than the most radical ideas of the opposition.

Worthy of note is that the statement made by Miodowicz was immediately retorted by Jerzy Turowicz, who was on the side of the opposition. He argued that censorship was justified. Later on, several other people spoke and finally Siła-Nowicki took the floor again and required that representatives of other opposition circles should be allowed to take part in the negotiations and that the preventive censorship should be abolished, suggesting simultaneously that ‘some form of strict legal liability’ for the written word should be maintained.<sup>[130]</sup> At the end of the official proceedings on the first day, a schedule for further work to be carried out within workgroups and sub-workgroups was adopted.

Negotiation groups were divided into three workgroups: on political reforms, economic reforms, and union pluralism. Because the thematic range of talks had a fairly wide remit, a more detailed division was applied. The workgroup for political reforms was divided into four sub-workgroups (‘little sub-tables’), which addressed, respectively, media issues (holding five sessions), youth issues (five sessions), reform of the judiciary and legal system (nine sessions), and associations and local authorities (two separate groups which altogether held seven sessions). The workgroup dealing with economic issues was divided into six sub-workgroups covering the following areas: mining (ten meetings), agriculture (five), housing policy (four), health care (five), environmental pollution (eight) and science and education (four). The workgroup dealing with union pluralism did not form any sub-workgroups. The sub-tables additionally created 11 working groups, which prepared documents and proposals for solutions on particular issues.<sup>[131]</sup>

Sessions of most of the workgroups and sub-workgroups went quite smoothly, but in the most important issues very often serious differences

of opinion occurred, not only between the representatives of the government coalition and the opposition, but also within the authorities' camp. One of such topical and urgent matters was the legalisation of Solidarity, which entailed two issues. Firstly, whether the union should be re-legalised, or registered as a new organisation. Re-legalisation involved the necessity of returning the property seized by the communists during martial law, which would not have to happen if Solidarity was established again as an organisation not connected formally with the previous union of the same name. The other issue was the postulate put forward by the OPZZ, namely 'One union in one enterprise', which seriously limited pluralism for that matter.

Another controversial issue, which arose during talks of the workgroup dealing with union pluralism, was the matter of moral and financial compensation for persons repressed (fired from employment, for example) during martial law and afterwards for their activity in Solidarity. The government coalition was not willing to make any far-reaching concessions because too broad a compensation would undermine the 'legitimacy' of introducing martial law. Finally, a compromise was reached according to which individual cases were supposed to be investigated separately on the motion submitted by a person interested in returning to work.<sup>[132]</sup>

Following the negotiations, the postulates put forward by the OPZZ were also rejected, but the authorities did not agree to re-legalise Solidarity, only to legalise it again (it was not decided whether employees of enterprises subject to the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of the Interior would be allowed to join the union, this matter was left to be decided 'later'), which occurred after the Round Table had finished.

The most important talks were conducted by the workgroup dealing with political reforms, which got underway on 10 February. Even before the talks began, both sides agreed that the main subject of the negotiations should be parliamentary elections (there was already the consent from the opposition that the elections would not be fully democratic), including the election to the newly established Senate, the creation of the presidential office and deciding the scope of competence of the created bodies.

The electoral regulations – as had been decided earlier – were to be used only once and then changed by the newly elected parliament. The division

of seats in the Sejm and the Senate was an open issue. The opposition proposed a 60:40 division for the benefit of the authorities (i.e. 60 per cent of the seats for the governing group would be ensured, while 40 per cent would be taken in free elections), but there was no agreement on the issue. Negotiations reached a deadlock.<sup>[133]</sup> In order to resolve it, a meeting was called on 2 March, for the first time during the Round Table in Magdalenka. The participants present at the meeting included representatives of the OPZZ (who had not earlier participated in the talks at Magdalenka). There were also Church observers present. The talks extended for nine hours, which was a record for that type of meeting so far. When no agreement seemed to be reached, Aleksander Kwaśniewski<sup>[134]</sup> took the initiative and suggested organising completely free Senate elections (initially it was assumed that Senators would be appointed by the president following the motion of such bodies as the Consulting Committee, the PRON, the OPZZ, the Primate's Social Council, and Solidarity). Seemingly this proposal had not been consulted with anyone earlier, but making this type of concession softened the stand-point of the opposition on other issues and as a result led to a compromise that satisfied all sides – 'Lech's Team' accepted a 65:35 division of seats in the Sejm, the election of the president by the National Assembly (both chambers of the parliament sitting in joint session) by a common majority of votes and a six-year term of office for the head of state.<sup>[135]</sup>

While the general provisions became established, many details were still to be determined. As both sides valued the results of talks in Magdalenka, the next meeting was billed for 7 March. The government side presented a proposal to prepare only one round of parliamentary elections, but the opposition rejected it, so the agreement was not reached until the next day, on 8 March, which provided for organising two rounds of parliamentary elections on 4 and 18 June 1989 respectively.

Another contentious issue was the so-called national list of candidates for MPs. These were supposed to be candidates not connected with any specific regions, and votes for them could be cast all over Poland. The government side wanted the list to include the candidates put forward by both sides of the Round Table, but the opposition would not accept this. Finally, it was decided that this list would only include the leaders of the PZPR and its satellite parties, such as Kiszczak, Rakowski, and Miodowicz. Only those

who would receive above 50 per cent of votes were to enter the parliament, but no alternative was provided for in case this did not happen.<sup>[136]</sup>

During the discussion on the higher chamber of parliament in the making, it was decided that there would be 100 senators, two from each province except for the capital province and Katowice province, where three senators from each would be elected. The Senate would have the right to veto the bills passed by the Sejm. The matter under discussion was the number of MPs required to reject the veto. The opposition suggested 2/3 votes which meant that with the 65:35 division it would not be possible to reject the veto if the opposition managed to get all the seats in the free part of the election. Negotiations concerning this issue were lengthy. Finally, a compromise was reached in Magdalenka on 3 April. The government coalition accepted the 2/3 number of votes but the opposition accepted the solution that the same number of votes would be necessary to pass amendments to the Constitution, to reject the presidential veto, or to impeach the president.<sup>[137]</sup>

In mid-March, negotiations regarding the election seemed to have ended, and the issue was directed to the Sejm, which was supposed to pass a proper bill. However, to great astonishment and disappointment of the opposition, the legislative body started to debate on the draft that differed very much from the one agreed at the Round Table. The crisis could have led to a complete breakdown of the negotiations, but thanks to the mediation of Father Orszulik, on 17 March a meeting in a small group was held. The representatives of the government emphasised that it was necessary to pass the election bill through the Sejm as soon as possible, and this was the reason of preparing such a draft, but it was met with a resolute 'no', so the authorities withdrew from the changes.

After this matter was resolved, talks surrounding the presidential competences started. The communists did not hide that this office was to be taken by Jaruzelski and it was supposed to be the strongest branch of power, with possibly the widest scope of competence, such as the right to dissolve parliament. The opposition side of course said that it could not accept such powers, so eventually it was slightly limited. The head of state could dissolve the parliament if it passed a bill or a law, which would make it difficult for the president to execute his constitutional rights, but there was a lot of room for interpretation. Moreover, the president had the right

to a legislative veto, albeit it could be rejected by the Sejm by a 2/3 majority of votes. Besides, the president was the commander in chief of the army and could introduce a state of emergency and martial law.<sup>[138]</sup>

On 7 April, after the Round Table sessions were over, the Sejm voted for amending the 1952 Constitution, thus introducing the changes, which had been agreed. However, at the last minute a few other changes were made, according to which the established period for which the negotiated solutions should be binding was prolonged (primarily they were supposed to be binding only in one case). Thereby, the outrage of the opposition was ignored.

It was understandable that the most controversial were the sessions of the sub-workgroup for mass media. When entering the negotiations, the authorities agreed that the state media monopoly would be abolished, but the degree of concessions and the borderline for freedom of speech were still matter up for debate. It was relatively easy to break the monopoly of the press. The communists agreed that *Tygodnik Solidarność* weekly should be reissued, as should be the weekly of *Solidarność Wsi* issued by the Rural Solidarity. However, the biggest breakthrough was the consent to issue a national daily under the auspices of the Civic Committee (that daily was later entitled *Gazeta Wyborcza – The Electoral Gazette*). The chosen name indicated the short-term goals set ahead of the newspaper, which, down the line, was to be transformed into an opposition daily, according to the settlements. In the case of the printed press, there was a problem with paper rationing by the government, which thus additionally controlled the circulation of publications. Finally, the authorities approved the purchase of additional paper from foreign currency reserves and the introduction of free paper circulation from 1990.

Negotiations regarding the opening up of national radio and television for the opposition were much tougher. After the purges during martial law, both these media outlets did not employ any other journalists other than those supporting the government. Additionally, there was a question of rehabilitation of those persons, who had been fired from the media. The authorities seemed to be adamant about the mass rehabilitation procedure, but after lengthy and fervent discussions a solution similar to other areas was adopted – each case was to be examined individually, which extended the procedure and rendered impossible the return of most of opposition

journalists to work before the election. Hence, the opposition found itself at the mercy of pro-establishment journalists. The Solidarity side managed to merely secure a 30-minute programme on TV and a 60-minute radio broadcast once a week. Additionally, preventive censorship was not abolished, contrary to the postulates put forward by Miodowicz in his inauguration speech. This led to a situation where periodicals issued still had some texts removed. Furthermore, *samizdat* publishing was not legalised, although the authorities promised to mitigate its policy towards it.<sup>[139]</sup>

The negotiations of the sub-workgroup on the youth were also tempestuous. The first session revealed great discrepancies as far as the subject of talks was concerned. The government coalition side wanted to concentrate on wide-ranging general considerations regarding youth issues, whereas the opposition regarded the negotiations as strictly political ones, analogous to the subjects tackled in other workgroups or sub-workgroups. The most important postulates were as follows: legalisation of the Independent Students' Union (NZS) and the abolishment of the monopoly of the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association (*Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego* – ZHP), which for the entire period of communism was subject to strong communist ideological pressures. The authorities did not want to accept any of those proposals, accusing Solidarity of exerting influence on minds of the young. Finally, a solution was adopted which provided for the registration of the NZS in the future but the demand of creating a non-communist scouting organisation was rejected. In the case of the students' organisation, its formal registration was merely a legalisation of the then state of affairs, whereas breaking the monopoly of the ZHP could have had further reaching consequences, therefore the compromise meant that the government side gained the upper hand on that matter. Moreover, the postulates of the opposition to punish the police officers who violently suppressed the protests of the youth and to shorten the obligatory military service and make it more bearable for conscripts were also rejected – these issues were entered into the discrepancies protocol.<sup>[140]</sup>

The sub-workgroup on associations and local self-government was divided into two thematic groups immediately following its inaugural session. The position of the authorities with regards to associations included a certain compromise – a draft law was developed that provided

for the re-registration of artistic associations dissolved during martial law – whereas in the case of local self-government only a protocol of discrepancies was drawn up. In hindsight, it seems that the communists were not fully aware of what local self-government entailed, and they were afraid that creating it might lead to giving the power at the lowest level into the hands of the opposition, while it was not bound to happen. On the other hand, Solidarity placed a lot of emphasis on the local authorities, counting that they would gain some power at this level anyway, but a more fundamental issue was involved too, regarding the idea of self-governing society, which could make vital decisions itself. Hence, the sub-workgroup was essentially a dispute on the system of values and perhaps that is why its only outcome was a protocol of discrepancies revealing completely different standpoints from both sides.<sup>[141]</sup>

The result of the negotiations of the sub-workgroup on law and judiciary reform was similar. The opposition fiercely criticised the most outrageous examples of communist legislation, such as Article 282a of the Polish Criminal Code, which provided for sentencing a person who “could potentially cause social unrest or riots” for up to three years in prison. This practically meant that anyone could be jailed as such a law could be arbitrarily interpreted. Solidarity also demanded that the death penalty be abolished. However, these postulates were decidedly rejected by the government coalition side so they were not taken into consideration.

The workgroup on economy and social policy held the most sessions, as many as 13 meetings altogether. It was also divided into a number of sub-workgroups and groups which analysed more detailed issues. The discussions were rather stormy and, on two occasions, the dispute was so fervent that it might have ended in breaking off the Round Table negotiations altogether. One of the most important questions discussed was the issue concerning privatisation, which many of the opposition representatives understood – quite rightly – as the appropriation of state property by the communist nomenklatura. Against the position taken by Solidarity, the law on the consolidation of the national economy, which was very beneficial for the governing side, was tabled in the Sejm to deliberate.

Soon, an even more serious dispute began within this sub-workgroup. It focused on three issues: mining, salary indexation, and the closing down

of the Gdańsk Shipyard (still known as the Lenin Shipyard), which was commonly perceived as an act of revenge for the rebellious attitude of its workers. For some time, the government had been thinking of limiting coal mining and restructuring that branch of industry, which translated into a similar position of the coalition side – if only a fraction of it, as the OPZZ fervently protested against those plans, being afraid of mass redundancies. Solidarity, on the other hand, raised the argument that the swelling clerical administration in the mines had to be reduced. The heated discussion on this issue and non-uniform opinion of the government coalition side almost led to a breaking off in the negotiations.<sup>[142]</sup>

Similarly, the negotiating workgroups had different opinions on salary indexation, i.e. raising salaries relatively to fast-growing inflation, which was important for all citizens. The sides agreed to the necessity of introducing such a solution, but the level of indexation was a contentious issue. The government wanted to have the lowest possible indexation level, but the opposition was determined not to go below 80 per cent,<sup>[143]</sup> while the OPZZ on the other hand adopted the most radical position and demanded indexation at a level of 100 per cent. Despite the threat to break off the negotiations on the part of the OPZZ, a narrow group of negotiators met in Magdalenka where they reached a compromise and settled the indexation rate at 80 per cent. The OPZZ finally refused to sign the totality of settlements of the economy workgroup, submitting a note of dissent with regard to the above issue.<sup>[144]</sup>

The matter of the Gdańsk Shipyard, against the assurances of the authorities, was clearly political. Finally, the agreement was reached during the above meeting in Magdalenka held on 3 April. Pursuant to this agreement, the Sejm Presidium was obliged to order the Extraordinary Committee for Introducing the Economic Reform to examine the situation of enterprises, which were put into liquidation, particularly the Gdańsk Shipyard. Until the completion of this examination, the shipyard was supposed to be provided with continuous financial support.

Sessions of other workgroups and sub-workgroups were not that turbulent, mostly due to the lesser importance of the topics under discussion. The Round Table was supposed to end on 5 April. The course and programme of the closing ceremony, which was supposed to take the form of a plenary

session, was decided during meetings in Magdalenka on 29 March and 3 April. Everyone predicted that, as in the case of the inauguration, some unscheduled speeches might be made. Solidarity demanded that only Wałęsa and Kiszczak make the final speeches, but the government coalition side did not want to accept it and suggested that Miodowicz should also take the floor. No agreement was reached regarding this matter.

On the evening of 4 April, a meeting was held in the Presidential Palace, which was attended by a narrow group of people who discussed the agenda of the plenary session. Finally, the proposal put forward by Geremek was adopted. He suggested the following order of speakers: Kiszczak, Wałęsa, a ZSL representative, a Democratic Party representative, Miodowicz, a Solidarity representative, and finally, a farmers' representative.

The following day at 5.10 p.m., the Round Table's closing ceremony started, and was broadcast live on television. Initially, everything went according to schedule, but after Wałęsa's speech, the OPZZ asked for a break. Union members demanded that the leader of Solidarity should be followed by Miodowicz, not the representative from the ZSL. A break for fervent negotiations lasted as long as two hours, which made a terrible impression on TV viewers. Eventually, the representation of the opposition was forced to relent and Miodowicz could take the floor, but on the condition that he should be preceded by Geremek, who would, briefly, explain the situation to the confused citizens. That solution was accepted. The leader of OPZZ threatened strikes, but his speech was not a considerable contribution to the proceedings.<sup>[145]</sup>

Miodowicz was followed by the activists who had been scheduled earlier, and finally, at 10 p.m. the negotiations were brought to an end. Kiszczak and Wałęsa signed a 300-page document which became later known as the Round Table Agreements, concluding that they wanted to pursue the settlements stipulated by it. Thus, a new stage of political struggle began.

The Round Table sessions did not take place in a social void, although basing on media coverage from the events in the Presidential Palace and observing the discussions in workgroups and sub-workgroups, one might have had such an impression. The fact that the talks were attended only by part of the opposition contributed to its lowered legitimacy. Some large organisations such as the KPN or Fighting Solidarity, and smaller ones such

as the 'Independence' Liberal-Democratic Party, as well as a part of Solidarity were excluded from the Round Table talks, as was the increasingly stronger student community, which gathered around the still-illegal NZS.

The very idea of negotiating with the communists was not called into question, but some groups which were not invited to join the Round Table (or they did not want to take part in it from the outset) pointed out that the sessions should be held in a more confronting atmosphere, clear goals should be set, and the negotiating group should be more varied and chosen in a more democratic way. According to Security Service estimates, in 1987 less than half of all people who were engaged in nationwide opposition activity treated Wałęsa as their leader.<sup>[146]</sup>

Those representatives of the opposition who did participate in the Round Table were accused of inertia, as well as a separation from society and the problems that average citizens had to cope with. Such a position was aptly explained in a document issued before the sessions started, on 18 December 1988, by the authors from the circle gathered around Andrzej Gwiazda and Anna Walentynowicz: "It is supposed to be an agreement which would endow the conciliatory group, or the so-called 'constructive opposition', with certain political concessions in return for securing the economic interest of the system. This means that some opposition groups would commit to restraining the society from rebellion, while the living standard would keep dropping, and as a result exploitation would increase".<sup>[147]</sup> After many years, Kornel Morawiecki said, "Personally, I thought that we could have demanded more and that the Round Table should have set some requirements for the communist authorities leading to their relinquishing of power".<sup>[148]</sup> After a debate, the board of Fighting Solidarity decided not to participate in the Round Table talks – as Morawiecki comments: "we recognised that – apart from an aversion to hold talks with them [the communists – authors] – we could have played a more important role as an external, more radical pressure group. We could thereby have created a space for a kind of agreement, with us as a bogey for authorities".<sup>[149]</sup>

The authorities did not cease using violence against opposition groups, which were not represented at the Round Table, and also against society. On 25 February 1989, the Congress of Anti-System Opposition (*Kongres Opozycji Antyustrojowej*) was held in Jastrzębie Zdrój. It was attended by

representatives of various organisations such as Fighting Solidarity, the KPN, as well as the Freedom and Peace Movement (*Ruch "Wolność i Pokój"*). The Security Service arrested 120 people who wanted to attend the Congress, but it took place anyway and ended in issuing a joint statement which announced that the goal of the groups attending the Congress would aim for free elections and the abolition of PZPR's monopoly.<sup>[150]</sup> It did not have any significant meaning at that time, as the most important events took place at the Round Table, but it was an expression of a certain tendency which was more and more clearly articulated.

In the second half of February, wide-ranging students' protests took place, particularly in Kraków, where students organised a demonstration on 17 February, on the eighth anniversary of the registration of the Independent Students' Union (NZS). Police forces attacked students and there were some riots on the streets. However, peace was restored not so much due to the intervention of the Motorised Reserves of the Citizens' Militia (ZOMO) or the police forces, but thanks to the arrival of the Jagiellonian University Rector who mitigated the tension. Participants of the protest criticised the representation of the opposition, which sat at the Round Table for ignoring social resources, especially the youth.<sup>[151]</sup>

On 21 February, student protests took place in Warsaw and Kraków, but they were not so widespread. Two days later in Kraków, there was an anti-communist event, which fell on the anniversary of the creation of the Red Army. The biggest fights between students and police occurred on 24 February in Kraków. The riots were focused around the building of the Jagiellonian University and lasted for about two hours. In the following weeks, there were also some youth rallies and student protests in Poznań, where the police and the ZOMO also violently intervened.<sup>[152]</sup> During the students' protests, the education minister was accosted in one of Kraków's high schools for a few hours.<sup>[153]</sup> All this happened during the Round Table sessions when, as has been mentioned before, the authorities ignored the postulates put forward by the opposition to hold responsible the police officers who acted beyond their capacities. The determination of young people must have been categorical, as it all happened in winter when the conditions were arduous for street demonstrations.

Regardless of the attempts to unite the opposition factions which were not invited to participate in the negotiations, as well as the student riots lasting for a few weeks, the whole country suffered from strikes and workers' protests, mostly due to the economic situation, but which had clear political undertones. Already on 6 February, when the Round Table session started, the Bełchatów lignite mine began an all-encompassing strike. Thanks to the approach of the mine's branch of Solidarity, 'for the sake of the wider interest' the workers decided to resign from some pay demands so the strike ended on 9 February and the protesters expressed their support for the negotiations.

The strike in Bełchatów resounded widely among society, but during the next two months similar protests occurred in many places all over the country. In February 1989, there were 67 strikes altogether, but in March that number increased to 260. Finishing the Round Table talks settled down the mood a little bit – in April there were only 9 strikes, although that number once again increased to 26 in May.<sup>[154]</sup>

Some opposition leaders who entered the negotiations with the authorities at the Round Table came to conclusion, which was suggested by the communists, that strikes across the board may lead to undermining the legitimacy of the discussions, hence rendering the agreement reached during the talks invalid. During one of the meetings with Church representatives, Rakowski even raised a geopolitical argument and threatened that it might cause the breakdown of perestroika in the whole communist bloc.<sup>[155]</sup> Such a perspective – which seemed rather unlikely anyway – inclined the opposition leaders to take action to try and assuage the range of the strikes. Wałęsa became wholeheartedly involved, and despite the ongoing Round Table negotiations he travelled around the country visiting the enterprises which had gone on strike and persuaded them to start talks and refrain from strikes.

Thus the Round Table, as an agreement between the communists and the opposition, did not have full social support. Some of the opposition circles rejected the idea of talking with the authorities, at least under those specific circumstances, and a portion of them rightly maintained that the delegation of the opposition did not represent important politi-

cal trends. Additionally, the society at large was not interested in the talks at all, considering that they would not bring any significant changes anyway.

However, it turned out that the authorities were willing to respect the signed agreement. As early as 13 April, the date of the parliamentary elections was set for 4 and 18 June 1989. Although they were only partially free, it was a success for democracy on the scale of the whole Soviet Bloc. The election campaign turned out to be an expression of freedom of speech, despite the ever-present censorship. On 17 April, Solidarity was legalised and three days later the Individual Farmers' Solidarity union was founded, a clear sign that the changes were becoming real, at last.

As Witold Trzeciakowski, who was the co-chairman of the workgroup for economy and social policy, assessed, "the main guarantee of the compromise reached is the power of Solidarity (...). We have only a consensus based on the bargaining power of the union. If it turns out to be large enough, the very fact that Solidarity accepts or rejects something could be a decisive factor in respecting this or that decision".<sup>[156]</sup> As the events unfolded, this assessment proved right.

## The Election

The two groups knowing each other from the Round Table talks stood on opposite sides. On the one hand, there was the united team of Wałęsa, and on the other, the divided communist party, initially confident of success (which at any rate they were guaranteed to an extent) together with its satellites, such as the OPZZ and other 'social' organisations. Seemingly the authorities held all the cards: developed structures, financial means, and almost a total monopoly of the media – the opposition seemed rather feeble in comparison. The only strong medium at the disposal of the opposition was *Gazeta Wyborcza*, established by Michnik and Mazowiecki, although the broadcasts assigned to Solidarity on national radio and television were very popular among the listeners and viewers, so their impact was greater than one might expect judging by the limited airtime which they received. The opposition, which gathered around Wałęsa, had in many regions (especially outside large conurbations) quite weak structures, sometimes

the election committees were created spontaneously as a mass activity. As a result, the balance of power was rather unfavourable for the opposition, at least at first sight.

However, at second glance the proportions seemed reversed. The PZPR, together with its coalition, made many mistakes, probably because they were too self-assured. The government side, or at least its leadership, flouted not only the opponents but also the rules governing elections as such. The most significant mistakes they made during the election campaign were as follows: underestimating the real support for Solidarity in society and putting up too many candidates (mostly it was about the seats from the 35 per cent pool and seats in the Senate which could be competed for without any restrictions), so the votes got divided between them.<sup>[157]</sup> A clear mistake, or an unpredicted weakness, was also the meagre involvement of PZPR structures in the election campaign, which contrasted with the huge enthusiasm shown in this case by Solidarity activists and its other members.

It is worth mentioning that some opposition organisations called for a boycott of the election indicating their non-democratic character, the weak legitimacy of the Round Table agreement, as well as the complete lack of access to the media of political options other than coalition and the faction of Solidarity gathered around Wałęsa.<sup>[158]</sup> Each of these arguments was true but insufficient to reject the election by the society, although they contributed to a significant decrease in the voter turnout. Young people adopted a particularly radical attitude. On 16–18 May, riots once again started in Kraków, initiated by members of organisations such as the NZS, the KPN, the 'Federation of Fighting Youth', and a student faction of 'Freedom and Peace'. The atmosphere of distrust towards Solidarity and the agreements of the Round Table was fostered by yet another refusal of legalisation of the NZS on 23 May. Over the course of a few days, over 40 universities all over the country organised protests, but later on these tensions were almost completely phased out.<sup>[159]</sup>

According to the electoral regulations, 460 MPs and 100 senators were supposed to be elected. 299 seats in the Sejm were reserved only for the government coalition and the rest were supposed to be democratically allocated, with the reservation that candidates could not belong to the coalition organisations. As a result, the communists put up election

candidates who did not belong to any party but who were strongly connected with the authorities. The best known case was Jerzy Urban who ran from the Warszawa-Śródmieście (Warsaw Downtown) constituency.<sup>[160]</sup> In most constituencies, there were several candidates for one seat in the Sejm who 'did not belong to any party'. Solidarity put forward exactly as many candidates as the number of seats they could take.

Besides the candidacies mentioned above, members of other illegal organisations also ran from the opposition list, but they did not stand much of a chance to be elected and their participation in the election was merely an attempt to manifest their views. The most significant was the KPN, which put up 16 candidates for MPs and six for the Senate. Besides the KPN, the Workgroup of the National Committee, the Union of Real Politics, and the Movement of Free Democrats also proposed their own candidates. Independent candidates who, for various reasons, were not in the mainstream, led by Solidarity and Wałęsa's team, also ran from many constituencies.<sup>[161]</sup>

The pool of 65 per cent of seats for candidates belonging to the PZPR, the United People's Party (ZSL) and the Alliance of Democrats (SD) also included the so-called 'national list' with 35 seats. The list contained the names of famous politicians, such as Prime Minister Rakowski. This list could be voted for in every constituency and only candidates with 50 per cent of the vote could enter the Sejm. There was no option considered that they would not be elected, which was a sign of exaggerated confidence on the part of the authorities.

The Senate election was free and the number and division of candidates was similar to the Sejm pool. Solidarity put up only one candidate for one seat, whereas the coalition proposed several candidates. Altogether, 588 candidates of the authorities ran for the Senate and as many as 1,760 for the Sejm. On the one hand, it meant liberalisation within the party itself but on the other hand, it lowered their chance to get into the parliament, which in turn was a sign of misunderstanding of the voting mechanisms. It was a good idea to put not only communist activists on the party lists, but also famous and popular people who were not directly associated with the authorities, such as cardiologist Zbigniew Religa or the only Polish astronaut Mirosław Hermaszewski, even though none of them finally succeeded.

Wałęsa's team competed with these candidates, with the group seemingly more closely knit than the one sitting at the Round Table. On 7 April, the Solidarity leadership decided to organise the election campaign by means of the Citizens' Committee (*Komitet Obywatelski* – KO), which meant that the election would be attended by a narrow political representation, not a broad coalition as some activists had wanted. Soon, regional Citizens' Committees were established, which were often organised with the support of the Church. Since the Citizens' Committees were often created ad hoc, in many places there were several competing Committees. This situation was clarified at the central level which considered only one committee as appropriate for any given region. Some candidates were brought from Warsaw, which sometimes surprised local activists, although many of them were famous people and acted as 'election drivers'.

The election campaign in the media began no sooner than in the second week of May. On 8 May, the first issue of *Gazeta Wyborcza* was published, with the daily bearing the logo of Solidarity. The circulation was 150,000 copies. Its editor-in-chief was Adam Michnik, who in the editorial wrote that the most important role of the new journal was to "provide extensive, current, and unbiased information clearly separating the commentary from the news".<sup>[162]</sup> Michnik emphasised that the daily would not only represent Solidarity, but also other factions of the opposition and social trends. *Gazeta Wyborcza* made an overnight success as the only big media outlet not connected with the authorities (although censorship, while it still existed, sometimes interfered in its publications). The title of the newspaper implied certain temporariness and a fleeting character, but over the course of several weeks, it became a household name.

On 9 May, television programmes broadcast by Solidarity were launched.<sup>[163]</sup> They were professionally prepared and enjoyed great popularity, enhanced, furthermore, with information of the censor's interference, which went as far as to suspend some transmissions. Those programmes were countered by election spots of the government coalition and the rest of the television content, which favoured the communists by informing, or rather misinforming, as well as changing facts for the benefit of the authorities (which was nothing new).

The Solidarity election campaign was run in a quite modern way for that time. Opposition activists attracted some international stars such as Jane Fonda or Stevie Wonder. One of the election posters spread all over the country featured Gary Cooper with a Solidarity badge in his lapel, a ballot paper in his hand, and the title of the famous movie *High Noon* written underneath. The renowned director Andrzej Wajda came up with an idea, which turned out to be very efficient; namely, he suggested taking a picture of each candidate running from the lists of the Citizens' Committees with Lech Wałęsa. It made the activists of the opposition recognisable for the general public because they were not very well known – particularly in small towns; besides, this promoted 'Wałęsa's team' as a whole, not individual candidates.<sup>[164]</sup> It made an impression of unity in contrast with the government coalition, torn by inner squabbles.

The authorities tried to obtain a certain number of votes for their candidates by applying some formal procedures as far as the method of voting was concerned, particularly regarding the national list. In order not to vote for any candidate on a given list, all the names had to be crossed out; otherwise, those not crossed out would obtain a vote. As a result of negotiations, the government side accepted that the whole page could be crossed out in one go. Therefore, some of the Solidarity broadcasts were devoted to the technique of voting; for example, famous comedian Jacek Fedorowicz demonstrated how the whole national list could be crossed out.

The spirit of the PZPR leadership was rather upbeat.<sup>[165]</sup> All the main activists were convinced that Solidarity would obtain a maximum of 60 per cent of all the votes that it could receive.<sup>[166]</sup> What is interesting here is that the candidates of the coalition themselves were not that optimistic. Seeing the intensified efforts of the opposition and the sluggishness of their own apparatus, as well as simultaneously believing in the omnipotent nature of their party, they often became apathetic and did not engage in the campaign as much as they could have. On the other hand, some candidates tried to pretend they were under the Solidarity banner, which clearly indicated that lower level activists were better informed about the social sentiments than the leaders.

On 4 June 1989, the first round of partially free parliamentary election was held. With a relatively low attendance (only 62.3 per cent of those entitled

to vote took part in the election, which was a clear sign that society did not accept the Round Table agreements entirely or was simply not interested in political life at all), Solidarity dealt a massive blow to the authorities. Already in the first round, the opposition obtained 160 out of 161 possible seats in the Sejm and 92 out of 100 seats in the Senate. The rest remained to be taken in the second round. However, the biggest blow to the government was the complete defeat of the national list. From the whole list only two people obtained the required 50 per cent of the vote: sociologist and publicist Mikołaj Kozakiewicz and lawyer Adam Zieliński. But even they barely managed to exceed the required majority; the former received 50.9 per cent of the vote and the latter 50.7 per cent.

The results of the first round came as a huge surprise for everyone.<sup>[167]</sup> Society had decidedly rejected the coalition and so they had rejected communism. Solidarity gained everything, which they could and even more, as they had contributed to the defeat of the national list. Nobody expected this outcome, and therefore 4 June is considered the day which marks the end of communism in Poland. Popular actress Joanna Szczepkowska uttered a famous sentence about it on the news, albeit later in the year, on 28 October 1989: “Ladies and Gentlemen, on 4 June 1989 communism in Poland came to an end”.<sup>[168]</sup>

The authorities faced a dilemma: how to save the national list and thereby the settlements of the Round Table. Initially, they considered annulling the election but it was quickly rejected as unrealistic. Already a day after the election, during the session of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR, they discussed the chances for developing a legal solution to introduce the candidates from the national list into the Sejm and to negotiate such a solution with the opposition.<sup>[169]</sup>

The Solidarity leadership was also surprised and even terrified by the scope of their victory. Some of them were afraid that it might lead to the use of force (it was partly justified as the Ministry of the Interior still conducted some preparations for a possible introduction of state of emergency, which they had begun a year earlier).<sup>[170]</sup> Others realised that there would be strong pressure to accept the national list anyway, even if it meant the violation of law and order.<sup>[171]</sup> On the other hand, the Solidarity leadership felt a great responsibility imposed on them by society, particularly ordinary activists who

demanded that such an opportunity should be embraced. However, already a day after the election, an order was issued in local Citizens' Committees to calm down the atmosphere and not to manifest triumphalism.

On 6 June, representatives of the authorities led by Kiszczak met with Geremek and Mazowiecki. During the meeting, the authorities convinced the opposition to adopt a conciliatory approach about the national list.<sup>[172]</sup> The arguments regarding the danger from the Soviet Union were understood by the opposition. On 8 June, the National Coordination Commission held a meeting<sup>[173]</sup> during which it was decided that 33 seats from the national list would be divided into 33 constituencies and put up to vote in the second round of the election. On 12 June, the Council of State issued a decree on the matter.

The clear concession of the opposition was very badly received by ordinary members of Solidarity and by many citizens. Disrespect for the will of society and a violation of the law, as well as seemingly moving the goalposts during the game were commonly discussed.<sup>[174]</sup> The second round of the election took place on 18 June. The attendance rate was merely 26 per cent. Solidarity gained the lacking seat in the Sejm and seven out of eight possible seats in the Senate. Henryk Stokłosa from the Piła Province was the only senator who did not belong to the opposition. At the time, he was already a tycoon in his region (and years to come he was to become one of the richest Poles). His rival, Piotr Baumgart, who was a long-standing activist in Solidarity, was the only candidate from the opposition who did not have his picture taken with Wałęsa, which could have been the reason for his defeat. The second round brought about the final clarification as to which of the coalition candidates was to enter the Sejm. Solidarity decided to lend its support to those who gave hope for greater independence from their organisational structures. Thanks to this, 55 MPs who entered the Sejm were approved by the opposition. Naturally, they were connected with the PZPR or its allies, but many of them noticed an opportunity to act independently. Lending support to them turned out to be the right calculation on the part of Citizens' Committees.

After 4 June, the balance of power changed so much that one could speak about an entirely new reality, although it would have been far-fetched to assume that it was already a free Poland (the legal system did not change,

the Security Service, censorship and other instruments of the totalitarian regime still existed and formally the communists were still in charge). But the authorities lost their initiative and started to retreat, still trying to maintain control over the most important decisions. Although the parliament established as a result of the election was far from a democratic one, the influence of the communists was smaller than could stem from a simple calculation of votes. Both sides had some trump cards up their sleeves. A new chapter in the game was about to unfold.

## The Presidential Election

After winning the election, Solidarity's popularity rocketed. It caused some defeatist sentiments in the PZPR and its satellite parties, eventually leading to the disintegration of these circles.<sup>[175]</sup> The most urgent issue for the leadership of the PZPR was to conduct the election as soon as possible so that General Jaruzelski could become president, as postponing the election might have negative repercussions for the PZPR which was losing its hold on power by the day. Local party authorities all over the country debated the future of the party, communism, and Poland as a state.

Many persons from the Solidarity leadership supported the choice of Jaruzelski as well, for various reasons. As interviews published at that time indicate, as well as memories published later on, some opposition leaders were afraid of certain particulars: on the one hand, a radicalisation of sentiments at a lower level of the organisation and a so-called 'street response', while on the other, a violent reaction of the conservative faction of PZPR and, worse yet, Moscow's intervention, not necessarily a military one (which seemed rather unrealistic at the time). Additionally, a kind of warm rapport established between the main members of the re-legalised Solidarity, and the authority negotiating side, could not be underestimated.

In fact, this last factor caused an increasingly wider difference of opinion on particular issues between those who took part in the negotiations in Magdalenka and the rest of the opposition. That division, initially barely noticeable, became deeper with time. However, it seems that at the turn

of July 1989, even the most radical activists accepted the election of Jaruzelski for president as a necessary evil.

For the first several days after the election, the Solidarity leadership considered various possibilities, including the presidency of Wałęsa,<sup>[176]</sup> but it soon turned out that the communists were so determined that putting up a different candidate was impossible. Finally, on 23 June, the Citizens' Parliamentary Club (the parliamentary club gathering the representatives of the opposition) during its first meeting decided not to put forward their own candidate for the presidential election.

In the meantime, Jaruzelski himself made a move aiming at uniting his team and probably intimidating the opposition. On 29 June, during the session of the Politburo, he announced that he would not be running for president. To explain his decision, he outlined a perspective of losing the election with consequences that could be hard to predict. In response to the approach presented by Jaruzelski, Kiszczak became a presidential candidate, but probably he had even less chance to be elected by the National Assembly. For several days, the party activists tried to convince the general to change his mind. On 1 July, during the session of the Citizens' Parliamentary Club Wałęsa lent his support to Kiszczak, thereby making a clear sign that each PZPR candidate would enjoy the trust of the Solidarity leader. A concession in this matter was used to put forward some demands in another issue. On 3 July, *Gazeta Wyborcza* published an article entitled "Your President, our Prime Minister" written by Michnik. He suggested that "the alliance between the democratic opposition and the pro-reform wing of the authorities" should be the best solution for the country.<sup>[177]</sup> The mission of forming the government should be carried out by a Solidarity candidate and thus the cabinet was supposed to be accepted by at least a part of the PZPR. On the other hand, from the outset it did not have the full support among the opposition leaders, including Tadeusz Mazowiecki (who soon became the Prime Minister fulfilling Michnik's postulate) or Karol Modzelewski, who regarded it as premature.<sup>[178]</sup>

Simultaneously, members of the Solidarity leadership started probing the Kremlin.<sup>[179]</sup> This was nothing new; such contacts had already been made, but at the beginning of July they intensified. The Soviets themselves adopted a quite an indifferent approach to Solidarity's attempts to gain

some power. On 4 July, a day after the above-mentioned article appeared in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Vadim Zagladin, Gorbachev's adviser, said: "The decision in that matter [appointing the government] is the internal affair of our Polish friends".<sup>[180]</sup> On 6 July, at the session of the Council of Europe, Gorbachev put an end to the Brezhnev Doctrine: "any intervention into the internal affairs of befriended or allied countries [...] is out of the question".<sup>[181]</sup> However, on 7 July during the assembly of the Warsaw Pact in Bucharest, Gorbachev convinced Jaruzelski that he should run for president and simultaneously warned him not to put forward Kiszczak's candidature as he was less popular and not so well prepared for the role.

In the meantime, Adam Michnik and Andrzej Wajda went to Moscow. On 12 July, they met with delegates of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, opposition activists, and representatives of culture, which was received by some members of the PZPR as the approval of the independent position of political circles represented by them. Apparently, the visit in Moscow convinced Michnik that he was a witness of a historic moment in which the USSR, occupied with its own problems, stopped to be interested in Poland, so the opposition could be tempted to gain power without any particular fears of Soviet intervention. Michnik was afraid that such favourable circumstances might not occur again soon, and he demanded the implementation of his concept as soon as possible. Michnik's ideas were received with scepticism by the Solidarity team.<sup>[182]</sup>

At the turn of July, various rallies were held in different cities protesting against electing Jaruzelski as president. They were not as widespread as the students' riots during the Round Table talks, but they clearly indicated that a bigger part of the society did not accept the general as the head of state, as he was a symbol of a hateful system liable for numerous crimes. Unexpectedly, Jaruzelski received support from the USA. On 10–11 July, the US President George Bush visited Warsaw. He strengthened Jaruzelski's position by meeting him and also tried to convince him to change his mind about his resignation from running in the presidential election. Even earlier, the American ambassador in Warsaw John Davis had met with opposition MPs and explained to them how they could make Jaruzelski's election possible.<sup>[183]</sup>

Finally, Jaruzelski caved in and on 18 July during the Politburo session, he informed that he was going to run for president after all. Voting in the National Assembly (the Sejm and the Senate) was conducted the following day. Jaruzelski was the only candidate and the ballot was open. 544 MPs out of the total number of 560 took part; 270 persons voted for, 233 were against, 34 abstained and 7 votes were invalid. With such a proportion, the majority required to elect the head of state was 269 votes, so actually the new president of the People's Republic of Poland was chosen with only a one vote advantage. It turned out that six MPs from the ZSL, four from the SD and one from the PZPR voted against, whereas three from the ZSL and one from the PZPR did not take part in the election. As such, Jaruzelski was elected with the support of MPs from the Citizens' Parliamentary Club.<sup>[184]</sup> As many as 11 of them did not take part in the vote, while one voted for the general. Senator Andrzej Wielowieyski showed the crucial initiative by convincing six MPs to post invalid votes as he had done. Thus, the minimum necessary for electing Jaruzelski president was lower. Such behaviour of MPs from the Citizens' Parliamentary Club caused many unpleasant comments, although they acted actually in accordance with the approach of some leaders who did not see any other alternative for Jaruzelski at that time.

As a result, the president, who enjoyed wide-ranging competences, was elected by a majority of merely one vote – not in a general election, but by the parliament, against several MPs from the PZPR and its satellite parties and with the morally questionable support of 19 representatives of the Citizens' Parliamentary Club. This situation seemed rather temporary and unstable from the very outset. Nevertheless, the election of Jaruzelski was a success for the communists as his possible defeat could have had serious consequences, not only as a matter of prestige. It was also hard to predict what consequences it might have had for the country.

## New Negotiations

After the presidential election, the most urgent matter was to appoint a government which, at least to some extent, would reflect the balance of power in the parliament. Initially the communists took the initiative.

On 29 July, they held the 13<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Central Committee of the PZPR. Jaruzelski, as president, resigned from the position of the first secretary and was replaced by Rakowski, despite significant opposition against the latter. He was supported by 171 members of the Central Committee, although 41 voted against in the event. The Plenum also made the decision to put forward Kiszczak as a candidate for the prime minister. As the PZPR, together with its coalition, had a majority of seats in the parliament, implementing this plan would not be difficult.

The idea that Kiszczak would be the prime minister, while Jaruzelski was president seemed ideal for the party leadership. If they had seen it through, the most important positions in the state would have remained in the hands of the communists, while the appearances of democracy would have been kept up. As Rakowski would remain the first secretary of the PZPR, power would still remain in the hands of the same group of people who had been wielding it for the past few years.

However, it seems that the party leadership did not take the current situation in the country into consideration; neither did they perceive the approach of their own coalition, which already at the Round Table, some six months earlier, had started to reveal some aspirations for being independent. On the other hand, putting up the head of the hated secret police as the candidate for the prime minister was very badly received by the general public – despite the support for Kiszczak as a presidential candidate expressed several weeks earlier by Wałęsa. However, Wałęsa was aware of people's sentiments and already on 1 August announced that he did not support Kiszczak in the new role.

This candidacy also caused dissatisfaction among the coalition members. The PZPR decided to act quickly and on 2 August the Sejm voted for entrusting Kiszczak with the mission of forming a new government; 237 MPs voted for and 173 against, including as many as five from the PZPR, 21 from the ZSL and three from the SD. The results of the vote meant that the leadership was losing support within their own team, which was increasingly aware that the totalitarian regime was falling apart and that the team of Jaruzelski did not have anything to offer and were justifiably on the defensive.

Meanwhile, social sentiments became more radical at the end of June. Strikes and street protests started breaking out again. This trend intensified in July, during the holiday season. In the third week of July, 49 incidents occurred and by the following week that number had gone up to 138 (including 27 strikes), whereas in the first week of August that figure shot up to as many as 206 (85 of which were strikes).<sup>[185]</sup> The government decision to transfer food prices to a market-oriented economy, effective on 1 August, was an additional factor which fuelled the protests. This accelerated inflation: in July the rate was 9.5 per cent, while in August it had rocketed to 39.5 per cent, while in October it stood at 54.8 per cent. Between September and November, official prices of goods and services rose sharply, among others: medicines by 100 per cent, electricity by 150 per cent, railway tickets by 50 per cent, postal and telecommunications services by 150 per cent.<sup>[186]</sup> The feeling of insecurity led to immense social pressure, and it only grew while Kiszczak and Jaruzelski's group had practically no possibilities of countering the wave of social resentment.

The opposition decided to take advantage of the situation and they nurtured the idea of entering the government in any political configuration. If Kiszczak had become the prime minister, the opposition could have counted on the position of the deputy prime minister and several ministers of less crucial ministries.<sup>[187]</sup> Theoretically, the responsibility for governing, or rather managing the crisis, would fall to a great extent on the communists, but the opposition knew very well that they would do everything to hold Solidarity at least partly responsible for the situation, as well as the social cost of the reform (not to mention the detriment to Solidarity's image for supporting Kiszczak) would be borne by 'Wałęsa's team' which would have no real influence on the decisions made. As such, the offer was not worthwhile.

At the turn of July and August, the Solidarity leadership considered various scenarios, two of which seemed the most likely. The group gathered around Geremek, Kuroń, and Michnik was in favour of causing a split, or rather a difference of opinion within the PZPR, and wanted to enter into a coalition with the reformist wing of the party. The possible participation of the ZSL and the SD in this endeavour was not necessary, although if they expressed the will to do so they would be incorporated in it, albeit under

worse conditions. This idea was opposed by the brothers Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński, who wanted to establish a government together with the satellite parties, thus separating them from the PZPR.<sup>[188]</sup>

Wałęsa hesitated for some time, but on 7 August he made a statement in which he claimed that continued rule by the PZPR and the mission of Kiszczak serving this purpose was harmful and that “the only political solution in this situation would be to appoint the Council of Ministers on the basis of a Solidarity-ZSL-SD coalition”.<sup>[189]</sup> The Kaczyński brothers were delegated to negotiate with those parties. This led to a dispute in the Citizens’ Parliamentary Club, but Wałęsa’s authority gained the upper hand and finally the whole Club accepted that solution.

The following day, on 8 August, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the PZPR gathered only to find out that many leading activists were on vacation. It was a clear sign that the disintegration of the party had reached its peak. The discussion at the session ended in a general appeal to join forces and prevent the elimination of the party from the government, but in his last speech, Rakowski announced that he also intended to go on holiday, which might have been a suggestion that he was giving in. In the following weeks, he faced some very difficult new decisions. The ball was in the court of the opposition, whereas the head of the PZPR could not remain passive if he wanted his party to play any role.

In the meantime, Kiszczak continued the mission of forming a government, although he found it extremely difficult to find any ministerial candidates. Few people believed in the success of this initiative. Its chances were practically non-existent after the Citizens’ Parliamentary Club started negotiations with the previous allies of the PZPR. Already on 9 August, the ZSL parliamentary club decided to withdraw their support for Kiszczak which they had granted only a week before. The SD’s approach was more complex, albeit this party had much less influence.

Kiszczak did not intend to give in without a fight. He met the leaders of both groups to convince them to reject the proposal of Solidarity. On 11 August, he met American ambassador Davis, remembering his role in the talks with the opposition, but this time he did not gain much understanding, as the Americans refused to try and prevent Wałęsa from forming a coalition without the PZPR.<sup>[190]</sup> On the same day, the ZSL chairman, Roman

Malinowski, and the leader of the SD, Jerzy Józwiak, met independently with the Soviet ambassador Vladimir Brovikov, who assured them that the Kremlin would not raise any objections against a government created by these parties together with Solidarity. The green light from the Soviet embassy, even in the form of no objection, could be crucial for the success of the project.

The final attempt made by the leadership of the PZPR was to bribe Malinowski on 13 August by offering him the mission to form the new government. But Malinowski refused the offer made by Jaruzelski. In order to put pressure on the Citizens' Parliamentary Club, Kiszczak suggested reaching an agreement with the opposition faction which was not in the parliament, but this failed as well. On 14 August, he was forced to resign, and he recommended Malinowski as his successor; however, Malinowski rejected the proposal and thus a political vacuum occurred.

It was then that a group within the Citizens' Parliamentary Club one more time demanded a big coalition including the PZPR as the main partner. Some argued that Solidarity should not enter the government at all for the time being. On 16 August, a heated meeting of the Presidium of the Citizens' Parliamentary Club took place, during which Jarosław Kaczyński presented the results of negotiations with the ZSL and the SD, suggesting at the same time that Wałęsa would become the prime minister. Wałęsa denied this claim, although he did not reveal whom he could possibly see as the head of the government. However, earlier he had met with Tadeusz Mazowiecki and tried to persuade him to accept the mission of forming the cabinet. He did not receive Mazowiecki's consent, but Mazowiecki pointed out that the crucial ministries should remain in the hands of the PZPR. On the night of 16 August, the atmosphere of the discussion in the Presidium of the Citizens' Parliamentary Club reached its climax. Michnik repeated his arguments in favour of the coalition with the PZPR: "you have to form a government with landlords not with butlers".<sup>[191]</sup> But the decisions had already been made, although eventually Wałęsa chose the option of compromise.

Wałęsa chose to have the coalition with the SD and the ZSL taking into consideration a simple truth – why become compromised in Poles' eyes by entering a coalition with the communists, if there was a possibility to dethrone them and thus 'proclaim' a new state?<sup>[192]</sup> Wałęsa did not want to become a Prime Minister himself, but did not want to have Geremek

in that role either, perceiving him as too strong a candidate who could be 'too independent'. He chose Tadeusz Mazowiecki, believing that he would be much weaker, not endangering Wałęsa's position. It became truth only partially – Mazowiecki's personal attitudes (such as a problem with decision-making, tendency to listening to all the arguments), which were criticised by Geremek and Michnik, were a real obstacle for this role. However, from the outset Mazowiecki began his fight for independence – he refused to consult his cabinet's composition with Wałęsa. After Wałęsa's remark, "It was me who made you prime minister", he answered: "That's right – but now I am the prime minister already".<sup>[193]</sup>

Thus, on 17 August, Mazowiecki agreed to accept the mission of forming the government. Then Wałęsa met with Malinowski and Jóźwiak, and the coalition was officially established. The chairman of the ZSL informed Jaruzelski of the fact, and subsequently all of them went to the general in order to put forward Mazowiecki's formal candidacy. The president of the People's Republic of Poland did not raise any objections. Then Wałęsa had a tête-à-tête with Jaruzelski, suggesting the following division of positions: seven ministries for Solidarity, six for the ZSL, five for the PZPR, and three for the SD. According to the report of the Secretary of the Central Committee of the East German SED (Social Unity Party of Germany), this proposal was accepted by the general but he set the following conditions, namely preserving the socialist political system in Poland, maintaining the 'alliance' with the USSR, and the position of the People's Republic of Poland in the Warsaw Pact, as well as proportional participation in the government by all political groups represented in the Sejm (thus including PZPR), which Wałęsa was supposed to accept.<sup>[194]</sup>

Rakowski and the PZPR leadership were confronted with the *fait accompli* and taken by surprise. This meant that information reached the first secretary of the PZPR with some delay, which was another sign that the previously ruling party had lost its position. On 18 August, the Politburo of the Central Committee gathered. The discussion was permeated by anxiety, but also some relief as the responsibility for the state was taken over by someone else. Some activists emphasised that this moment should be used to restructure the party so that it could become internally stronger. Rakowski emphasised the "focusing of all efforts to rescue the party".<sup>[195]</sup>

The Politburo summoned the extraordinary 14<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Central Committee the following day. The Plenum adopted the following approach towards “appointing the new government and the current political situation”. They criticised the Citizens’ Parliamentary Club, the ZSL, and the SD for violating earlier agreements and entering a path of confrontation, but they accepted the state of affairs.

On 19 August, Jaruzelski formally entrusted Mazowiecki with the mission of forming the government. It was a breakthrough throughout the whole Soviet Bloc. For the first time since the 1940s, a non-communist was about to be the prime minister. Nicolae Ceaușescu ‘appreciated’ the significance of the situation, and on the same day he sent a letter to the ‘allied’ parties including the PZPR, in which he objected to Mazowiecki’s forming a government and he promised help for a conservative faction, should such need occur. This initiative was ignored by other communist leaders<sup>[196]</sup> but the leadership of the PZPR felt obliged to react. In their response, they included some assertions that the strong position of the PZPR in Poland would remain unchanged and the president’s office would be an additional guarantor.

The threats by the ‘Genius of the Carpathians’, as Romanian apologists dubbed him, were used in the fight for the division of ministerial positions in the new cabinet. Solidarity’s leaders were informed about the Romanian initiative and were ‘warned’ that heads of other countries in the Bloc had similar ideas as Ceaușescu, so too high demands of the recent opposition may well cause a hostile reaction from abroad. Naturally, it was a bluff, but it had certain psychological significance.<sup>[197]</sup>

On 22 August, the session of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the PZPR was held, during which a strategy was adopted. The strategy involved keeping the key ministries, such as the National Defence, the Interior, and the Foreign Affairs, as well as the national media in the hands of the party. On the same day, Rakowski spoke with Gorbachev, who was to suggest to him the need to dissolve the old party and create a new one in its place, but the Polish first secretary would not hear of it.<sup>[198]</sup>

Two days later, on 24 August, Tadeusz Mazowiecki appeared in the Sejm as the official candidate for prime minister. The tone of his speech was conciliatory. He focused on economic issues, postulating a return to a market

economy, but he did not speak about privatisation (and even erased any remarks from the preliminary draft of his speech, which might have implied such a direction of development).<sup>[199]</sup> With regards to ideological matters, he uttered some historic sentences such as: “Let us separate ourselves from the past with a thick line. We will be held responsible only for what we did to get Poland out of the current crisis”.<sup>[200]</sup> The candidate for the position of prime minister did not say anything which could irritate the present representatives of the PZPR. The results of the vote over appointing him as prime minister were very promising: out of 423 MPs, who took part in the vote, 378 were for the motion, only four were against, and 41 abstained from voting.

Two weeks later, Mazowiecki met the then KGB head Vladimir Kryuchkov. The freshly appointed prime minister of the yet-to-be-formed government assured that the policy of friendship with the USSR would be continued, although Poland would remain an independent country; this meant that the communists did not have to be the only party guaranteeing that Poland would preserve the alliances within the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance.<sup>[201]</sup>

Forming the cabinet lasted about three weeks. The government was the result of the compromise between the parties creating it, and because all parties agreed that forming such a government was a good idea, there was no danger of breaking off any negotiations. Finally, Solidarity took 12 positions out of 24 members of the cabinet, the PZPR – 4, the ZSL – 4, the SD – 3, and one was taken by an ‘independent’ candidate. Each group received one position of the deputy prime minister, key departments were taken by the PZPR (Kiszczak – the Ministry of the Interior, Gen. Siwicki – the Ministry of Defence), whereas Krzysztof Skubiszewski, who entered the government as an independent candidate, became the minister of foreign affairs. Andrzej Drawicz became the head of the Radio Committee.

The vote on the government took place in the Sejm on 12 September. There were 415 MPs present; 402 MPs voted for the government, and 13 abstained from voting. There was no single vote against the motion. The session of the Sejm was held in a very solemn atmosphere. During his policy speech, Prime Minister Mazowiecki collapsed, but he quickly got

up and apologised to all who were gathered, making a quip about the weak Polish economy in doing so.

Forming the government led by Mazowiecki opened a new chapter in the history of Poland. From that moment on, one could speak of post-communism. Abolishing the most evident signs of the totalitarian regime, such as censorship, the Security Service, or changing the name of the country and its emblem came quite quickly, but getting rid of other remnants of communism took much longer.<sup>[202]</sup>

## Economic Transformations

The beginning of transformation was not easy. It can be safely claimed that of all the countries described in this book, the Polish economic situation was the worst. J. Kofman and W. Roszkowski are undoubtedly right when they point out to the tragic balance of 40 years of communism as the reason of Polish-specific conditions of political transformation.<sup>[203]</sup> The feigned reforms introduced by the Messner government, along with the absolutely overdue but forced actions of the Rakowski government, not only did not prevent the collapse of the People's Republic of Poland,<sup>[204]</sup> but what is worse, they left the Solidarity government with an extremely dire economic situation. The shops were virtually empty. Such commonplace matters as a lack of toilet paper on the market became symbolic in Poland (this issue was many times the subject of discussion during the state and party meetings at the highest level!), and the lucky ones who managed to get hold of that rare good became heroes. According to common knowledge, the only product that was always abundant was vinegar, which lined shop shelves. The stagnation of the economy was accompanied with by a fall in investment resources, retail sales, particularly foodstuffs, a deep budget deficit and foreign debt.<sup>[205]</sup> Under the circumstances, to balance the food market, on 29 July a decision was made to liberalise food prices, which must have caused a dramatic increase in prices, living costs, and deregulation of the market. Contradictory decisions of the government led to complete chaos, a decrease in production rates, deficit of goods, rapid price fluctuations, currency speculations, cumulative increase of the budget deficit and

many payment delays, because in the conditions of raging inflation it was profitable for enterprises to be in arrears with their liabilities.<sup>[206]</sup> Additionally, the People's Republic of Poland had an enormous foreign debt of nearly USD 40.8 billion in 1989, for which nobody was ever held to account (the sum was the equivalent of a six-year income from exports),<sup>[207]</sup> and this situation was unparalleled with any other country described in this book. The annual inflation rate in 1989 reached 251 per cent, and a year later as much as 586 per cent, but the following year plummeted to 70 per cent and until 1998, it remained at the level of up to 10 per cent.<sup>[208]</sup>

In this economic situation, Mazowiecki took over the government and entrusted the execution of economic reform to Leszek Balcerowicz. From that moment, the Polish economic transformations after 1989 have always been connected with the name of this – relatively young at that time – economist from the Warsaw School of Planning and Statistics (which soon returned to its traditional name, the Warsaw School of Economics), who was the minister of finance and deputy prime minister in Mazowiecki's government. The so-called 'Balcerowicz Plan' was introduced as the first project worldwide to decentralise the economy after several dozen years of central planning.

The Balcerowicz Plan consisted of two factors – current economic stabilisation, and systemic activity, which aimed to lay the groundwork for an institutional and legal basis for a market economy. Both these fields were supposed to intertwine with each other – the stabilisation activity was to assist and direct the systemic changes.<sup>[209]</sup> The programme of stabilisation, introduced at the beginning of 1990, assumed that the economy should balance itself out. On the one hand, it liberalised the economy in terms of supply, and on the other, it introduced a hard budget and monetary policy, thus limiting the flow of money into the market. For that purpose, prices of most consumer goods were liberalised, state subsidies were reduced, the final elements of central planning in trade were abolished, and foreign trade was liberalised, thus increasing market competition. As far as demand was concerned, the salary indexation rate was significantly lowered, a progressive income tax was introduced, as well as an additional tax on normative income in the public sector (the so-called 'excise wage tax', which substantially limited the increase of salaries in the budget sector); interest rates and liabilities on the dividend account were standardised

(actual tax on fixed assets), and an array of detailed solutions were implemented, which tightened monetary and budget regulations.<sup>[210]</sup>

The Balcerowicz Plan was called a ‘shock therapy’ as its effects had a very strong impact on the society from the very beginning. The main part of the plan’s stabilisation activities was implemented in the first half of 1990 – then a market balance was achieved (particularly for consumer goods) and inflation was dramatically reduced, which replaced the economy of deficit with an economy of supply, also leading to the slow abandonment of the economic model based on the dollar as a reference point. Additionally, the state budget was balanced, and at the end of 1990, it even showed a small surplus. On the other hand, the stabilisation package also brought some negative side effects such as the recession which was reflected in a rapid drop in the GDP and production, the drop of real wages and consumption, the reduction of some part of economic potential in the public sector, and the sudden onset of unemployment.<sup>[211]</sup>

The Balcerowicz Plan, from the very beginning of its implementation, evoked some vivid reactions, among both economists and the ordinary Poles whose lives it influenced dramatically. Some professional circles criticised a lack of broader consultation before the plan was implemented, as well as its seemingly unnecessary restrictiveness as far as the influx of money into the market was concerned.<sup>[212]</sup> This is not the right place for thorough considerations into whether that criticism was justified in pinpointing some flaws of the Balcerowicz Plan, however. Setting aside the issue of submitting conclusive evidence that there was an alternative to the plan in 1989, it remains a fact that the government had to grapple with an economic disaster whose scale was unpredictable. Consequently, the success of the reform substantially depended on the credence of Poland in foreign countries which was the ‘casting vote’ as to decide whether the government in Poland (no matter which government) conducted reforms according to the expectations of financial markets. Only the government, which met those expectations, could rely on the open credit line and political support, so under the circumstances of a several-hundred-per cent inflation rate and a multi-billion foreign debt, postponing reforms might have turned out disastrous. It would have also meant a conflict with the International Monetary Fund or the Paris Club, which set very tough conditions for Polish

society in return for reducing the Polish debt and providing financial aid.<sup>[213]</sup> Poland had no chance in this conflict from the start, so the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki did not see any other option of overcoming the crisis but to accept the programme, which for several years made its author (Leszek Balcerowicz) a person raising extreme emotions. It also drew one of the main lines of the ideological conflict, which focused on the evaluation of this programme and its possible continuation, or taking another direction (i.e. returning to economic interventionism, high taxes, as well as an active role played by the state in providing social protection), etc.

Proponents of changing the course of reforms could count on big support. The opinion about the seemingly radical nature of the Balcerowicz Plan was shared by millions of people who, having experienced a decrease in the standard of living, the threat of unemployment, and the increasing stratification of income, readily applauded the slogan: "Balcerowicz must go!" Undoubtedly, a lack of protective mechanisms, which could mitigate the consequences of transformation, was a crucial drawback (according to critics) of the project implemented by Balcerowicz, but Poland unfortunately could not afford them in the deputy prime minister's opinion. A high unemployment rate, a forgotten issue during the communist period, which affected whole social groups, reached almost 12 per cent as early as 1991, and for many years to come it did not drop below the 10 per cent threshold (reaching even 18 per cent in 2002).<sup>[214]</sup> The weak legal and institutional system, whose changes could not keep up with the economic changes afoot, was an equally significant factor in perceiving the implemented reforms. As a result, numerous scandals in the first years of transformation erupted (such as the Fund of Servicing Foreign Debt or 'ART-B'), stemming both from legal loopholes and the weakness of law enforcement agencies. These flaws were particularly useful for representatives of the communist nomenklatura, who often stood behind dubious financial deals, which in the early years after 1989 were also a reason for even bigger social frustration.<sup>[215]</sup>

Only after some time had passed did it turn out that, despite the above-mentioned flaws and negative external conditions, the Balcerowicz Plan brought about many positive results. Thanks to the restoration of the market and substantial reduction of inflation, the Polish economy was quickly (albeit not painlessly) directed towards a free market economy, avoiding the dangers

connected with a 'third way' or a path of slow transformations (as in the case of Hungarian gradualism).<sup>[216]</sup> The positive effects of the reforms introduced by Balcerowicz occurred in 1992, when the Polish economy recorded a 4 per cent increase in industrial production and a 2 per cent increase in GDP.<sup>[217]</sup> Poland was not only the first country from the former Soviet Bloc which entered the path of economic growth, but also the first one to reach the level of GDP from 1989 already in the mid-1990s (although it should be noted that in the case of Poland, that level was much lower in 1989 than, for instance, in Czechoslovakia or in Hungary, as the recession had started earlier). It should be also emphasised that despite the systemic problems mentioned above, the Polish economy proved to be extremely resistant to crises, and for the following 25 years, it recorded a positive GDP, including during the recession across Europe after 2008.

One should also not overestimate the issue of the nomenklatura's appropriation, which, although important for the sake of justice, in the long run seemed less and less important for the effectiveness of the new economic system. However, this led to the establishment of a middle class based on nomenklatura, although market mechanisms, in most cases, eliminated weak players who did not have any business skills with their only merit being the ability to take over public property. Suppressing inflation allowed the execution of one more crucial operation, namely the Polish currency denomination. Since 1 January 1995, legal tender in Poland has been the new Polish zloty (PLN), which replaced the former currency (PLZ) at the 1:10000 ratio. At that moment, PLZ 1,000,000 became PLN 100, and the reduction of the number of zeros reintroduced the grosz (one-hundredth of the zloty) back into circulation.

Fundamental changes in the structure of ownership constituted a crucial element of the economic transformation. Although Poland had never been a state completely deprived of the private sector, the changes of 1989 brought a significant breakthrough in that matter. The so-called 'little privatisation', which involved such branches as retail, services, and partly transportation and construction, was the easiest. Many more problems occurred in connection with the privatisation of Polish state enterprises, particularly since this issue was excluded from the Balcerowicz Plan. In 1990, a rule of equivalent privatisation was adopted, so that every privatised enterprise should be treated individually, while at the same time, public – and employee-based privatisation was

rejected. However, this did not mean an outright resignation from these two models of privatisation. Solutions were adopted which enabled the so-called employee leasing of small and medium enterprises, whereas mass privatisation was introduced with some delay through the National Investment Funds (NIF) programme. The NIF programme was adopted in 1993 by Hanna Suchocka's government and was supposed to pursue the following three goals: a response to social expectations initially raised by Lech Wałęsa, who promised "one hundred million for everyone"; the speeding up of the privatisation processes, and the implementation of enterprise restructuring incentives. Far-flung and incoherent goals underlay the failure of the programme as a whole, and while over 95 per cent of entitled individuals picked up shareholder certificates, the vast majority of buyers sold them immediately, although the profit of the average citizen was symbolic and common ownership was practically nonexistent.<sup>[218]</sup> The NIF project was not highly evaluated even among the supporters of mass privatisation, whereas critics panned it severely, claiming that the State Treasury lost billions of PLN on this transaction (receiving an income of PLN 1.68 billion, with the potential income of PLN 15 billion). Additionally, no strong owners of the privatised companies were selected, which would have allowed access to capital and new technologies. Eventually, the key role in the privatisation of large enterprises in Poland was played by foreign investors (mainly from Europe and the USA), who took over most of the property in the privatised enterprises.

Despite the slow processes of equivalent privatisation and the delayed implementation of mass privatisation, in 1995, 60 per cent of Polish GDP was produced in the private sector – a higher rate was recorded only in the Czech Republic and a similar figure in Slovakia.<sup>[219]</sup> This happened both due to the success of 'little privatisation' and, or perhaps mainly, due to the explosion of entrepreneurship which had been suppressed for so many years. When business activity was permitted effective 1 January 1989, small companies of all kinds started appearing in great numbers, and street trade became a symbol of economic freedom; sellers displayed their goods on camp beds and tables, and after a few months of such activity they could afford a tin container. This kind of business activity enjoyed great popularity after the years of a permanent deficit of goods and before the onset of 'hypermarkets era', which in Poland occurred in the late 1990s.

At this juncture, a peculiar paradox should be noted which had a significant impact on the pace and direction of political changes in Poland. On the one hand, the above-mentioned economic transformations were observed with great interest abroad, and political elites soon realised that the external conditions did not give much space for economic improvement. A logical consequence of adopting the Balcerowicz Plan was the search for a bigger stream of capital, which would allow for modernisation, hence the consistent pursuit of the Polish elites to obtain EU membership as soon as possible. On the other hand, positive macroeconomic indicators for a long time were not associated in social consciousness with any improvement of material status. This was due to the numerous bankruptcies of many industrial plants (an inevitable effect of economic liberalisation) and the fact that technical modernisation and streamlining had deprived many people of their jobs, while in many cases (due to age or incomplete education) the unemployed had no chance to return to the job market. The above circumstances would significantly define the framework within which Polish political life has moved in the 30 years to follow, as well as the subject matter of ideological arguments and cultural developments.

It is worth noting, however, that until 2015 the basic line of economic policy was neo-liberal and stood up to the ideas of Balcerowicz. Criticism towards it never led to fundamental changes. After elections in 2015, the Law and Justice party (PiS) declared a shift towards stronger redistribution and bigger role of the state in economy as well as support of families. The flagship “500+” programme (with each family receiving 500 PLN for the second and consecutive child per month, while poor families also receiving the benefit payment for the first child) was introduced merely months after electoral victory. Both the deepness and outcomes of the changes may be judged in the next few years.

## Political Transformations

Against the background of other countries from Central and Eastern Europe, one might think that Polish political changes occurred with some delay. Although in 1989 Poland was undoubtedly a leader of political changes in the Eastern Bloc and set the trend for the opposition in such countries

as Hungary or Czechoslovakia, Warsaw soon lost this status. When Prague and Budapest had non-communist presidents in June 1990 and their parliamentary elections were completely free, in Poland General Jaruzelski was still the head of state, only 35 per cent of the seats in the Sejm consisted of the MPs chosen in a free election, and the power ministries in the government were still in the hands of representatives of the military and party regime, namely generals Kiszczak and Siwicki.<sup>[220]</sup> Censorship was only abolished in April 1990, and it was not until November and December 1990 that a general presidential election was held, whereas the first genuine parliamentary election took place in October 1991. In October 1992, the so-called 'Small Constitution' was adopted, which regulated the relations between different authorities in the country, and in 1997 a completely new fundamental law was passed. Furthermore, internationally Poland was not a leader in the region in the early 1990s; suffice it to say that NATO membership was adopted as a strategic goal by the government of Jan Olszewski (the end of 1991), whereas the last – by then Russian, not Soviet – soldier left the territory of Poland on 17 September 1993 (in the case of Czechoslovakia and Hungary it had occurred two years earlier).

The above statements lead to beg the question: what was the reason for such a turn of events? How was it, that a country which had been famous for its most rebellious attitude towards the enforced regime for dozens of years, in which anti-government and anti-party demonstrations had definitely occurred most often, and which had been the cradle of a mass movement against the authorities in the form of a huge workers' union called Solidarity, in the very moment when its aspirations were coming true, could not conduct political reforms in a more decisive and in-depth way?

The roots of such evolutionary, as the supporters put it, or slow, as the opponents say, manner of introducing changes can be found in the negotiated character of the changes, which occurred in Poland. For many reasons, the Polish communists, although they were not ready to give up power soon, were best prepared of all the parties in the Bloc for the transformations to come. The most insightful among them knew that they would have to share power a long time before the Round Table started, so they could prepare some 'shock-absorbing' mechanisms. It was no coincidence that high-ranking officials were the biggest beneficiaries of the laws, which liberalised the economy,

introduced by the Industry Minister Mirosław Wilczek, triggering the so-called nomenklatura appropriation.<sup>[221]</sup> Additionally, the settlements of the Round Table, which were a great breakthrough on the scale of the whole Bloc when they were signed, gave the party and government side strong tools to mitigate the changes to come. One might venture to say that since Poland was a pioneer and paved the way for other countries, a year after the Round Table started, these other countries were already further down the road to reforms, because during the introduction of reforms in Poland, the opposition side did not know how far they could move in their negotiations with the communists. Naturally, the negotiations borderlines were not set as far ahead as in those countries where talks were conducted several months later, under completely different conditions, not only political, but also geopolitical. One should remember that the first non-communist government in Poland inherited not only a critical economic situation from its predecessors, but also an unfavourable situation in international relations. Furthermore, Western countries (which theoretically should have been concerned with the reforms in Poland) were not interested in encouraging Warsaw to carry out quick and radical changes. On the contrary, the USA was afraid that too rapid a transformation in Poland might undermine the position of Gorbachev in Moscow, and called for caution, supporting a conciliatory policy towards the remnants of the communist regime in Poland rather than postulating a complete parting with the past.<sup>[222]</sup>

Since the end of negotiations, the changes in Poland could be described as two intertwining tendencies – the continuation of the People’s Republic of Poland, and a parting with it. The Round Table undoubtedly assumed a certain continuity and evolutionary character of the changes in the course of the following years, but the election that took place on 4 June certainly undermined that consensual character of the negotiated outcome and revealed the social desire to shake off communism in Poland. The clash of old rules with the new ones which were being established, was noticeable throughout the whole of 1989, both after the first round of the election and the forming the coalition of the Citizens’ Parliamentary Club with the SD and the ZSL, and appointing the government of Mazowiecki (acting along the new democratic rule – that power is transferred to the person who gains a mandate from the electorate).<sup>[223]</sup>

Mazowiecki's formation of government may have been a significant turning point in the course of this intertwining of continuity and break-up, which would have stemmed from its quasi-revolutionary character. However, external conditions and the economic situation were not favourable for taking radical decisions. Struggling with raging inflation and bearing in mind the threats of Rakowski, that the approach of the army and the Ministry of the Interior constitute an impassable barrier, the prime minister took a number of actions that favoured maintaining old political rules, which were adopted to the great dissatisfaction of a sizeable part of the opposition. One should mention, for instance, the postponement of changes to the state administration and in the ministry of the interior and the ministry of national defence for many months, the delay in introducing the law on nationalisation of PZPR property, the maintaining of censorship until April 1990 (with such ideas as establishing new 'democratic' censorship – sic!), or no changes to information policy. Only in April was the Citizens' Militia replaced by the State Police, and the Security Service by the Office for the Protection of the State (UOP).<sup>[224]</sup> The slow pace of changes rapidly led to a situation in which the government lost its support and the advocates of the 'thick line' declaration (which according to the Prime Minister meant that his cabinet was responsible only for their own actions) transformed into critics of the policy proposed by the government (according to its opponents it meant an unwillingness to settle historical scores, conduct lustration and de-communisation, and acceptance for post-communists' presence in Polish politics and economy).<sup>[225]</sup>

The progressing stratification of the opposition side and a relatively permanent separation of the opposition from post-communist groups led to a significant delay (in comparison with other countries in the region) in adopting the new Constitution. In legal terms, the amendment of the 1952 Constitution, introduced in December 1989, had a great significance for the continuation of the old system. Thanks to the introduction of an amendment to Article 1 on the democratic state of law, the Constitution Tribunal could gradually extend democratic standards through the adjudication procedure, which undoubtedly supported political transformation in the country. Nevertheless, the logic of intertwining continuity and parting with the past effectively prevented the adoption of a new constitution.

The 'Small Constitution' passed in 1992 was a kind of compromise between Wałęsa and his opponents, and finally the full text of a completely new fundamental law was adopted no sooner than in 1997.

The policy of the Mazowiecki government, which for the citizenry meant severe belt-tightening caused by the Balcerowicz reforms, combined with a reluctance to split with the past completely, raised increasing bitterness. These sentiments were used by Wałęsa, who opted for a faster pace of changes, aimed for a free and general presidential election, and emphasised that the situation had changed and that Jaruzelski's time had come to an end.<sup>[226]</sup> After the election for the head of state was announced to be held in November and December 1990, Wałęsa based his campaign on a slogan proclaiming acceleration. The election was held on 25 November and 9 December 1990, and ended in defeat for Mazowiecki, who gained only 18.1 per cent of the vote and did not enter the second round, losing not only to Wałęsa (who gained nearly 40 per cent of the votes), but also to a man from nowhere: a repatriate from Canada, Stanisław Tymiński (who garnered 23.1 per cent of the vote). In the second round, after a massive media campaign against Tymiński, support was granted to Wałęsa by almost all political groups, and in the event he won, gaining 74.3 per cent of the vote.<sup>[227]</sup> After taking office, Wałęsa did not implement his electoral slogans; one of the most glaring examples of this was the consent to the continued existence of the contractual Sejm as long as until October 1991 (despite the fact that the resolution on the necessity of self-dissolution of the Sejm in the face of political changes, which occurred in Poland had already been adopted in September 1990).<sup>[228]</sup> Only after the parliamentary election did Jan Olszewski's government openly address the issue of a possible breaking up with the rules of the transition period, but due to weak parliamentary support, most of the declarations in this respect remained but wishful thinking. Unsuccessful reforms in such areas as the military and lustration proved that in confrontation with the party policy, breaking up with the past was impossible. Since then, the conflict between continuity and parting ceased to define the lines of separation in Polish politics, and the proposal of breaking up has been treated as an instrument used against political opponents by a narrow group of right wing parties.<sup>[229]</sup> Consequently, Polish politics was divided into four groups after the events of 1989–1993.

- 1) Supporters of the group gathered around Mazowiecki and his government, usually in favour of the model of liberal democracy, insignificant involvement of the state in the economy and the continuation of Balcerowicz's reform. As far as the outlook was concerned, the state should be rather neutral in its opinions. This political group included the Democratic Union party (*Unia Demokratyczna* – UD, becoming the Freedom Union in 1996, *Unia Wolności* – UW), led by Mazowiecki and Balcerowicz. The UD was a member of the Christian Democrat and People's Parties International until 1996. This group also included a part of the right wing which had been against Mazowiecki in 1989, but as a result of some experiences gathered in the first years after 1989, it changed direction and without hesitation supported both democratic processes and economic reforms, as well as the accession to the European Union (e.g. the Christian National Union, the Conservative People's Party, the Liberal Democratic Congress). These politicians differed from the UW through their attitude towards the Church and its role in the social life; they were also less enthusiastic about modernisation.
  
- 2) Supporters of the group initiated by Wałęsa, but ultimately taken over by Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński. This group consistently maintained that 1989 was the 'betrayal of the elites' and the post-communists should be held responsible for their crimes (martial law remained a painful wound in the memory of the whole generation), and the role of the government was to eradicate their influences from social life, particularly from the media and economy. This group accused Mazowiecki and his supporters of being too lenient towards post-communism and sometimes they also accused them of betraying the ideals of Solidarity. Advocates of these views were in favour of economic interventionism (undoubtedly it was part and parcel of their union origins and the experience gained in the NSZZ, which told them to take into consideration the needs of the economically underprivileged), and they were definitely less enthusiastic about increasing the scope of civic rights and freedoms (the role of administration was supposed to be limited but to a lesser extent than proposed by the UD and the UW). For a long time, they were also rather distrustful about integration with the European Union. A vast

majority of politicians from this group emphasised their connections with the Church, for some of them the role of the Church in social and public life should be expanded. The parties, which represented this outlook were as follows: the Centre Agreement (*Porozumienie Centrum* – PC), the Movement for the Republic of Poland (*Ruch dla Rzeczypospolitej*), the Movement for Reconstruction of Poland (*Ruch Odbudowy Polski*), led by Jan Olszewski, and a more radical organisation, based on the traditions of the former PAX, namely the League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin* – LPR), which was established in 2001 as a result of combining several parties, including the party led by Olszewski).

- 3) Supporters of the post-communists whose representative, the Democratic Left Alliance (*Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej* – SLD)<sup>[230]</sup> from 1991 onwards started to climb up the popularity rankings. The SLD was based on the support of functionaries of the *ancien régime*, but their driving force were extreme anti-clerical views (at least in some periods) and economic populism, as well as the longing for the People's Republic of Poland, which was visible in some parts of society. This longing was mostly due to a sudden leap in the unemployment rate, which was a side effect of the reforms implemented by Balcerowicz. This allowed the post-communists to convince inhabitants of pauperised villages and towns that the People's Republic of Poland was not so bad after all (at least they had jobs then), and that all the trouble began when the Solidarity government took charge of the country.
- 4) Yet another view was represented by the agrarian Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe* – PSL, also called the Polish Peasants' Party),<sup>[231]</sup> established on the basis of the transformed ZSL,<sup>[232]</sup> which was strongly connected with rural areas and defended the interests of rural inhabitants (particularly afflicted by the rapid transformation processes triggered by the Mazowiecki government). They differed from the SLD thanks to their dislike for PZPR functionaries, who tried to pretend to be social-democrats in the new reality, as well as their commitment to tradition and the Church, which preserved a strong influence in rural areas.

Due to economic problems and a high unemployment rate, reaching political stability was out of the question. It is not a matter of coincidence that in the period 1989–2005, the prime minister's position was held by ten different people. The reasons of such a state of affairs originated in the ideological legacy of the first post-1989 years of the Third Polish Republic, when the gap between post-communist groups and those based on traditions of Solidarity turned out to be an insurmountable obstacle, and the conflicts within the latter additionally destabilised political life. On the other hand, Polish reality after the Balcerowicz reform had a stiff framework into which Polish political life was locked. The scope of political activity was defined by issues such as integration with the EU, and agreements with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, as well as those signed with the creditors of Poland abroad. Consequently, even if a given political group, such as the SLD in 1993 and 2001, rose to power promising a dramatic improvement in the economy which was bound to end in failure, their eagerness to keep pre-election promises paled into insignificance. But since EU integration required implementing relevant reforms, each government before 2004, i.e. Poland's entry into the European Union, was forced to follow up on those implemented earlier.

For obvious reasons, the SLD-PSL-UP (Labour Union) coalition, which governed in the years 1993–1997 and 2001–2003, was not interested in changing the state of affairs (in 2003–2005, the SLD governed as minority coalition with the UP). Neither did the post-solidarity coalition of the Solidarity Electoral Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność* – AWS) and the UW (1997–2000; in 2000–2001 the AWS governed alone), which, despite implementing four reforms of the political system, did not object to the status quo that had been established earlier. The situation changed after the so-called Rywin Affair, or 'Rywingate' as it was labelled in Poland – a corruption scandal at the higher echelons of power, which exposed the mechanisms of law-making in Poland. It began in the summer of 2002, when Lew Rywin, a film producer, approached the editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Adam Michnik, with a proposal to change a draft bill of the media law which could be beneficial for *Gazeta's* publishing house, Agora S.A. These changes would have enabled Agora, and Michnik, to purchase Polsat television – all in exchange for a bribe worth USD 17.5 million and a senior

position in Polsat TV. In order to make his offer more credible, Rywin said that he was acting on behalf of the most prominent activists from the SLD and the 'group in power' (according to public opinion, and some members of the Sejm committee appointed to investigate the scandal, this 'group in power' included such influential left-wing activists as Robert Kwiatkowski, Włodzimierz Czarzasty, or Aleksandra Jakubowska). The scandal was revealed by *Gazeta Wyborcza* six months after Rywin had visited Michnik, when the transcript of the conversation was published in one of the issues of the newspaper.<sup>[233]</sup> The consequence of the scandal led to the appointment of the first investigation committee by the Sejm. Its activity was carefully monitored and commented on. Independently from the various conclusions drawn by its particular members, the committee's activity revealed the mechanisms of power in the Third Polish Republic, which shook the Polish political world and led to the reappearance of the postulates for a deeper reorganisation of public life.<sup>[234]</sup>

This resulted in an emergence of a call to build the 'Fourth Polish Republic' – a concept that assumed a thorough conversion and strengthening of the state (although the authors of the proposal did not aim for the state's omnipotence) which had exhausted the possibilities of existence in its previous shape. Such a need was proclaimed already back in 1998 by historian and political scientist Rafał Matyja and popularised and introduced into the wider public debate by sociologist and historian Paweł Śpiewak in January 2003.<sup>[235]</sup> An increase in the popularity of such a radical parting with the past was brought about by the Rywin Affair on one hand, and social fatigue with the 15-year period of constant economic and political transformations on the other hand. The above factors overlapped with a decrease in popularity of the idea of cozying up to Western countries. After joining NATO (12 March 1999) and the European Union (1 May 2004), the strategic goals of Polish foreign policy formulated in the 1990s were attained.<sup>[236]</sup> On the other hand, the European project itself entered a crisis stage, which was proved by referenda on the so-called European Constitution in France and the Netherlands in 2005. In fact, the result of the negotiations of the – later not ratified – Constitutional Treaty was received by the majority of Polish political elites with disappointment (and these were often the ones so far associated with the centre of the political stage).

Under such circumstances, the 2005 parliamentary election was won by two parties which directly referred to the concept of the Fourth Polish Republic – the Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* – PiS) and the Civic Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska* – PO), whereas the presidential election was won by Lech Kaczyński from the PiS. The victory of the PiS over the PO came as a huge surprise (as some members of the public commented: ‘PO did not have a backup plan, whereas PiS lacked an original plan’), with the Civic Platform deciding not to enter into a coalition with a stronger partner.<sup>[237]</sup> Those elections mark the deepest change on the Polish political stage, which shifted both main lines of division and social emotions to a different place.

The project of the Fourth Polish Republic executed by the PiS, a party which was first supported by the *Samobrona* (Self-Defence) agrarian populists and the extreme right-wing LPR, which all together formed the government coalition in 2006,<sup>[238]</sup> stirs a lot of controversy right up until today. This stems from the fact that the programme proposed by the PiS referred to the principles of the Olszewski government, decidedly different from the binding programme consensus, in which requirements of internal and foreign policy were subordinated to wider European integration goals; at the same time in the years 1989–2005, the role of the state in the life of ordinary citizens gradually decreased, even though consecutive governments (such as the SLD-PSL in 1993–1997 and 2001–2003, and then the SLD alone) tried to slow down this process. Joining the European Union and a significant improvement of the economic condition coincided with the situation in which power was taken over by a political group setting much more demanding goals for the state than those accepted by the intellectual elite of the country thus far. The programme proposed by the PiS based on the concept of a strong state, i.e. one that has the following priorities: criminals (particularly those who are in power) are justly punished by the efficient judiciary system; a role played by the government in the economy is crucial; privatisation of state enterprises is treated as a last resort; citizens who are out of employment are not left on their own but can count on the help of relevant institutions; the state appreciates the role of the Church, and Polish tradition is supported by funds supplied by the government budget. The Polish national interest in foreign policy was supposed to be emphasised much more strongly than by earlier governments.<sup>[239]</sup>

It is not difficult to predict that such a programme, because of its clear centrist-statist tendencies and the promotion of the official's role in the state as well as fostering the ideals of social sensitivity, which refer to the concept of social solidarity, was bound to come across some resistance of those who preferred a more liberal model. The resistance grew bigger as leaders of the PiS clearly articulated whom they perceived as enemies of their ideas, and the enemies included both the post-communists discredited after the 'Rywingate' and part of the opposition associated with Mazowiecki. As far as the latter group was concerned, the PiS blamed them for the fact that during the years of transformation they stood firm against introducing legislation which would hold some groups of people responsible for the crimes of the People's Republic of Poland, without proving their guilt in a lawsuit, and also against lustration that would involve not only a narrow group of top rank officials but also other groups of public trust (journalists, those working in the judiciary or in the academia, etc.).

The Kaczyński brothers did not manage to implement the programme. After years of reforms going in another direction, reversing these efforts would have required many years' work and a much wider social support than just an arithmetic majority and the backup of President Lech Kaczyński, who was at the disposal of the coalition consisting of the PiS, the *Samobrona*, and the LPR, which was necessary to pass certain laws effectively. In this respect, the switching sides by the PO greatly diminished the chance of success of the Fourth Polish Republic project, albeit it did not eliminate it entirely. The resistance against ideas of the PiS stemmed, on the one hand, from a different approach to democracy and on the other, from differences arising between the party programme and the *Realpolitik*. It was obvious that implementing the programme of the PiS meant a much larger consolidation of power in Warsaw at the expense of local authorities losing influence. This centralisation was a logical consequence of emphasising social equality and levelling of opportunities for the regions, which bore the biggest costs of transformation, as well as the result of the will to efficiently suppress corruption and eliminate the influence of organised crime on the Polish economy. The hitch was that in order to achieve these goals, some regulations had to be introduced which in fact decreased the protection of rights of the individual, and at this point the programme proposed by the PiS was unacceptable for

the Polish elites, and finally for the whole society, which in a snap election in 2007 pushed the party into the opposition.<sup>[240]</sup> Hence, the concept of a broad reform of the judiciary, which Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro tried to enforce, fell through. It came across strong resistance in the legal milieu and the courts, including the Constitutional Tribunal which rightly indicated its weak preparation pertaining to the subject matter and its abandoning of standards for democratic legal process, introduced in Poland after 1989. For similar reasons, the Constitutional Tribunal considered the amended lustration law as partly unconstitutional.<sup>[241]</sup>

However, it goes without saying that the reason for the biggest aversion to the Fourth Polish Republic project was not so much the programme itself but the manner of its implementation. The idea to crack down on corruption was popular in society, and despite the vociferous protests of legal circles, Zbigniew Ziobro was one of the most popular politicians at the time. The idea of holding the communists responsible for the period of the People's Republic of Poland could enjoy much greater support in Poland. Anyhow, as the PiS approval rating began to slide over time, and, inversely, support of the opposition PO grew, the reasons for the latter winning the election in 2007 were threefold. Firstly, the PiS remained in the coalition with political parties, which most of the society did not trust. Andrzej Lepper, a populist who built his popularity solely on the negation of the political changes after 1989, soon became the subject of a prosecutor's investigation, which broke out in connection with a sex affair, and another bribery scandal which was revealed by the Central Anticorruption Bureau. The latter scandal became the reason for breaking the coalition and announcing the snap election.<sup>[242]</sup> Moreover, Roman Giertych from the nationalist LPR was not considered very trustworthy either. Yet politicians from the PiS were also involved in corruption scandals (an affair in the Ministry of Sport, for example). With regards to punishing the responsible parties for the crimes of the People's Republic of Poland and lustration, the PiS could count on greater understanding, but for the fact that the party leadership from the outset questioned not only the legal and moral heritage of 1945–1989, but also the period of political transformation, not hesitating to verbally abuse people who undoubtedly deserved credit for what they had done for Poland (such as Lech Wałęsa, Bronisław Geremek, and Władysław Bartoszewski), and even the country's

intellectual elite (mockingly referred to as an “elite of liars”).<sup>[243]</sup> Many of those who held any offices in the 1990s felt threatened, and they were refused any credit whatsoever by Kaczyński’s team, which made explicit suggestions in its propaganda that it was those people who implemented a part of a bigger plan whose aim was to harm Poland’s national interests. Such statements, combined with a clumsily executed penal policy (when the general prosecutor’s office, whose head was Ziobro, could not present the arrested parties with any evidence of their alleged crimes), and the activity of the Institute of National Remembrance, responsible for lustration, and whose publications put forward accusations based on more or less plausible data, created a peculiar ‘psychosis’, furthermore fuelling an argument from the opposition that Jarosław Kaczyński did not actually aim at eradicating pathology in Polish political life, but was rather vying for a personal dictatorship in which democracy would merely be a meaningless façade. This accusation was additionally supported by the activity of the Central Anticorruption Bureau, especially established when the PiS came to power, which during the election campaign started an investigation against an MP from the PO, with the propaganda of the power-wielding party clearly suggesting that if the PO won the election, then power once again would be taken by people who had a guilty conscience.<sup>[244]</sup>

It was this sense of being under threat and the inability to gain people who had a neutral outlook, as well as the unfavourable attitudes of majority of the media and conflicts with many influential professional corporations and business, which was crucial for the party’s defeat in the election of autumn 2007.<sup>[245]</sup> However, when the coalition formed by the PO and the PSL came to power, it did not mean the return to a *status quo ante*, signifying a complete rejection of PiS policy. Civic Platform drew conclusions from their defeat in 2005 and consequently their programme evolved towards a social direction considering the needs of those economically underprivileged, more than had been the case at the beginning of the decade. After the election, it turned out that the new prime minister, Donald Tusk, was willing to embrace some anticorruption slogans (even a special ministerial position was appointed for that purpose in the prime minister’s chancellery, but the results of this work are not very impressive), and did not decide to put an end to historical policy led by his predecessors. The result of this

approach was the appointment, after a successful voting hand-in-hand with the PiS, of a young historian, Łukasz Kamiński, for the head of the Institute of National Remembrance in June 2011, which happened against the expectations of some politicians and journalists who wanted to reduce this institution to a minimum.<sup>[246]</sup> Certain continuity in the activities of both governments was also noticeable in foreign policy, which in 2005–2007 was still the subject of bitter argument between the two groups. Although the diplomacy, led by Radosław Sikorski, adopted a much friendlier attitude towards Berlin, Paris, and Brussels, and was more conciliatory towards Moscow, focusing less on Central Europe, the Euro-enthusiasm so typical of Polish liberals at the beginning of the decade was replaced by a much larger dose of Euro-realism.<sup>[247]</sup> As a consequence, the PO skilfully absorbed the ideas proposed by the PiS and thus managed to stay in power efficiently with ratings hovering around 45–50 per cent in popularity rankings, while the PO candidate, Bronisław Komorowski, won the snap presidential election (July 2010). In 2011, the Civic Platform won the parliamentary election again, gaining over 39 per cent of the votes (almost ten percentage points more than the PiS), thus becoming the first party after 1989, which managed to maintain power for a second term of office.<sup>[248]</sup>

It was not as successful, however, as the first term. People became more critical towards the ruling coalition as a number of disastrous events for the PO's image reached public opinion (such as the wiretapping affair or the Amber Gold shadow banking scandal). One year before the parliamentary elections, Donald Tusk decided to bow out of domestic politics and became the President of the European Council. He was replaced by Ewa Kopacz, who did not succeed in reversing the disadvantageous trend hitting PO's popularity, and President Komorowski failed to become a real leader. The effect was shocking – Komorowski, who in January 2015 was supposed to win in the first round second term as president, in May lost to Andrzej Duda (PiS), who had not even been a top ranked party politician a few months earlier. Another smashing hit came in October – the Civic Platform not only lost, but the Law and Justice became the first party after 1989, which gained enough seats to rule independently.<sup>[249]</sup>

It is impossible not to notice that the political dispute between the two main actors of the Polish political stage after 2005 grew extremely heated

(which according to many observers was beneficial for both sides, as it allowed them to maintain political unrest and thus pull the voters together basing on the dichotomy of ‘us and them’), which made cooperation difficult even concerning the most crucial issues for the country. The additional factor which contributed to further intensification of the political conflict, and even its transfer to another level, was the plane crash near Smolensk on 10 April 2010, in which President Lech Kaczyński and 95 persons of the Polish elite died.

The double victory of the Law and Justice, and the complete power garnered by one party should be seen in broader perspective – Brexit and Donald Trump’s victory in the US, the growing popularity of nationalist or populist parties in EU countries and global political changes. In its first year of governing, the PiS showed that the idea of deeper reconstruction of the country and society is being realised. Both directions of reforms and measures taken there have been frequently criticised abroad, mostly by liberal western media. The most fundamental criticism concerned the conflict around the Constitutional Court and the reform of the judiciary system, which became the topic of several hearings in the European Union’s institutions, followed by triggering Article 7 of the Treaty against Poland. However, it is hard to judge the meaning of these changes and they go far beyond the scope of this book.

## Dispute over Poland

Next to the struggle on the political stage, another – albeit less aggressive and emotional – ideological dispute was ongoing. In this dispute, the Polish intellectual elite tried to establish what should be the final shape of Polish reforms and what place Poland should occupy in a globalising world. Discussions about the pace of political transformation, its direction, and the manner of parting with the People’s Republic of Poland, were derivatives of a deeper conflict which took place on many grounds and whose essence was, in effect, the Polish identity. This debate had already been going on among opposition circles in the 1970s and 1980s, and as a formal debate about Poland, it properly started when the Mazowiecki government was appointed. Then, the fundamental lines of ideological division started

to emerge, which took the lead in the Polish public debate for the next 25 years. Certainly, specific issues under debate changed over the years and so did its temperature and participants (some of them switched sides in the interim), but the main division between the proponents of evolutionary democratic development, even at a cost of the major officers of the People's Republic of Poland getting away with their crimes, and the proponents of consistently settling accounts with the People's Republic of Poland and establishing a strong state remained unchanged. Only during the election campaign in 2005 did this division become less important. Then it turned out that the PiS introduced the division between the proponents of liberalism and solidarity only for the benefit of the campaign, but the main political division line remained one between those in favour of 'sovereignty', and those supporting 'globalism', essentially meaning between some who were convinced that the state should regain control over certain processes, and others who thought such ideas were wrong or impossible to implement.<sup>[250]</sup>

The camp of liberal democrats, who referred to the continuity with the People's Republic of Poland and the necessity to respect the resolutions of the Round Table, originated from the left-wing and liberal tendencies of Solidarity, and from the circles gathered around such people as Bronisław Geremek, Jacek Kuroń, and Tadeusz Mazowiecki. However, the main ideologist of this group was still Adam Michnik. This broad coalition involved not only political parties (the Citizens' Movement for Democratic Action, the UD and then the UW), but also influential intellectual groups with extensive media backup, so in actual fact the political component was not the strongest factor. *Gazeta Wyborcza* was the embodiment of this broad community, the medium that set the main vectors of political debate in the first years of the free Republic of Poland. One should emphasise that although this trend originated from the anticommunist opposition, for a long time its main concern were not the members of the SLD, but right-wing and centrist groups, which epitomised such dangers as nationalism, xenophobia, or clericalism. *Gazeta Wyborcza's* frenzy grew bigger when the failure of Mazowiecki's team in 1990 was interpreted as a threat to democracy in Poland, which undoubtedly influenced the editor-in-chief to look for some solutions and reach a historical compromise with the post-communists from the SLD.<sup>[251]</sup> This dispute exploded in the form of 'the war on the top' when

the strong group focused around Mazowiecki's government was confronted with the group led by Lech Wałęsa, supported by *Tygodnik Solidarność* (*The Solidarność Weekly*). This periodical, whose editor was Jarosław Kaczyński, held the government responsible for the polarisation of the political stage and using in the debate the Manichean dichotomy of good and evil, and pushing the opponents towards nationalistic and Catholic radicalism.<sup>[252]</sup> Wałęsa himself, confronted with an attempt of extortion of his unconditional support for the government under the pretext of obtaining 'national consensus', said: "The present situation – supporting the government, persuading that this is as good as it gets, that there is nothing to fight for, but only to back up – is neither good for the government nor safe for the society".<sup>[253]</sup> Several days later, Kaczyński announced that Wałęsa was going to run for president.

Out of necessity, we might simplify matters but we can claim that the dispute addressed the following issues:

- 1) The model of democracy. For broadly understood *Gazeta Wyborcza* circles, the best political solution would be liberal democracy, with a limited role of the state, low taxes, minimum level of interventionism and Poland strongly attached to the EU. Opponents of this approach maintained that economic neo-liberalism is not a good solution; basically the state should play an active role, whereas as far as EU integration is concerned, they did not take a common stand.
- 2) The approach towards the People's Republic of Poland and settling scores with the past. Some columnists from *Gazeta Wyborcza* thought that the People's Republic of Poland had its bright sides and – despite the fact that it ended in economic failure – it could not be perceived as a dichotomy of good and bad, whereas the traditions of the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939) might lead Poland to an authoritarian system and nationalism which would hinder the democratisation process and integration with the EU. Opponents of Michnik, on the other hand, considered the time of the People's Republic of Poland as a period, which was irretrievably lost, whereas the Second Polish Republic, in their opinion, was the source of endless inspiration for contemporary politics.

The evaluation of the People's Republic of Poland also led to various calls for the settling of accounts with the past. While the liberal group maintained that in a democratic country the only acceptable form of criminal accountability is based on legal proceedings as a result of which the defendant is found guilty, their opponents claimed that it is merely ignoring the reality in which using classic criminal proceedings would actually never lead to a conviction because gathering sufficient evidence would turn out impossible. Moreover, they were afraid of the influence of people from the former regime in law enforcement agencies and in the judiciary.

- 3) The role of the Catholic Church in Poland. The Church enjoyed unquestionable authority in the communist period, when it avoided being destroyed or marginalised; on the contrary, it played a key role in keeping up the nation's spirits. After the changes, which took place after 1989, the Church had to find a new way for the new reality. The debate about the Church considered such matters as its presence in public life, the teaching of religious education in schools (as it had been in the past), concordat (the agreement between Poland and the Holy See), and abortion. The debate was particularly vivid in the early 1990s, when on the one hand, some fears arose connected with over-representation of the Church in public life, which could lead to the emergence of a 'confessional state'; on the other hand, the Church was defended from these accusations and it was demanded that the public and legal order of the Third Polish Republic should be based on the Christian tradition. However, the last issue turned out much more complicated than it seemed at first: although some parts of the post-communist media such as the weekly *Nie*, edited by Urban, and *Trybuna* reeked of anti-clericalism, which invoked intense responses from some Catholic media,<sup>[254]</sup> the approach of *Gazeta Wyborcza* remained much more complex. It included both openly anticlerical texts as well as ones that were quite friendly towards the Church, for example written by journalists belonging to the circle of *Tygodnik Powszechny*. The great role of the Church in the time of the People's Republic of Poland, the confessional homogeneity of the society and the unquestionable authority of John Paul II really heated up the debate about the role of the Church, but the circles criticising its excessive

participation in public life did not decide on a full-on confrontation. On the other hand, the Church hierarchy learned quickly that too deep an interference in political discussion or even supporting some political parties by the Church authority (as in 1991, when they supported the Catholic Election Action), directly leads to losing its credence. No political group (including post-communists) was willing to undertake an open fight with the Church, both because they counted on its support in various issues, or at least friendly neutrality (the case of the Euro-Atlantic integration), and because each group consisted of believers and non-believers (including the post-communist SLD). These factors meant that the Church obtained satisfying solutions concerning almost every controversial issue – religious education returned to schools, the Sejm adopted a ‘compromise’ anti-abortion law, which allowed abortion only when pregnancy threatened mother’s life or health, it was a result of crime, or when the foetus was genetically impaired. The concordat, whose ratification was held up by the Sejm when the post-communists had the majority of seats, was finally ratified in 1998 and the fact that it was signed by President Kwaśniewski (despite the protests of his political team) seems symbolic.

In the reality of the 1990s (and to a certain degree also later on), the advantage of the liberal group in these political disputes seemed clear, as far as the quantity and quality of the printed media was concerned, particularly that most of the Polish cultural and academic elite had similar views as those represented by *Gazeta Wyborcza*. In this sense, ‘the narrative mainstream’ was clearly on the side of Michnik, particularly because his opponents were dispersed and even sometimes represented contrary options. Some of them gathered around the media led by the Redemptorist, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk (Radio Maryja, the *Nasz Dziennik* newspaper, and later the *Trwam* television), representing a clerical and nationalist movement, shaped by defying the outcome of the Polish political transformation and announcing that it was a plot conjured up by the enemies of the Polish state. The conservative trend focused around the so-called ‘pampers group’ (journalists of the young generation who had right-wing and centre-right views) and the *Życie Warszawy* newspaper, which in 1996 changed

its title to simply *Życie*. This trend clearly tried to reconcile the postulates of the active role of the Church and a bigger respect for Polish historical heritage with the modernisation requirements of the country. The basic problem of the Polish conservative milieu was very weak capital support. This hindered building any independent media arsenal, which influenced the possibilities of presenting their ideas in a continuous and consistent way.

In the 1990s, the main line of controversy was defined as a conflict between the supporters and opponents of post-communism. But an important remark should be made here. Although in the public debate, the groups gathered around *Gazeta Wyborcza* and the UW often took the same side as the SLD, a 'coalition above divisions', expected by some, in which both groups would unite, never happened. It is an interesting phenomenon considering that such an agreement was reached in Hungary already in 1994. This situation should be explained in categories of taste (but combined with political calculation) – an open union with post-communists would be unacceptable not only for a big part of the UW electorate, but also for its many activists who came from opposition groups and remembered the times of martial law. Certainly, there was also an argument that right-wing parties would accuse them of striking agreements with the SLD (which posed a real risk as the right used repeatedly the rhetoric of 'the Round Table betrayal'). It should also be remembered that although *Gazeta Wyborcza* achieved an enormous success in shaping the awareness of Poles, neither the UD nor the UW had ever succeeded in a similar way in politics. Under the circumstances entering the coalition with a much stronger SLD would threaten the disappearance of the UW as if it had no serious possibility to invoke its Solidarity origins, it would have quickly become subservient to the post-communists.

The year 2005 could be considered a breakthrough in Polish public discourse due to a radical change, which occurred on the political stage as a result of both presidential and parliamentary elections. A rapid fall of the post-communist formation opened the horizons of the debate and elevated it to the next level, on which other European countries also debate, including those without a communist past. Briefly referred to as the dispute between 'sovereignty supporters' and 'globalists', it replaced the main conflict so far, although it also incorporated the issues related to post-communism.

Such a line of division was shaped for the next two years. Even though before the 2005 election both the PiS and, to some extent, the PO declared their support for the idea of the Fourth Polish Republic, i.e. strengthening the state ('sovereignty' postulates), during the snap election in 2007, these two parties stood on opposite sides of the barricade. The line of debate marked in this way overlapped with the earlier one, thereby extending its spectrum in the mainstream – to put it simply, one might claim that the 'globalists' adopted the attitude of defending the accomplishments of the 30-year transformation, whereas 'sovereignty' supporters opted for criticism. But the change which occurred in Polish political discourse after the 'Rywingate' moved it far beyond such a framework, and the years to come only confirmed this change, making it a constant determinant of the Polish public debate.

## Post-communists – the Rise and Fall of the Formation

After the Round Table agreements, June election, and the formation of the Mazowiecki government, the one-party system ceased to function in Poland,<sup>[255]</sup> which meant that the PZPR had to find itself a new place under the new conditions of actual social competition. The activists of 'the leading power of the nation' so far had to answer the question whether they should conduct further activity and, if so, in what capacity.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the PZPR summoned in January 1990 debated in the atmosphere of apathy and discouragement that had been present among the party members for half a year. Already in October 1989, the parliamentary club of the PZPR announced in a declaration: "The PZPR ran out of time. It is on the verge of political breakdown".<sup>[256]</sup> During the Congress, the necessity of dissolving the organisation under its current name was out of the question, the matter to decide was only as to the manner of transforming the party into 'a modern social democracy'. Finally, the less radical option won, according to which a new party was formed (Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland, *Socjaldemokracja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* – SdRP)

which invoked the accomplishments of the PZPR. A young and dynamic activist, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, became the party leader. He was a symbol of transformation and adept at adapting to the new conditions. The few delegates who advocated a breaking off from the heritage of the PZPR, failed.<sup>[257]</sup>

A symbolic ending of the existence of 'the leading power of the nation' was marked with famous words uttered on 29 January 1990 by its last First Secretary, Mieczysław F. Rakowski: "Take out the banner of the PZPR". Yet since the SdRP was not willing to break up with the past entirely, particularly with regards to the property of the dissolved party, many controversies arose around this issue from the very beginning. The draft law on the nationalisation of the party property was blocked as too radical, and, in November 1990, a new law was adopted on the seizure of the property that belonged to the former PZPR. In 1992, the treasury took over a great deal of the party's estate, but the execution of liabilities after taking over cash and movable estate was much more difficult as their value was difficult to estimate and the representatives of SdRP efficiently blocked all information on the subject.<sup>[258]</sup>

The financial advantage over other participants of political life in Poland, and the fact that some of the post-Solidarity elites accepted that the post-communists could gain credence in the eyes of the society as a serious and rightful political subject, made this formation extremely successful.<sup>[259]</sup> Its position on the political arena became stronger and more grounded from one election to another. In the first round of the presidential election in November 1990, the post-communist candidate, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, ranked fourth, gaining over 1.5 million votes (9.2 per cent), whereas in the first completely free parliamentary election, the post-communist party appeared in a broader coalition of left wing parties, the SLD, and gained 12 per cent of the vote, and thereby 60 of their MPs entered the Sejm, which under the circumstances of the unprecedented scattering of the parliament allowed them to establish the second biggest parliamentary club.<sup>[260]</sup>

After the election in 1991, it was too early for the post-communists to participate in any power wielding, so the SLD was actually isolated in the Sejm. The leader of this group, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, albeit satisfied with the election result, was aware of the situation and claimed that his grouping's place was in the 'responsible opposition'. Paradoxically,

remaining on the sidetrack of the mainstream of political conflict was quite beneficial for the SLD, as in the shadows of permanent fights conducted by the centre-right, the post-communists managed to present themselves as 'a peaceful refuge' and as eager defendants of democracy against 'anti-communism with a Bolshevik front' (as Kwaśniewski put it); they also denied the communist character of the PZPR, claiming that in the past they had been only pragmatic technocrats.<sup>[261]</sup>

The success achieved by the SLD in the next snap election in 1993 was surprising for the post-communists themselves. A decided quantitative victory (20.4 per cent of the vote) was almost doubled by the advantageous electoral regulations – for the first time there were election thresholds – 5 per cent for a party and 8 per cent for a coalition – and the d'Hondt method, which preferred strong parties when the votes were converted into parliamentary seats. New electoral regulations, combined with the fact that the right wing was not united and could not adjust to a completely different system, contributed to the situation in which over 1/3 of voters were not represented in the Sejm. Finally, the post-communists, who had over 37 per cent of the seats, set up a coalition with the PSL, which also benefited from the new electoral regulations, gaining 15.4 per cent of the votes, and 28.7 per cent of the seats in the Sejm.<sup>[262]</sup>

Obtaining a decidedly dominant position in the parliament by the post-communist parties only four years after abolishing the communist regime came as a huge shock for post-Solidarity elites and raised fears whether the directions of economic reforms and the line of foreign policy adopted so far would be maintained. The SLD itself was also in a bit of an uncomfortable situation, contrary to what the parliamentary arithmetic indicated, as the UD flatly refused to form a coalition, and the post-communists were left with the PSL, which set very tough conditions. Additionally, they were convinced that they had to gain credence in the eyes of society and were afraid of President Wałęsa's possible reactions.<sup>[263]</sup> These factors contributed to appointing Waldemar Pawlak from the PSL as the prime minister, whereas the president was asked to take the initiative of choosing the heads of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of the Interior, which meant stretching the 'Small Constitution' to a certain extent.

The fears of returning to communism and abandoning the main directions of the policy while the SLD and the PSL were in power turned out to have been unjustified. The declaration to continue the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the country made when Poland joined the Partnership for Peace programme greatly alleviated the tension. Slowing down the pace of social and economic reforms fully corresponded with the sentiments in the society, tired after the post-1989 radical changes. Despite a sharp conflict inside the coalition, the leaders of the SLD managed to maintain a peaceful and level-headed image, and the conflicts with President Wałęsa, who could easily have been accused of political rowdiness, definitely helped achieve that purpose. Under the circumstances, another surprising event occurred: in 1995, the leader of the post-communists, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, won the second round of the presidential election against Lech Wałęsa, the symbol of Solidarity. The dismissal of Waldemar Pawlak from the prime ministerial position in March 1995 gave way to two years of total control under the post-communists. They did not seem to be harmed by anything: neither by their mistakes (such as the candid statement by Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz addressed to the sufferers of a giant flood in the summer of 1997: “you should have taken out insurance”), nor even by the most serious affairs (such as accusations, which with time turned out unjustified, addressed at Prime Minister Józef Oleksy that he had been spying for Moscow – the so-called ‘Olin Affair’). In the next parliamentary election conducted in 1997, the SLD obtained 27.1 per cent of the vote, almost seven points more than four years earlier, but it did not translate into a similar success – the centre-right had learned their lesson, and united under the banner of the Solidarity Electoral Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność* – AWS). The AWS gained 33.8 per cent of the votes, formed a coalition cabinet with the UW (13.2 per cent), and thus ousted the post-communists from government.

However, the successive years brought the post-communist team back to the height of power. Challenging reforms initiated by the coalition government under Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek, the decomposition of the AWS, as well as serious tensions between the two governing partners, all contributed to the growing popularity of the SLD and its leaders. The culmination of the growing power of the SLD was marked by two events: a crushing victory of Kwaśniewski in the presidential election in 2000 – the incumbent

president obtained as many as 53.9 per cent of the vote in the first round, and the success in the parliamentary election achieved by the coalition of the SLD with the Labour Union (*Unia Pracy* – UP). The latter was a small left-wing party which had non-communist roots and did not have any chance of entering the Sejm on its own. The result of over 41 per cent of the vote was the best obtained after 1989 (a better one was scored seven years later by the PO when they received 41.51 per cent of the vote).

However, the election result was not sufficient for the SLD-UP coalition to form a government alone (due to different electoral regulations), and they needed yet another alliance with PSL. The second coalition of this kind did not have such limitations (external and resulting from self-restriction) as it did in 1993–1997. The post-communists did not have to gain social credence; they also had a very strong position in the Sejm (216 seats). Leszek Miller – former first secretary of the Provincial Committee of the PZPR in Skierniewice, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the PZPR and one of the founders of the SdRP and then the political party SLD – became the prime minister. He was known as an ‘iron chancellor’, a politician who embodied not only toughness and even brutality in politics, but also resorted to cynicism. The government camp adopted a similar manner of behaviour as they were increasingly convinced that nothing could disturb the popularity of the post-communists in society.

This self-conviction of their impunity formed the basis for the failure of the SLD.<sup>[264]</sup> Its catalyst was the Rywingate affair, after which the proceedings of the Sejm investigation committee dealt heavy blows to the post-communist formation, being the most drastic turn of events for the post-communists in Poland. Since then, the SLD was on the defensive, which was made even more difficult by the revelations of subsequent scandals (such as the Starachowice Affair, which concerned an information leak about planned arrests, and a corruption scandal known as the ‘Pęczak Case’). This deep crisis was observed by the coalition partners (the PSL), who became increasingly distanced from the government, and finally in March 2003 they were removed from it. The SLD managed to maintain a minority cabinet until the election planned for autumn 2005 was held, but the earlier monolithic image of the party was cracked. In March 2004, a group of activists led by Marek Borowski established a new organisation – the Social Democracy

of Poland (SdPl); a year later, other members abandoned the SLD and joined a new party that replaced the UW, the Democratic Party (*Partia Demokratyczna* – PD). The image of the post-communists could not be saved by the new leadership and promoting the ‘young generation’, embodied by the new party leader, Wojciech Olejniczak. The European parliamentary election in 2004 (9.2 per cent of the vote) and the parliamentary election in 2005 (11.3 per cent of the vote) ended in failure for the SLD and foreshadowed serious problems for the formation which had been so powerful before.<sup>[265]</sup>

The attempts to regain their position did not bring about the desired results. The changes in the ‘first row’ of politicians (mainly due to lack of charisma among the promoted leaders – Olejniczak and Grzegorz Napieralski), an alliance with other organisations (this was the purpose of the ‘Left and Democrats’ coalition formed in 2006, which consisted of the SLD, the SdPl, the PD, and the UP), as well as an attempt to take advantage of Kwaśniewski’s popularity, fell flat. In the parliamentary elections of 2005 and 2007, the SLD obtained a little above 10 per cent of the vote. In 2009, the SLD adopted another strategy by inviting older and more popular activists to the ‘first row’ (Leszek Miller and Józef Oleksy). This resulted in putting up Jerzy Szmajdziński for the presidential election in 2010 (his death in the airplane catastrophe near Smoleńsk was the reason for the change of the candidate, so finally Napieralski ran for president and obtained about 14 per cent of the vote). Eventually, it was Miller who returned to the position of party leader in 2012, but without success. In 2015, the party suffered two disastrous defeats. In the presidential election of 2015, the SLD decided to put forward a young unknown historian, Magdalena Ogórek, who was only loosely connected with the party. She got only 2.38 per cent of the votes, and serious questions emerged within the SLD about the purpose of the strange experiment. Another hit came in the parliamentary elections in 2015, as the party decided to start as a coalition with smaller entities (which levelled the electoral threshold to 8 per cent of votes), only to fall out the Sejm after gaining 7.5 per cent.<sup>[266]</sup> Those two major mistakes cost Miller the post – he was replaced by Włodzimierz Czarzasty.

## Settling Accounts with the Past

The basic political dispute regarding settling scores with the communist past in Poland was connected with the issue of lustration and revealing names of people working for the Security Service (SB) and other secret services. This issue appeared in the public debate at the beginning of April 1990 and its main context was the concern about the state security in a situation of blackmail involving persons engaged in cooperation with secret services. But then the topic was not given high priority by the new authorities.<sup>[267]</sup>

At the beginning, it should be noted that in Poland, unlike in other countries, such as Czechoslovakia, the definition of lustration was quite narrow and it did not involve de-communisation. As such, it was not justified by eliminating the old order, which would have involved staff turnover, but only by protecting the state against potential blackmail directed at people who performed important public functions and who, in the past, had cooperated with the secret police.<sup>[268]</sup>

The first attempt to regulate this situation legally was made by the Christian National Union (*Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko Narodowe* – ZChN) in the spring of 1991. The draft submitted by the ZChN assumed the publication of information concerning cooperation with the Secret Service of persons who ran for parliament. Such a regulation was supposed to become a part of electoral law, but in the contractual Sejm it did not have any chance to succeed, so it fell through.<sup>[269]</sup> The proponents of lustration had a much bigger chance in the Senate, as the Senators were elected in a completely free election procedure, and they managed to introduce a resolution, which called on the candidates for parliament to undergo a verification procedure that would examine their possible activity as agents.<sup>[270]</sup> However, this resolution was not binding or implemented in practice.

In autumn 1991, the proponents of lustration gained a much stronger position in the Sejm, which was elected in a completely democratic way. More importantly, lustration was decidedly supported by the government: Prime Minister Jan Olszewski and Minister of the Interior Antoni Macierewicz. In his policy statement, the prime minister announced as follows: “the demand of holding the culprits responsible for what they have done stems not from revenge, but a moral necessity, the necessity to bring up the nation in the spirit

of righteousness. We do not want collective responsibility but responsibility for individual decisions made by people who committed crimes against the national interest for the sake of pursuing their careers. Such people should not be surprised that they might be punished for that”.<sup>[271]</sup> Subsequent government activity, such as appointing the Department of Studies for the Ministry of the Interior which examined the files of the Security Service and prepared a possible lustration procedure after its passing by the Sejm, confirmed the determination expressed by the prime minister.

On 28 May 1992, on the initiative of MP Janusz Korwin-Mikke from Real Politics Union (*Unia Polityki Realnej* – UPR), the Sejm passed a resolution which obliged the interior minister to reveal, until 6 June, the names of people cooperating with the Security Office and the Security Service and who belonged to the following groups: state officials of high rank, MPs and Senators, and in the further perspective, also judges, prosecutors, lawyers, members of local councils as well as local authority executives. The resolution was adopted very quickly thanks to political ploys, yet was imperfect and incompatible with other acts of law (including the Constitution), while in practice it did not provide for any procedure of appeal and gave very wide competences to Minister Macierewicz, who was obliged to decide who had cooperated with the secret services.<sup>[272]</sup>

The implementation of the law was conducted in parallel with the procedure of dismissing the government on the motion put forward by the UD, which made the atmosphere even more heated. On 4 June 1992, Macierewicz provided the leaders of parliamentary clubs with sealed envelopes containing 64 names of people who did not cooperate with the services but whose names were found in the files examined by the Ministry of the Interior. Thus, the minister tried to protect himself from potential allegations, but at the same time he did not follow up on the resolution, which required him to establish unambiguously whether the vetted individuals had had any connections with the Security Service in the past.<sup>[273]</sup> Soon Olszewski’s government was dismissed, which the prime minister interpreted as the result of activity of those threatened by lustration.

The ‘Macierewicz List’ remained a synonym of lustration for a long time – its opponents presented the minister’s activity as posing a fundamental danger to the state, which in their opinion proved that such verification

should be abandoned at all costs. On the other hand, the supporters of the list, ignoring other reasons of the collapse of Olszewski's government, glorified its activity as the only one which attempted to settle scores with the past, and the fact that it failed was interpreted as evidence of the omnipresent secret service agents among the elites of the Third Polish Republic.

Although the issue of lustration existed in the public debate and appeared in the parliament, it did not receive any legal resolution until 1997. Only the above-mentioned 'Olin Affair' led to a more serious approach in this matter. Finally, after a long debate, abounding with controversies, and after overcoming the resistance on the part of the SLD, the lustration law was adopted by the Sejm and Senate in April 1997, and then signed by President Kwaśniewski. It became effective on 3 August 1997 so, according to the intentions of the so-called lustration coalition (opposition parties: the UW and the UP, both factions of the KPN, the Nonpartisan Bloc for Support of Reforms and the Conservative People's Party, and a vast majority of the coalition belonging to the PSL), before the parliamentary election planned for autumn.<sup>[274]</sup>

The 1997 law required that persons who run for high public offices (including candidates in the general election) should submit a lustration statement. In the case of submitting a false statement, such a person would be deprived of the right to take the positions that should be subject to lustration for the next ten years (but no sanctions were provided if someone had cooperated with the communist secret services). The truthfulness of the lustration statement was to be decided by the Lustration Court consisting of 21 judges, whereas the Spokesman for the Public Interest acted in the capacity of a prosecutor. It soon turned out that an important obstacle in implementing this law was the fact that there were no judges willing to sit on the Lustration Court. Under the circumstances, an amendment was adopted in 1998 according to which the duties of the Lustration Court were taken over by the Appeals Court in Warsaw. Moreover, the lustration procedure was specified and the Spokesman for the Public Interest was to decide about referring a lustration statement to court, which made it possible to avoid all statements to be verified by court.<sup>[275]</sup>

The law adopted in 1997 was binding for the following decade, but many advocates of lustration and de-communisation claimed that its scope was too limited. In 2004, in order to extend the scope of access to the files

of the Security Service, a well-known publicist and journalist, Bronisław Wildstein, copied files from a database held by the Institute of National Remembrance, a catalogue index of archival resources of files which contained over 160,000 names. That index, commonly known as the 'Wildstein List' started to function, contrary to the intentions of the initiator of the disclosure, as the list of security agents, although it contained also the names of the hassled and persecuted by the secret services. According to the declared intentions, disclosing the list to journalists was supposed to help them effectively demand the data about former agents on behalf of the society and indirectly force politicians to clear the public space of former agents. The main goal was to give society access to its property (data) and the truth about its latest history. A fierce dispute started around such issues as the data leak, the right of journalists to use such methods, and also the pace of lustration and availability of the archives.

On 18 October 2006, the Sejm adopted a new law about the disclosure of information regarding documents of the state security services from the years 1944–1990 and their contents. In 2007, the law was amended by introducing some changes suggested by President Kaczyński, which were based on the verdict of the Constitutional Tribunal that declared some of the provisions of the said law as inconsistent with the Constitution.<sup>[276]</sup> This new law abolished the function of the Spokesman for Public Interest and the lustration process was moved to the Institute of National Remembrance. The list of functions and offices which required submitting a lustration statement was greatly extended and the following terms were clearly defined: state security agencies, files of state security agencies, and persons acting in public functions.<sup>[277]</sup> However, the law was questioned by the Constitutional Tribunal as incompatible with the Constitution in many provisions and ultimately it was not put into effect.

The theory and practice of lustration in Poland differ substantially. Although the statutory regulations do not contain the element of de-communisation and their purpose is to protect the democratic state against possible dangers resulting from the undisclosed cases of cooperation with the Security Service by public figures, actually the practice went much further. The Spokesman as a rule appealed against acquitting verdicts, prosecutors suspected of cooperation with security agencies were fired,

and politicians dismissed (or resigned themselves) when the lustration procedure commenced. Despite the statutory regulations, the Polish lustration procedure actually contained a certain de-communisation aspect.<sup>[278]</sup>

The procedure of lustration regarding specific persons (or sometimes various circles) and their confirmed or alleged cooperation with the services of the People's Republic of Poland, became the subject of a fierce dispute. The most famous case was most certainly the one of Lech Wałęsa, accused of cooperating with the Security Service in the early 1970s as secret collaborator (TW) 'Bolek'. The accusations against the Solidarity leader publicised in the early 1990s became a constant subject of controversy regarding the past and lustration. The discussion around Wałęsa and his activity in 1970, his reaction as the president seen as aimed at hindering the process of discovering the truth, and also his status as a national symbol is still very emotional, one might even say that it does not allow a non-binary approach.<sup>[279]</sup> On the one hand, there are those who defend Wałęsa and claim that undermining his good name is wrong, so even if the Solidarity icon does not have a clear conscience, it should not be mentioned. On the other hand, there are those who are convinced that Wałęsa was a traitor and a security agent. The voices between these two extreme approaches, which try to make enquiries and explain doubts, so far had been qualified as taking one specific side of the ideological dispute in question. It was a logical consequence of the place occupied by lustration and de-communisation in the political programme proposed by the right wing and the perception of these issues by part of the liberal group (who understood the demands of settling scores with the past as a threat towards democracy in Poland). Any historian who wanted to address this difficult issue from the latest Polish history (assuming that someone wants to describe it in a reliable and unbiased manner), has to be aware that the results of this research would be immediately qualified by both sides as politically motivated; consequently, clarifying a common vision of the history of Poland that would be acceptable for both sides would turn out to be extremely difficult.

The case of Wałęsa is a flagship example of the fact that the subject of lustration is vital in Poland; it is also proof that a lack of legal solutions in this matter right after 1989 was an obvious mistake. Sweeping the problem

under the carpet led to a situation in which gossip spread and misunderstandings occurred, which in turn started living their own life, but most of all, both sides of the dispute just hardened their positions.

The final breakthrough (although, not closing the public debate) happened on 16 February 2016, when Czesław Kiszczak's widow came to the IPN offering its president the purchase of Wałęsa's file. The Institute's prosecutors confiscated it later the same day and soon it was included in IPN's archival resources and open to researchers and journalists. Although Wałęsa himself still claims that the documents are forged, historians have no doubt about their authenticity, which has been confirmed by an analysis undertaken by the Institute of Forensic Research.<sup>[280]</sup>

However, settling scores with the past in Poland was not only limited to the matter of lustration. One of the basic issues was punishing the crimes of communism. In 1991, a law was passed which introduced the notion of 'Stalinist crimes' (committed before 31 December 1956), which was a compromise acceptable also for the post-communists (giving some legitimacy to those from the pro-reform wing of the PZPR).<sup>[281]</sup> This law was repealed in 1999, when the law on the Institute of National Remembrance was introduced. The new regulation replaced Stalinist crimes with communist crimes (committed between 17 September 1939 and 31 December 1989).<sup>[282]</sup>

The legal practice of punishing communist crimes is usually much more lenient than the strict regulations provide for. The Main Commission for the Persecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation (persecuting Stalinist crimes pursuant to the law of 1991) commenced 1,200 investigations till the end of its existence, and submitted motions to the prosecutor's office to initiate indictment proceedings in 250 cases, of which 62 such proceedings began. Some 28 perpetrators were convicted, several of them by final and binding sentences.<sup>[283]</sup> On the other hand, the activity of the Main Commission for the Persecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation within the Institute of National Remembrance between the years 2000 and 2015 led to concluding 14,506 investigations and submitting 326 indictments against 508 perpetrators of crimes, obtaining evidence from 103,334 witnesses. 137 accused were sentenced.<sup>[284]</sup>

## Change of Symbolism and Collective Memory

The process of changes in the symbolic sphere, both inevitable and long lasting, started in Poland together with the above amendment of the Constitution from 29 December 1989. In the changes adopted by the parliament, the most important ones regarding symbolism included the restoring of the traditional name of the state, the Republic of Poland, and the emblem which was again the white eagle wearing a crown on a red shield. Ideological slogans about the leading role of the PZPR, the alliance with the USSR and other socialist countries, a centrally planned economy and a socialist system were crossed out. They were replaced with provisions introducing notions such as a sovereign nation, economic freedom, and a multi-party system.<sup>[285]</sup> It was the confirmation of the actual state of affairs, but the symbolism connected with restoring the country's name and returning the crown to the white eagle cannot be overestimated.

The People's Republic of Poland tried to influence the society ideologically also by a canon of national holidays and other bank holidays. The most important public holidays were 1 May (Labour Day) established on 26 April 1950,<sup>[286]</sup> and 22 July (the National Day of the Rebirth of Poland) adopted by law on 22 July 1945;<sup>[287]</sup> the former was often referred to as the political system's 'name day' and the latter as its 'birthday'. The law introducing the day of 22 July simultaneously abolished the Independence Day, established in 1937 – 11 November – and due to fear that the holiday of 3 May established in 1919 might become a competition for the Labour Day celebrations (and due to the reluctance to continue the republican tradition of the First and Second Polish Republic), this date was erased from the calendar of public holidays in 1951.

In the years 1989–1990, four changes were introduced to the calendar of public holidays and non-working days, mainly restoring the original state – 3 May and 15 August became holidays again (since 1992, the latter had not only a religious aspect as the Assumption, but also the national one as it became the Polish Armed Forces Day to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw in 1920), as well as 11 November, whereas 22 July

was abolished.<sup>[288]</sup> In 2010 (and in force from the following year), Epiphany was also established as a bank holiday.

In the years 1998–2010, eight national holidays were established that do not have the status of a bank holiday: 24 March – the National Day of Life, 13 April – the Day of Remembrance of Victims of the Katyń Massacre, 2 May – the Flag Day, 28 June – the Day of Remembrance of Poznań revolt of June 1956, 1 August – the Day of Remembrance of the Warsaw Uprising, 31 August – the Day of Solidarity and Freedom, 27 September – the Day of the Underground Polish State, and 16 October – the Day of John Paul II.

The breakthrough of 1989 also required ‘symbolic de-communisation’ of public spaces, leading to the destruction of some statues and the building of new ones, changes in the names of streets and patrons of some schools or other institutions. The most symbolic was a spectacular removal the statue of Felix Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the first Soviet secret police (Cheka), on 16 November 1989 to lively cheering of the audience gathered on one of the main squares in Warsaw (incidentally also known by his name until 1989). Some 12 years later the plinth of Dzerzhinsky’s statue was used to construct a new statue of a renowned Polish romantic poet, Juliusz Słowacki.

Equally symbolic was the history of Lenin statue in Nowa Huta in Kraków. Erected in 1973 in the ‘flagship achievement’ of socialism which was the workers’ city built from scratch in the People’s Republic of Poland, the monument went through hard times. In 1979, it fell victim to an assault organised by Andrzej Szewczuwaniec, but due to that explosion, the statue of the world communist leader lost only its heel. In 1989, the monument was a target of mass demonstrations, attempts of removal and even arson. Finally, on 10 December, it was dismantled and taken away, and in 1992 purchased by a Swedish millionaire, Big Bengt Erlandsson for SEK 100,000; he slightly modified the revolutionary leader (with an attached cigarette and an earring) and placed him at the High Chaparral open-air museum and theme park near Stockholm.<sup>[289]</sup>

Nevertheless, this does not mean the problem ceased to exist. Approximately 200 Soviet monuments are present in Polish public space and every decision of dismantling any of them causes an anxious reaction from the Russian embassy. At the beginning of 2016, the IPN mooted an idea to create a special outdoor historical park, where they could be gathered

and presented to broader public.<sup>[290]</sup> This project has not been implemented, but along with the amendments to the Act on decommunisation of public space, authorities received a tool successive removal of symbols of Soviet domination from the public space. Together with the fall of the communist regime, an action of changing street names started, especially those commemorating the national and international communist movement, its world icons, events, and organisations connected with the former political system and the Soviet Union. The main part of this process occurred at the beginning of the 1990s, when each city changed the names of dozens or even hundreds of bigger and smaller streets. The Red Army, October Revolution, or 22 July Avenues disappeared together with such street patrons as Wanda Wasilewska, Julian Marchlewski, the Polish Committee of National Liberation (*Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego* – PKWN), Janek Krasicki, Rosa Luxemburg, all being replaced by other names such as Marshal Józef Piłsudski, 3 May, 11 November, General Władysław Anders, Solidarity, and General Tadeusz Bór-Komorowski.<sup>[291]</sup>

After the first mass wave of changes, new ones came with increasing difficulty. The financial argument started to come up ('one should not force the inhabitants to bear the cost of such a change') along with a reluctance to continue the process. Therefore, there are still some streets whose patrons were connected with the communist movement (the record holder for this is the communist propaganda hero, participant of the Polish-Bolshevik war of 1920 but on the Soviet side, General Karol Świerczewski 'Walter'). Since 2007, the Institute of National Remembrance has appealed for changes with local authorities, but in most cases it receives negative responses, usually supported by the opinion of the inhabitants of particular streets. Only in some cases has such an action brought the desired effects.<sup>[292]</sup> It is easier to introduce a change when it is possible to find another hero with the same family name – so, for example, the communist fighter Janek Krasicki can be replaced with the name of Bishop Ignacy Krasicki, an 18<sup>th</sup> century poet and publisher who was one of the most important representatives of the Polish Enlightenment. In Szczecin, a housing district named after Aleksander Zawadzki, the Head of the State Council of the People's Republic of Poland, got a new patron – Tadeusz Zawadzki 'Zośka', a hero of the Polish Underground State.<sup>[293]</sup>

On 1 April 2016, a new “Act on the prohibition of promotion of communism or another totalitarian system through the names of buildings, objects and public facilities” came into force. It states that: “Names of buildings, objects and public facilities, including roads, streets, bridges and squares, given by municipal authorities cannot commemorate people, organisations, events or dates symbolising communism or any other totalitarian regime, or promote such a system in any other way”,<sup>[294]</sup> which means that the question is not solely the municipalities’ competence any more. Executive regulations gave the local authorities a one-year period to change the names and after that if the changes were not carried out, the governor of a relevant Province adopts decisions after consulting the IPN. The Act raised controversies – in the majority of cases, local authorities (mainly those from the government’s opposition) did not introduce changes within the legally prescribed deadline. Subsequent decisions on such changes taken by the regional government representatives were being taken to administrative courts, which were overturning these decisions. Thus, in Warsaw alone, 44 decisions on the change of street names were overturned, including the most emotional one: returnin the name of Lech Kaczyński Avenue to its previous name, the People’s Army Avenue.<sup>[295]</sup>

Independently of the symbolic remains of the People’s Republic of Poland, the Third Polish Republic more and more explicitly invokes the myth of the Home Army (AK) and of Solidarity.<sup>[296]</sup> The attempt to promote the Round Table as a foundation of a free Poland ended in failure – it is obvious that it was not the elite’s compromise reached at the Round Table, but the election on 4 June which was the moment when the nation rejected the old regime. On that day, the most important anniversary celebrations take place. The monument of the Polish Underground State was erected in a symbolic place, in front of the Sejm, and the celebrations of the Warsaw Uprising, which was its emanation, have been very solemn in recent years. The breakthrough here came with the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising combined with the opening of the modern Warsaw Rising Museum, which attracted crowds of visitors. Its several-year activity became the most significant effect of introducing the new historical policy demanded at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century by both the PO and the PiS. In last several years, another element could be added – the ‘cursed soldiers’

myth, which refers to the anti-communist underground after the World War II. The effect of the change in the way of thinking about history and collective memory is manifested both in the projects of new institutions devoted to important historical events (the European Solidarity Centre, the Museum of the Second World War, the Museum of Polish History, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews) and new anniversary celebrations which are attended by more and more people. However, despite many attempts, the official museum of communism has not yet been established. History, its interpretation and collective memory returned to the mainstream of public debate, overcoming – in a permanent manner, as it would seem, the Polish version of Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’, which is captioned by the slogan ‘let us choose the future’.

The scale of the change can be illustrated with another unique project. In 2011, the newly elected President of the IPN, Łukasz Kamiński, together with the Ministry of Justice and the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites, launched a project of excavations and identification of victims of the communist terror. It aims to find the burial places of soldiers of pro-independence organisations killed during Stalinist times and deprived of their graves. Soon after, the Pomeranian Medical University in Szczecin joined the project in establishing the Polish Genetic Database of Victims of Totalitarian Regimes to identify victims. More than 1,000 people were excavated and over 100 of them identified in the first five years of the project.<sup>[297]</sup> They were given a reburial in 2015 in a special pantheon established in the same place where most of them were found – “The Soldiers’ Field” in Powązki Cemetery. The ceremony was attended by Polish authorities and thousands of people.<sup>[298]</sup>

In context of remembrance, it is worth noticing a certain regularity typical of the whole region; after the decade of ‘forgetting’ (the 1990s) and the decade of building institutions of remembrance (first ten years of the new millennium), the period of searching for the possibilities of more extensive cooperation between the countries with a similar historical experience has started. When the memorial institutions in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have become well established and have a stronger position on the national arena, the tendency to put forward demands that the historical narrative of Europe should take into consideration also

specific experiences of this very part of the continent, becomes increasingly prevailing. One of the examples of historical expansion beyond the country's borders is the establishment of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, set up by 21 European institutions in October 2011 during the summit of prime ministers of the Visegrad Group in Prague.<sup>[299]</sup> In 2005, the European Remembrance and Solidarity Network was founded following the initiative of ministers of culture from Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia.<sup>[300]</sup>

## Nostalgia for the People's Republic of Poland. Culture and Pop-culture.

Despite the passage of time, the memory of the People's Republic of Poland still remains vivid among many Poles. Besides an extensive intellectual debate devoted to the communist Poland, its colloquial, sometimes nostalgic perception was also established. An important influence on the perception of the People's Republic of Poland was shaped by culture and pop-culture, created both in the past (particularly from the 1970s and 80s) and in the Third Polish Republic, involving the time before 1989.

The nostalgia for the communist time, present in all post-communist countries, is underpinned by complex issues. One of its main reasons is a relative decrease in material status. According to research carried out in Poland in 1999, only one out of ten respondents who were satisfied with his or her material status would rather live in the People's Republic of Poland than in the Third Polish Republic, whereas half of the studied group who defined their material status as unsatisfactory would rather live in the People's Republic of Poland. Almost the same proportion refers to education – as many as one-half of those questioned with primary education and only 1/10 with a university degree would have preferred to live in real socialism. Age definitely plays an important role too, as ten years after the fall of communism only 5 per cent of students and pupils would have preferred its return, and the per centage of answers favourable for the People's Republic of Poland grew with age of the respondents.<sup>[301]</sup>

Public opinion research confirms the impression that the strongest longing for the past system is felt by those for whom the new reality was the most difficult to cope with. These were people for whom the illusory prosperity of the 'Gierek era', together with its social safety, presented a bigger value than political or economic freedom because they were not able to reap the fruits of its successes. This group includes the unemployed, pensioners, and retirees, often farmers, i.e. the social groups which, due to far reaching economic reforms, were apparently left behind. These are also the persons whose active lives coincided with the period of the People's Republic of Poland. In the 1990s, these sentiments brought the popularity of such slogans as 'it was better during communism', some products started to appear which openly referred to the allegedly better situation in the 1970s, such as 'ham from the Gierek times'.

In time, another memory of the People's Republic of Poland started to appear, cherished by the generation of those born between the late 1960s and the late 1970s. Their nostalgia is deprived of the element of longing for the political system; it is rather connected with objects, broadcasts, and events from childhood. This comprises the cultural code of a whole generation, of people who grew up watching the same bedtime stories, and playing with the same toys and games. This generation has a strong sense of being different. On the one hand, they remember the communist regime, which distinguishes them from younger people who spent their entire conscious life in a free Poland. On the other hand, the People's Republic of Poland did not manage to shape them in a manner comparable to the way it had shaped their parents.<sup>[302]</sup>

This phenomenon is undoubtedly connected with the common market deficits in the 1980s, which paradoxically led to a situation in which the few available products were remembered and gained the status of cult objects. Memories about 'Donald' chewing gum, a collection of foreign beer cans, soda fountains, or bottle caps, are regular topics during social gatherings of people from this generation. What is interesting, things, broadcasts, or events which gain 'cult' status now, in the 1980s were treated with contempt and mocked – such as children's boots called 'Relax' (which every child had to wear to their utter despair), chocolate-like products or replacement labels. Also the nostalgia for cartoons and television programmes

for children and youth (which then reached the artistic level unattainable at present), is an important aspect; people remember titles such as *Bolek i Lolek*, *Reksio*, *Miś Uszatek* and *Tik-Tak, Piątek z Pankracym* or *Teleranek*.

The market found this new niche very fast. Some television programmes devoted to this subject matter appeared (such as 'Food coupons under the Polish People's Republic' broadcast on VH1, a cable music channel), books have been published (such as *Generation '89* or *333 pop-cult items ... the People's Republic of Poland*),<sup>[303]</sup> but the internet is a real gold mine. Websites devoted to memories sprang up like mushrooms,<sup>[304]</sup> and a song 'Born in the PRL (People's Republic of Poland)' recorded by *Snake Charmer* to the same tune as the Bruce Springsteen hit 'Born in the USA', made a huge success and was followed up by video clips recorded by internet users. In addition, companies producing old brands took advantage of this longing for products from the People's Republic of Poland and they started to produce again such goods as a clumsy Polish fake of Coca-Cola which was named 'Polocockta' back in the 1980s (popularised by Juliusz Machulski movie *Kingsajz*), 'Bambino' ice-cream or 'Madras' tea.

Mass culture of the People's Republic of Poland still enjoys great popularity, particularly films, TV series, and youth songs. A slightly exaggerated 'cult' status was also given to television series from the late 1960s – such as *Czterej pancerni i pies* (*Four Tankmen and a Dog*, aired between 1966 and 1970) and *Stawka większa niż życie* (*More Than Life at Stake* from 1967–1968) – on the one hand, they were propaganda products of the communist regime, which twisted the history of the Second World War; on the other hand, they featured great acting based on good scripts, which is the reason why, despite some voices demanding taking them off the air, they are still broadcast and they attract many viewers. One should not forget either other series: *Czterdziestolatek* (*The Forty-year-old* from 1974–1977), which was an illustration of the 'golden period' of the Gierek decade, or *Alternatywy 4* (*4, Alternative St.*, 1983, premiered in 1986), which showed the reality of the late People's Republic of Poland in a distorting mirror. The director of the latter, Stanisław Bareja, at present perceived as the genre classic, is also the author of several comedies enjoying everlasting popularity, including *Miś* (*Bear* from 1980) which is constantly re-run. Another film often watched and quoted is *Rejs* (*Cruise*, 1970) by Marek Piwowski. The fact that comedies, which usually

poke fun at the absurd reality of the People's Republic of Poland are the most popular, indicates that this sentiment does not really reflect any longing for the past political system.

The issue of pop music is similar. Polish rock giants who became popular during the boom of the 1980s – *Maanam*, *Perfect*, *Lady Pank*, *Republika*, *Dżem*, *Kult*, or *Budka Suflera* – have many fans, and this number is growing larger as new generations join them. This type of music was at that time an answer for the hopelessness of the surrounding reality, and so was the famous rock festival in Jarocin. It gave an opportunity to articulate one's protest. Despite the fact that the communist authorities treated rock music as a kind of 'safety valve', which allowed them to channel the rebellion of the youth, it played an undoubtedly important role in shaping the attitudes of the young generation.<sup>[305]</sup> After the collapse of the regime, rock music lost its momentum and 30 years after the political transformation, the 'dinosaurs' are still the most popular, joined by only few other groups (*Hey*, *Myslovitz*).

However, not only the rock musicians who tried to defy the authorities, to a bigger or lesser degree, have been popular in the free Poland (although sometimes it was only an ostensible protest). The stage favourite of the People's Republic of Poland, Maryla Rodowicz, is still an unquestionable leader, still releasing records, making television shows, and giving concerts for thousands of fans; artists such as Irena Santor or the late Zbigniew Wodecki enjoy strong popularity as well.

The period of communism is still entrenched in many films, plays, books, or even pop music. Particularly, film and television productions show a significant growth of interest in this subject matter as well as in the issue of settling scores with the past regime. One can clearly see a connection between the change of emphasis in the public debate and the way of presenting communism in art in recent years. In the 1990s, one of the symbolic movies was *Psy (Dogs)* by Władysław Pasikowski, about a former security service officer fighting against mafia underground (which actually abounds in former security service officers), whereas after 2000, more productions have appeared which presented the People's Republic of Poland and its functionaries in a negative light.

Every now and then artists have tried to depict the recent past. Already in 1990, the film *Ucieczka z kina 'Wolność'* (*The Escape from 'Freedom' Cinema*) was

released, starring renowned actor Janusz Gajos. The film, which combined the real world with fiction, presents a rebellion of actors on the cinema screen against their roles, which leads to the inner change of a censor who earlier had mercilessly expurgated various productions. Four years later, the film *Śmierć jak kromka chleba* (*Death Like a Piece of Bread*) appeared on the screens. It was made by a Silesian director Kazimierz Kutz, showing the most tragic events of martial law: the miners' massacre in the 'Wujek' coalmine, which had taken place on 16 December 1981. *Pułkownik Kwiatkowski* (*Colonel Kwiatkowski*, 1995) by the same director adopted lighter perspective – it is a comedy set in 1945. The main character is a doctor pretending to be a secret service colonel and thanks to his impudence releases many political prisoners from communist jails.

In later years, Polish films addressed these issues much more extensively. There were some plots related to the persecution of the Church and clergymen by the authorities, in such films as *Prymas. Trzy lata z tysiąca* (*The Primate. Three Years Out of a Thousand*, 2000) and *Popieluszko. Wolność jest w nas* (*Popieluszko. Freedom is in Us*, 2009); Stalinist crimes (*Generał Nil/General Nil* – 2009) or cooperation with the communist Security Service (*Rysa/Crack* – 2008). In 2007, Andrzej Wajda made a drama about the Katyń massacre. The film received very good reviews, particularly for its final harrowing scene of the execution of Polish officers. Additionally, new productions of artists from the young generation are interesting, such as *Rewers* (*Reverse*) by Borys Lankosz (2009), as they are not burdened with personal experience. The gripping black comedy with some elements of drama presents the Stalinist period in a decidedly negative way, and the security agents are undoubtedly bad people, but the director avoids didactic undertones and overwhelming martyrdom. Another excellent film showing the communist period is *Dom zły* (*House of Evil*) by Wojciech Smarzowski (2009). A seemingly simple thriller about a violent crime depicts in very naturalistic scenes not only the atrocity of the system but also the then reality. The director presents the late times of the People's Republic of Poland (the plot runs along two parallel tracks – in 1978 and 1982), which is “a great antidote for the nostalgia of socialism”.<sup>[306]</sup>

Between 2006 and 2011, film productions were systematically supported by the television theatre, which in a quasi-documentary way presented

the criminal past of the People's Republic of Poland on the 'Stage of Fact'. It particularly focused on the persecution of the so-called 'Cursed Soldiers', i.e. anti-communist underground army after 1945. The most famous performances included: *Śmierć rotmistrza Pileckiego* (*Death of Captain Pilecki*) describing a court crime committed on the hero of the Auschwitz concentration camp, *Inka 1946* (describing the execution of Danuta Siedzikówna, a messenger of the underground army from the Łupaszko unit, which took place several days before her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday) or *Pseudonim Anoda* (*Codename Anoda*), which shows the last days of a hero of the Warsaw Uprising, a soldier from the Zośka assault group, Lieutenant Jan Rodowicz, codename Anoda, who died in a security service prison), or particularly *Norymberga* (*Nuremberg*) by Wojciech Tomczyk, showing communist Poland through the eyes of a retired colonel of military counterintelligence of the People's Republic of Poland. The officer (another fantastically played role by Gajos) involves a young journalist who wants to find out some facts from the past. It is the story about the real face of communism: destroyed lives, ruined people, families, and careers. During the narration he demands his own crimes be fairly judged, he expects the Nuremberg trial for himself and his colleagues. On the one hand, the play explicitly exposes evil, but on the other, it allows numerous detailed interpretations and references to true events and figures.<sup>[307]</sup>

The change regarding the communist past is also observable in documentary productions of those years – not because films addressing these issues were not made earlier, but because they did not gain bigger publicity. The breakthrough came with the 2008 film *Trzech kumpli* (*Three Mates*), which told the story of three friends from the Jagiellonian University who were involved in the anti-communist opposition: Lesław Maleszka, Stanisław Pyjas, and Bronisław Wildstein. Pyjas gets murdered by the Security Service, Maleszka turns out to be a traitor, about which Wildstein finds out much later and takes some effort to discover the truth. The scenes in which Maleszka does not feel guilty in contrast with the equally moving confessions of another participant of the events, who breaks down and tells the truth about his role, are really harrowing. The fact that the film was commissioned by a commercial television station (TVN), indicated that the issues of remembrance became much more deeply ingrained in the mainstream of public debate than they had been before.

In February 2010, a lot of controversy was raised by airing the film entitled *Towarzysz generał* (*Comrade General*) on public television. The film presents the career of General Jaruzelski showing him explicitly in a negative way, exposing the fact that he cooperated with the Stalinist Military Information Service, took part in anti-Semitic purges, and played a role in the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968, as well as the 1970 Massacre on the Polish coast. The controversy was not focused around facts but rather the manner of their presentation and lack of any 'extenuating circumstances' mentioned in the film.

The phenomenon of nostalgia after the People's Republic of Poland seems to have started to fade away somewhat in the 2000s. The slogan 'it was better during communism', quite popular in the 1990s, barely appeared in the 2000s, and almost all programmes and publications devoted to memories of those times are preceded with a warning that they do not intend to exonerate or glorify that period.

## Actors of the Changes from the Perspective of Time

Lech Wałęsa, at the turn of 1989–1990, became involved in an ideological and competence dispute with the Mazowiecki government and its political milieu, and he proclaimed 'a war at the top'. In spring 1990, he was re-elected as the leader of Solidarity and announced that he was going to run for president. His electoral campaign was conducted under anti-government banners, which proposed accelerating the process of transformation, general de-communisation, and ownership reform, but after the victory in the election he did not follow up on his promises. During his five-year term of office he tried to be very active on the political stage, but he often went beyond his statutory competence and used 'creative' legal interpretations conducted by minister in his Chancellery, Lech Falandysz (the so-called Falandization of law) to gain as many prerogatives as possible. He began conflicts with various social and political circles (the most significant of them lasted for several years, and in 1991 led to the departure from the president's office

of Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński, who were the representatives of the Centre Agreement) and he lost the support of Poles. In 1995, he lost the election to SLD candidate Aleksander Kwaśniewski, which meant that he would occupy a marginal position in politics from then on. Other attempts to play a role on the political stage (establishing the party called Christian Democracy of the Third Polish Republic in 1997, or running for president in 2000) ended in spectacular failures. In the late 2000s, his past became an axis of the fundamental ideological dispute concerning the issues of lustration, as well as freedom and reliability of historical research.

The author of martial law, General Wojciech Jaruzelski, elected in July 1989 to be the president of the People's Republic of Poland, performed his function also in the Polish Republic until 22 December 1990, when Wałęsa took the presidential oath. As president, Jaruzelski only tried to delay any staff changes in the authorities and state apparatus. After his political retirement he devoted all his activity to defending his own version of history, according to which he appeared to have been a patriot and defender of Poland against 'a larger evil' (which apparently was supposed to have been the Soviet intervention), and found many advocates of his activity. Despite many attempts to do so, he was never called to account for introducing martial law and his role in the massacre of the workers on the Coast in December 1970 was not resolved in the court. He died in 2014. His funeral took place with full military honours at the Powązki Military Cemetery in the presence of the president of Poland, which brought about many protests.

General Czesław Kiszczak, after the failure to form a government in summer 1989, entered the Mazowiecki government as deputy prime minister and head of the Ministry of the Interior; he, too, tried to delay any changes. Under his charge, the Ministry destroyed many files of the Security Service of the People's Republic of Poland. After he left the government in July 1990, he was removed from public life and took political retirement. However, he did not avoid public appearances in which he consistently tried to defend his activity, often invoking unknown earlier episodes. Despite numerous court proceedings against him, only one culminated in a final and binding conviction – for contributing to the deaths of nine miners in the 'Wujek' Coal Mine in December 1981. Kiszczak was acquitted and handed a two-year suspended sentence for his role in imposing martial law. He died in 2015, with the Polish

Minister of Defence refusing to allot a burial plot for him at the Powązki Military Cemetery or provide military funeral honours.<sup>[308]</sup>

Kwaśniewski was undoubtedly the person who made the biggest career in the Third Polish Republic, among the participants of the Round Table talks on the party-government side. Being a young and not discredited person in the PZPR, he relatively easily took the lead in the SdRP, giving this post-communist formation hope to stand on their feet in the new reality. He managed the party efficiently, taking advantage of the social dissatisfaction with the transformation and leading the party to the historical victory in the parliamentary election in 1993. In 1995, he won the presidential election. He repeated this success five years later, winning in the first round, which was unprecedented. During his ten-year term of office he tried to maintain the image of a president not connected with any political party and a final arbitrator in politics, which allowed him to play a crucial role in it. He actively participated in foreign policy, and contrary to the fears of his opponents did not change the pro-Western direction in which the country headed but introduced Poland to NATO and the European Union. He also played an important role in the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine. Throughout his term as the head of state, he enjoyed very big social support, which was not disturbed by various controversies around such issues as his education, meeting the Russian agent Vladimir Alganov, his alcoholic inebriation during the celebrations of the Katyń Massacre anniversary in Kharkov (which he finally admitted to many years later), or mocking Pope John Paul II by a presidential minister. The presidency of Kwaśniewski coincided not only with the culmination of strength of the SLD, but also with the post-communist style of governing the country, i.e. unclear connections between business and politics and weak state institutions.

The political path of the first non-communist Prime Minister Mazowiecki very quickly diverged from the path taken by Wałęsa. As the head of government, he was very bitterly criticised by the Solidarity leader during 'the war at the top', for too slow a pace of political transformations, so he failed in the presidential election in 1990. He was defeated not only by his main adversary, but also by a previously unknown and mysterious figure of a Polish businessman from Peru, Stanisław Tymiński. After the election defeat, he became the leader of the newly established UD,

and after its merger with Liberal-Democratic Congress (*Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczny* – KLD) in 1994 into the UW, he remained the leader of this group for a year. When the UW failed in the election of 2001 and did not enter the Sejm, he made an unsuccessful attempt to recreate the formation and tried to co-establish the Democratic Party (*Partia Demokratyczna* – PD) in 2005, but it did not succeed on the political stage. After Bronisław Komorowski won the presidential election in 2010, he became his advisor. He died on 28 October 2013.

The career of Bronisław Geremek took a similar course. He originated from a fairly similar intellectual milieu and had similar views. Just as Mazowiecki, Geremek also was the target of Wałęsa's criticism in 1990; he was also a co-founder of such formations as the ROAD, the UD, the UW, and the PD, in which he occupied leading positions. His political interests focused on foreign policy; in the years 1997–2000 he was the head of diplomacy in Jerzy Buzek's government, using his position and contacts abroad. As the minister of foreign affairs, he led Poland into NATO on 12 March 1999. In the European parliamentary election in 2004, he achieved a major success, which greatly contributed to the fact that the UW crossed the election threshold. He died in a car crash in July 2008.

The political paths of the brothers Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński went along parallel tracks after 1989.<sup>[309]</sup> They both supported Wałęsa during 'the war at the top' and in 1990–1991 they were his closest collaborators, but due to the conflict regarding the policy conducted by the president, they left his chancellery and became his most bitter critics. In May 1990, the Centre Agreement (*Porozumienie Centrum* – PC) was set up, and Jarosław became its leader. After the election failure in 1993 when PC did not cross the election threshold, the Kaczyński brothers found themselves on the outskirts of politics. Lech Kaczyński was the head of the Supreme Chamber of Audit in the years 1992–1995, but he did not serve the entirety of his six-year office term, as he was dismissed pursuant to the Sejm and Senate decisions.

As the head of the Supreme Chamber of Audit, Lech Kaczyński became famous for his fight against corruption, which laid the groundwork for his return to major politics. In 2000, after the AWS-UW coalition had fallen apart, he became the minister of justice in the Jerzy Buzek government replacing Hanna Suchocka. During his one-year activity, he gained a lot

of popularity due to his determination in curbing corruption and the inefficiency of the justice system. On the wave of this success in March 2001, the Kaczyńskis established the PiS, headed by Jarosław, which obtained 9.5 per cent of the votes in the parliamentary election in the same year. In 2002, Lech Kaczyński became the mayor of Warsaw. Holding this office, he continued his fight with impudence and invoked a common historical past (establishing the Warsaw Rising Museum, which coincided with very festive celebrations of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of the Uprising, was an unquestionable success of his presidency in the capital city).

In 2005, the Kaczyński brothers achieved a spectacular political success as the PiS won the parliamentary election and Lech was elected the president of the Polish Republic defeating Donald Tusk in the second round. Fearing for his brother's chances in the election, Jarosław did not become the head of the government but he appointed Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz to take this position; however, already in July 2006 he replaced Marcinkiewicz in this position. In the election campaign, the PiS referred to the slogan of the Fourth Polish Republic – understood as an in-depth reconstruction of the state structures and settling scores with the People's Republic of Poland – but in the face of failure of talks about a coalition with the PO, its implementation was practically impossible. Jarosław Kaczyński's government lasted until the autumn 2007 when, pursuant to the corruption scandal involving the leader of the *Samobrona* coalition party, Andrzej Lepper, the coalition fell apart. In the 2007 snap election, the PiS was defeated by the PO and went to the opposition, whereas Lech Kaczyński had to start 'cohabitation' with Prime Minister Tusk. This period was abundant in many conflicts between these two centres of power, the prime minister aimed at limiting the presidential powers on one hand, whereas the president led very active policy as the head of state (particularly in the international dimension). Kaczyński's presidency was dramatically put to an end on 10 April 2010 when the presidential plane, carrying the first couple of the Polish Republic, numerous ministers, MPs, senators and representatives of the most important state institutions crashed near Smolensk in Russia. The symbolism of the disaster in which 96 persons died, all of them on the way to the celebrations of 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Katyń Massacre, was extremely meaningful and moved millions of Poles. After his brother's death, Jarosław Kaczyński, despite this

huge family tragedy, decided to run in a snap presidential election, declaring the will to continue Lech's policy. To no avail, as in the second round he lost with the candidate of the governing party, Bronisław Komorowski. In 2015, Jarosław Kaczyński led his party to a double victory (presidential and parliamentary) and garnered the biggest power in post-1989 Polish history.

Lawyer Jan Olszewski critically assessed the agreements of the Round Table already while they were being settled. In 'the war at the top', he supported Wałęsa and his idea to speed up the transformations. After the dismissal of the Mazowiecki's government, he received the task to form a new government, but his efforts were unsuccessful. After the election in 1991, he was appointed to be the prime minister again and he became the leader of the centre-right coalition. Soon he got into conflict with Wałęsa who aimed at taking over as many powers as possible – the main conflict involved the supervision of the army and the content of the Polish-Russian treaty. Finally, Olszewski government collapsed as a result of the lustration procedure led by Minister Antoni Macierewicz. In the following years, Olszewski led right-wing groups (Movement for the Republic of Poland – *Ruch dla Rzeczypospolitej* – RdR, Movement for Reconstruction of Poland – *Ruch Odbudowy Polski* – ROP) presenting pro-lustration, anti-communist and anti-privatisation programmes and also programmes invoking traditions connected with the country's independence. These parties sharply criticised also the Round Table elites. In 1995, he ran for president and obtained 6.9 per cent of the votes. Between 2006 and 2010, he was the political advisor for president Kaczyński, and in 2007, he became the head of the verification committee which was established after the former military intelligence agency had been dissolved. He died in February 2019.

Jacek Kuroń was the minister of labour and social policy twice, in the Mazowiecki government (1989–1990) and the Hanna Suchocka government (1992–1993). He tried to alleviate the social results of economic transformation, and attempted to introduce an array of laws which would protect persons who could not stand on their feet in the new reality, including introduction of unemployment allowance (the so-called 'Kuroń allowance'). He became famous for his charity schemes, such as the Social Help SOS foundation, whose most famous activity was giving away meals to poor inhabitants of Warsaw known as 'Kuroń soup'. Thanks to the real interest

in people's fate, he topped the political rankings for many years as one of the politicians who enjoyed great social confidence, but it did not translate into real political support – in the 1995 presidential election, he came third obtaining 9.2 per cent of the vote. He remained faithful to his ideals till the end of his life. In 2000, together with his wife Danuta, he established the Comprehensive University of Jan Józef Lipski in Teremiska – a charity with such goals as 'building a civic society', 'looking from the perspective of an ordinary man', 'disseminating culture and shaping the patterns of participation in culture in places where the continuity of contact with culture was interrupted'.<sup>[310]</sup> He died in June 2004.

The author of the concept 'Your President, our Prime Minister', Adam Michnik, took yet another path of public activity. Being the editor-in-chief of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which soon became the most influential newspaper in a free Poland, he quite soon concluded that the 'power over minds' is much more interesting than participation in party politics. Only in 1990, he was one of the co-founders of the ROAD, from which the UD emerged later on, and he supported Mazowiecki's candidacy for the presidential office. However, after the contractual Sejm was dissolved, he left active politics and devoted himself to strengthening the position and ideological line of his daily. Under his leadership, *Gazeta Wyborcza* adopted a clear profile, emphasised by numerous sharp disputes and controversies, particularly concerning the communist past and settling scores with it (Michnik became famous for his gestures of sympathy towards Jaruzelski, he decidedly opposed lustration and de-communisation), but also the issue of an alleged threat from the side of the national right wing. Throughout the 1990s, Michnik certainly remained the most influential director of the Polish public debate.

On 27 December 2002, Michnik revealed the 'Rywingate', which not only led to the collapse of the post-communist formation, but also harmed the position of circles connected with *Gazeta*. As a consequence and as a result of later activities of the special investigation committee, the political sentiments of Poles changed, which was reflected by the election results in 2005 and the victory of the two groups which propagated the need for a thorough change in the rules governing Polish public life. Such a shift of electoral support to the right opened a public debate for people and views which had

been marginalised before. Since then, Michnik has remained an important but not a dominant player in the competition for the ‘power over minds’.

Not all people from Solidarity gained high social status in free Poland; some could not find a place for themselves in the new reality. It concerned mostly those who already in the 1980s were in opposition to Lech Wałęsa and the union leadership; in the 1990s, they became marginalised in the public debate and consigned to oblivion as they were stigmatised as ‘freaks’. The most moving in this context was the fate of Anna Walentynowicz, a legendary gantry operator from the Gdańsk Shipyard and a co-founder of the Free Labour Unions, whose firing from work triggered the wave of strikes in 1980.<sup>[311]</sup> She criticised Wałęsa already in the 1980s for “betraying the ideals of Solidarity”, which was the reason for his public aversion of Walentynowicz and his criticising of her; she also accused Wałęsa of being an agent. After 1989, together with some opposition circles not connected with the Solidarity which came to power (Andrzej Gwiazda, Kornel Morawiecki, Krzysztof Wyszowski), she was active in the Free Labour Unions which opposed Wałęsa. In 1993, similarly to Gwiazda, she ran for parliament from the list called ‘Poza Układem’ – ‘Out of the System’ (connected with the magazine published by the Gwiazdas – husband and wife – under the same title) but with no success. Walentynowicz received 1,500 votes, whereas the whole list only 6,000 – as she commented: “I understood that 6,000 is too few for 40 million to put up barricades”.<sup>[312]</sup> The whole milieu to which she belonged consistently criticised the Round Table elites, claiming that they were infiltrated with communist agents. An attempt to bring these circles into the centre of public stage was made by the PiS after 2005. In 2006, Gwiazda and Walentynowicz were honoured with the Order of the White Eagle, whereas a year later Gwiazda became a member of the Committee of the Institute of National Remembrance. The desire of President Kaczyński to honour Walentynowicz in a special way had its tragic end – she was invited to participate in the delegation for the celebrations of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Katyń Massacre and died in the plane crash near Smolensk.

[1] Jerzy Eisler, "Polskie miesiące" czyli kryzys(y) w PRL (*Polish Months, or Crises in the People's Republic of Poland*), Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2008.

[2] Andrzej Paczkowski, *Strajki, bunty, manifestacje, jako "polska droga" przez socjalizm (Strikes, Riots and Demonstrations. The "Polish Road" through Socialism)*, the Poznań Society for the Advancement of Arts and Sciences (PTPN), Poznań 2003.

[3] See: Adam Zamoyski, *Holy Madness: Romantic, Patriots and Revolutionaries 1776–1871*, Phoenix, London 2001.

[4] Polish anti-communist tradition is rich and dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See: Bogdan Szlachta (ed.), *Polish Anti-Communism and its Intellectual Traditions. An Anthology*, Centre for Political Thought (OMP), Cracow 2001.

[5] Stéphane Courtois, Jean-Louis Panné, Rémi Kauffer, "World Revolution, Civil War and Terror", [in:] Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panné, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartošek, Jean Louis Margolin, *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Polish edition), Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa 1999, Vol. II, p. 286. See also: Andrzej Paczkowski, "Polacy pod obcą i własną przemocą" (*Poland, the "Enemy Nation"*), [in:] *ibid.*, Vol. III (Volume co-author Karel Bartošek), pp. 342–344.

[6] It is worth pointing out here that Stalin rejected Hitler's proposal to create a buffer state dependent on the Third Reich.

[7] Andrzej Paczkowski, *Polacy pod obcą...*, op. cit.

[8] About German elites' fascination with the Bolshevism, see: Gerd Koenen, *Der-Russland – Komplex: Die Deutschen und der Osten 1900–1945 (The Russia Complex: The Germans and the East 1900–1945)*, C.H. Beck, Munich 2005.

[9] For detailed information of conditions of German occupation in Poland, see e.g.: Richard C. Lukas, *Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation 1939–1944*, Revised Edition, Hippocrene Books, New York 2001.

[10] More on this subject: Norman Davies, *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw*, Pan Books, London 2004.

[11] Comprehensively, see: Nikołaj Iwanow, *Powstanie Warszawskie widziane z Moskwy (The Warsaw Uprising as Seen from Moscow)*, Znak, Cracow 2010.

[12] Comprehensively, see: Norman Davies, *Rising '44*, op. cit.; Alexandra Richie, *Warsaw 1944: Hitler, Himmler, and the Warsaw Uprising*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York 2013.

[13] Antoni Dudek, Ryszard Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce (1945–1980) (Communists and the Church in Poland (1945–1980))*, Znak, Cracow 2006, p. 9.

[14] Andrzej Friszke, *Przystosowanie i opór. Studia z dziejów PRL (Adaptation and Resistance. Studies of the History of the Polish People's Republic)*, Więź, Warsaw 2007.

[15] One cannot forget that the scale of the opposition against the Soviet occupation in 1944–47 was immense and it is just now being brought back to the collective memory. More than a dozen thousand victims on the side of underground soldiers and on the side of communists is the number comparable to the number of casualties of national uprisings. See: Rafał Wnuk (ed.), *Atlas polskiego podziemia niepodległościowego 1944–1956 (Atlas of the Polish Independence Underground 1944–1956)*, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2007, p. XXXIV. The broader spectrum of social rejection of the newly established system (not only armed) is raised in a book by Piotr Semka, *My, reakcja. Historia emocji antykomunistów 1944–1956 (We, the Reactionaries. The History of Anti-communist Emotions 1944–1956)*, Zysk i s-ka, Poznań 2015.

[16] For more on this subject, see: Rafał Wnuk (ed.), *Atlas polskiego podziemia...*, op. cit.

[17] The ratio of the party members to adult citizens.

[18] See: Piotr Osęka, *Rytuały stalinizmu. Oficjalne święta i uroczystości rocznicowe w Polsce 1944–1956 (Stalinism Rituals. Official Holidays and Anniversary Celebrations in Poland 1944–1956)*, TRIO, Warsaw 2007; Robert Kupiecki, “Natchmienie milionów”: *Kult Józefa Stalina w Polsce w latach 1944–1956 („Inspiration of Millions”: The Cult of Joseph Stalin in Poland in the years 1944–1956)*, WSiP, Warsaw 1993. Regarding the relations between the Church and the state, see: Jan Żaryn, *Kościół a władza w Polsce. 1945–1950 (The Church and Power in Poland 1945–1950)*, Towarzystwo im. Stanisława ze Skarbimierza, DIG, Warsaw 1997 (passim); idem, *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce (1944–1989) (History of the Catholic Church in Poland (1944–1989))*, Neriton, Instytut Historii PAN Polskiej Akademii Nauk (Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences), Warsaw 2003, pp. 88–156.

[19] About the course of events in Poland in 1956, see: Paulina Codogni, *Rok 1956 (The Year 1956)*, Prószyński i S-ka, Warsaw 2006.

[20] After 1945, pursuant to the agreements from Yalta and Potsdam, the Polish borders were changed by incorporating the territories, which had belonged to Germany before the Second World War, although it was firmly opposed by the government of the Federal Republic of Germany. Consequently, the issue of the status of these borders remained a subject of fear of Polish citizens (especially those, who lived on the territories incorporated by Poland) and dispute between the People’s Republic of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany. Even if the German – Polish Treaty, signed in December 1970 contributed largely to the detente between the two countries, still the “border question” remained the matter of controversy between two countries. Only in 1990, as of the “2+4” conference., Germany finally resigned from any claims to these territories. In the period in question, the Federal Republic of Germany claimed that these territories belonged to Germany, not to the much weaker People’s Republic of Poland, which actually gave the communists additional arguments in their struggle for the ‘hearts and minds’ in Poland, as maintaining the territorial status quo depended to a great extent on Moscow’s good will.

[21] Jerzy Eisler, *Polskie miesiące” czyli kryzys(y) w PRL*, op. cit., p. 24.

[22] It should be emphasised that due to the role played by clergymen in Polish history, they were subject to particularly heavy and bitter repressions – even by German terms. The German occupier presumed that the physical elimination of the clergy was one of the keys to enslave Poles, hence the scale of repressions which affected this group definitely exceeded the high level of terror (which was extremely high anyway) used by the Nazis in the territory of Poland.

[23] Wojciech Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski. 1945–1980 (The Latest History of Poland. 1945–1980)*, Świat Książki, Warsaw 2003, pp. 349–350.

[24] It is worth mentioning here that faction fights within the PZPR in 1956, described in the literature pertaining to the subject matter, did not concern the policy towards the Church, which was perceived as right by the cliques fighting within the Central Committee and Politburo, even if it was supposed to use such drastic and unlawful measures as imprisonment of Primate Wyszyński (see: Antoni Dudek, Ryszard Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce...*, op. cit., pp. 103–107).

[25] See: Ibid., pp. 103–107, 119.

[26] See: Ibid., pp. 317–319.

[27] More on this subject: Andrzej Friszke, *Koło Posłów Znak w Sejmie PRL 1957–1976 (The Znak Parliamentary Caucus in the Sejm of the Polish People’s Republic 1957–1976)*, Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, Warsaw 2002, see particularly: pp. 148–152.

[28] See: Ewa Czaczkowska, *Kardynał Wyszyński. Biografia (Cardinal Wyszyński. A Biography)*, Świat Książki, Warsaw 2009; R. Graczyk, *Cena przetrwania? SB wobec Tygodnika Powszechnego (The Price of Survival? The SB Towards Tygodnik Powszechny)*, Czerwone i Czarne, Warsaw 2011.

[29] Antoni Dudek, Ryszard Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce...*, op. cit., pp. 277–278.

[30] Ibid., pp. 120–122.

[31] According to the Primate's former Secretary, Fr. Prelate Bronisław Piasecki, Cardinal Wyszyński himself was to use this phrase among the persons closest to him (a talk conducted in February 2001 with Fr. Prelate Piasecki – information received by Aleksander Gubrynowicz).

[32] More comprehensively in the brochure edited in 1981, *Widmo głodu albo meandry polityki rolnej PRL (The Spectre of Hunger or Meanders of the Agricultural Policy of the Polish People's Republic)*. Issue 1, Niezależna Oficyna Rolników, Poznań 1981, particularly such articles as Waldemar Kuczyński, "Meandry polityki rolnej" ("Meanders of the Agricultural Policy") and Ryszard Manteuffel, "Czy rolnictwo indywidualne jest niewydolne?" ("Is Individual Agriculture Inefficient?"), reprinted from: *Zielony Sztandar*, 1981 Vol. 65. See also: Wojciech Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski. 1945–1980*, op. cit., pp. 640–642 and 714–715.

[33] Particularly, it is worth noticing the motion pictures supported by the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland. Television series produced in the 1960s and 1970s, such as *Czterej Pancerni i Pies (Four Tank-men and a Dog)* and *Stawka większa niż życie (More Than Life at Stake)* or *Polskie Drogi (Polish Fates)* promoted communist slogans to a lesser extent, rather fostering national ideas and, eventually, communists in these productions turned out to be patriots and their opponents were politically naive or traitors.

[34] Comprehensively addressed in Jerzy Eisler, *Polski rok 1968 (The Polish Year 1968)*, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2006.

[35] Jerzy Eisler, *Polski rok 1968*, op. cit., p. 659

[36] Wojciech Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski. 1945–1980*, op. cit., pp. 523–524.

[37] Ibid., pp. 634–635.

[38] See: *Działania Służby Bezpieczeństwa wobec organizacji Ruch (Activities of the Security Service towards the "Ruch" Organization)*, introduction, selection and preparation by Piotr Byszewski, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2008.

[39] Emil Morgiewicz, "Ruch wobec stabilizacji" ("Ruch vis-à-vis Stabilisation"), [in:] *"Karta" 1996*, vol. 20; Piotr Byszewski, "Kryptonim „Rewident”. SB na tropie Ruchu" ("Codename 'Auditor'. The SB on the trail of Ruch"), [in:] *Biuletyn IPN*, 2005, Vol. 3, pp. 83–93; Antoni Dudek, "Akcja Poronin" ("Action: 'Poronin'"), [in:] *Ślady PeeReLu. Ludzie, wydarzenia, mechanizmy (Traces of the Polish People's Republic. People, Events, Mechanisms)*, Arcana, Cracow 2000, pp. 127–131.

[40] See the full text of the *Ruch* declaration on the Internet website of the Czuma family, <http://www.czuma.pl/public/MijajaLata.html> (last accessed on 20.08.2018).

[41] See, e.g.: *Marzec 1968 w dokumentach MSW*, t. 1 *Niepokorni (March 1968 in the Ministry of the Interior records*, Vol. I: *The Disobedient*), academic edition by Franciszek Dąbrowski, Piotr Gontarczyk, Paweł Tomasiak, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2008, pp. 107–118.

[42] About the letter and its contents, see: Andrzej Friszke, *Anatomia buntu. Kuroń, Modzelewski i Komandosi (The Anatomy of Rebellion. Kuroń, Modzelewski and the "Commandos")*, Znak, Cracow 2010, pp. 202–222.

[43] Dariusz Gawin, *Wielki zwrot. Ewolucja lewicy i odrodzenie idei społeczeństwa obywatelskiego 1956–1976* (*A Great Turn. The Evolution of the Left and the Revival of the Idea of Civil Society 1956–1976*), Znak, Cracow 2013, p. 195.

[44] Bohdan Cywiński, *Rodowody niepokornych* (*Origins of the Disobedient*), Biblioteka Więzi, Warsaw 1971.

[45] See: Dariusz Gawin, *Wielki zwrot. Ewolucja ...* op. cit., pp. 236–252.

[46] Adam Michnik, *The Church and the Left*, transl. by David Ost, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 1993.

[47] Adam Michnik, *Kościół. Lewica. Dialog* (*The Church. The Left. Dialogue*), first edition in 1977 in samizdat. Second edition by Agora, Biblioteka Gazety Wyborczej, Warsaw 2009).

[48] Wojciech Roszkowski, Jan Kofman (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of Central and Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, M. E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York; London 2007, p. 1109.

[49] Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Poland, 1980–1989*, transl. by Christina Manetti, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, University of Rochester Press, Rochester, N.Y. 2015, p. 7.

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

[51] There were many English-language publications on the subject of Solidarity, its establishment and activity in 1980–1981, including Timothy Garton-Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (this book had several editions), or Jadwiga Staniszkis, *Poland's Self-Limiting Revolution*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 1984.

[52] The problem of the role the USSR played in the events from 1980–1981 remains controversial. More and more frequently, disclosed documents clearly indicate that the Kremlin did not intend to lead the army into Poland, and their whole effort was to convince Kania and Jaruzelski to introduce martial law. Moreover, it is quite likely that in the decisive days running up to 13 December 1981, General Jaruzelski, fearing failure of the operation, demanded some assertions that in case of any setbacks Moscow would give military support to his actions. See: *Zeszyt roboczy” generała Anoszkina 9–16 grudnia 1981 r.* (“*Working Notebook*” of General Anoshkin 9–16 December 1981), Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 1998; Władimir Bukowski, *Moskiewski proces. Dysydent w archiwach Kremla* (*The Moscow Trial. A Dissident in the Kremlin Archives*), Volumen, Warsaw 1998, pp. 540–574; Andrzej Paczkowski, *Droga do mniejszego zła. Strategia i taktyka obozu władzy lipiec 1980–styczeń 1982* (*The Road to „Lesser Evil”. Strategy and Tactics of the Power Camp July 1980–January 1982*), Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 2002.

[53] Detailed minutes of the Congress: *I Krajowy Zjazd Delegatów NSZZ “Solidarność”. Stenogramy, Vols. 1–2*, elaborated and edited by Grzegorz Majchrzak, Jan Marek Owsiniński, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2011, 2013.

[54] *Ibid.*, pp. 22–25.

[55] Andrzej Paczkowski et. al., *The Black Book...*, op. cit., p. 363.

[56] More on the subject of reprisals: Andrzej Paczkowski, *Wojna polsko–jaruzelska. Stan wojenny w Polsce 13 XII 1981 – 23 VII 1981* (*Poland – Jaruzelski War. Martial Law in Poland 13 December 1981 – 23 July 1983*), second edition, Prószyński i S-ka, Warsaw 2007, pp. 100–126.

[57] Interestingly, the introduction of martial law only slightly decreased the level of social trust towards the army – in November 1981 it was 93 per cent, in April 1982 – 85 per cent and in November 1982 – 78 per cent, maintaining a strong second position (behind the Catholic Church).

In comparison, support for the People's Militia fell from 65 per cent to 40 per cent between November 1981 and November 1982, while the party's support dropped from 37 per cent to 29 per cent. Łukasz Polniak, "Opinie społeczne o wojsku w świetle badań OBOP w latach 1958–1989" ("Public Opinions about the Army in the Light of OBOP Surveys in 1958–1989", [in:] *Wojsko w Polsce "ludowej" (The Army in "People's" Poland)*, edited by Robert Klementowski, Joanna Nowosielska-Sobel, Paweł Piotrowski, Grzegorz Strauchold, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Wrocław 2014, p. 59.

[58] "The Iron Affair" was a disclosure, in the 1980s, of a secret operation by the Polish intelligence officers whereby they had infiltrated various criminal structures in the West and, as a result of criminal activities, acquired funds that were to be earmarked for intelligence work. However, a majority of these funds ended up in private hands.

[59] Blessed father Jerzy Popiełuszko was invigilated for many years and perceived as especially dangerous for the regime for his Holy Masses for the Fatherland, which gathered thousands of patriotic believers. For more information, see: *Aparat represji wobec księdza Jerzego Popiełuszki 1982–1984 (Apparatus of Repression against Priest Jerzy Popiełuszko 1982–1984)*, Vol. I, edited by Jolanta Mysiakowska with foreword by Jan Żaryn, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2009; *Aparat represji wobec księdza Jerzego Popiełuszki 1984 (Apparatus of Repression against Priest Jerzy Popiełuszko 1984)*, Vol. II, *Śledztwo w sprawie uprowadzenia i zabójstwa ks. Jerzego Popiełuszki (Investigation into the Abduction and Murder of Priest Jerzy Popiełuszko)*, edited by Jakub Gołębiowski, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2014. In English, see e.g.: John Moody, Roger Boyes, *The Priest and the Policeman: The Courageous Life and Cruel Murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko*. Summit Books, New York 1987; Kevin Ruane, *To Kill A Priest: The Murder of Father Popiełuszko and the Fall of Communism*, Gibson Books, London 2004

[60] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit. pp. 44–47, 53.

[61] Mirosława Marody, *Długi finał (A Long Finale)*, WSiP, Warsaw 1995, p. 34.

[62] Data after: GUS (the Central Statistical Office of Poland).

[63] Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution ...*, op. cit., pp. 178–179.

[64] See: Maciej Replewicz, *Stanisław Bareja, Król krzywego zwierciadła (Stanisław Bareja. The King of the Crooked Mirror)*, ZYSK i S-ka, Poznań 2009, pp. 249–286.

[65] In 1983, a study indicated that 48 per cent of respondents claimed that the events from 13 December were negative but 43 per cent assessed them positively, which could also mean the growing tiredness of the society. After: *Stan Wojenny w Polsce (Martial Law in Poland)*, edited by Antoni Dudek, the Commission for the Persecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation, the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2003, Vol. 6., p. 25.

[66] For more on the economic reality of the epoch see: Janusz Kaliński, *Gospodarka Polski 1944–1989. Przemiany strukturalne (Poland's Economy 1944–1989. Structural Transformations)*, PWE, Warsaw 1995.

[67] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., pp. 37–38.

[68] Directly after Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government came to power in 1989, a Verification Committee was appointed whose task was to select officers and functionaries of the former Security Service who, according to the estimation of the Ministry of the Interior, were capable of working in the special services of the independent Poland. This data indicates that out of the total number of people working in the Security Service (24,000), as many as 10,000 did not submit any job applications whatsoever. Probably the motives of the decisions not to continue their careers, made by over 40 per cent of secret service functionaries, were varied, but the conviction that the private sector offered decidedly bigger possibilities of self-development, as well as higher remuneration was the most important factor.

[69] Pewex – a foreign currency shop where it was possible to purchase both imported and domestic goods unavailable in regular trade for Polish currency. The Polish word *cinkeciarz* (person that illegally trades with currency) comes from an English word ‘change’ – i.e. ‘to change money’.

[70] It is worth mentioning here that part of the authority camp in later years postulated making this process a peculiar tool aimed at weakening the opposition (see: Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., pp. 100–101).

[71] A study conducted by Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński indicated that already in 1985, as many as 53 per cent of Poles approved of the private sector, and that in 1988, the level of acceptance rose to 73 per cent. At the same time, most Poles supported an active social policy by the state, but this support fell from 80 per cent in 1984 to 65 per cent in 1988. Edmund Wnuk – Lipiński, “Nastroje społeczne w Polsce w latach 1986–1989” (“Social Moods in Poland in the Years 1986–1989”), [in:] *1986–1989 – koniec systemu (1986–1989 – The End of the System)*, Materials from the international conference, Miedzeszyn 21–23 October 1999, Vol. I, pp. 18–19.

[72] This turmoil also involved academics (future prime minister Marek Belka, Janusz Beksiak, and Witold Trzeciakowski), who came to the conclusion that socialism cannot be maintained, and the opposition member and philosopher Mirosław Dzielski already in the late 1970s suggested a system in which the party would maintain political power in return for introducing a market economy. See: Mirosław Dzielski, *Bóg, wolność, własność (God, Freedom, Property)*, Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej (OMP), Cracow 2001.

[73] Antoni Dudek, *Rok 1989. Koniec komunizmu w Polsce (The Year 1989. The End of Communism in Poland)*, <https://enrs.eu/pl/articles/33-rok-1989-koniec-komunizmu-w-polsce> (last accessed on 14.02.2019).

[74] See, e.g.: *Solidarność Walcząca w dokumentach (The Fighting Solidarity in Documents)*, Vol. 1: *W oczach SB (In the Eyes of the SB)*, foreword and edited by Łukasz Kamiński, Wojciech Sawicki, Grzegorz Waligóra, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2007; *Solidarność Walcząca w dokumentach*, Vol. 2, part 1: *Materiały własne Own Materials*, foreword and edited by Kamil Dworaczek, Grzegorz Waligóra, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2016; Igor Janke, *Twierdza. Solidarność Walcząca – podziemna armia (The Fortress Fighting Solidarity – an Underground Army)*, Wielka Litera, Warsaw 2014.

[75] It should be mentioned that concepts close to revolutionary ones appeared not only in the circles perceived as radical in March 1982. Kuroń, in his article smuggled from prison, presented the ideas of operations close to a national uprising. Andrzej Paczkowski, *Wojna polsko-jaruzelska...*, op. cit., pp. 158–159.

[76] Marek Wierzbicki (ed.), *Federacja Młodzieży Walczącej (The Federation of Fighting Youth)*, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2015.

[77] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit. p. 67.

[78] Andrzej Paczkowski, *Revolution ...*, op. cit., p. 171.

[79] *Ibid.*, op. cit., p. 232.

[80] Przemysław Zieliński, *Scena rockowa w PRL. Historia, organizacja, znaczenie (The Rock Scene in the People's Republic of Poland. History, Organisation, Significance)*, TRIO, Warsaw 2005, pp. 91–94.

[81] Dariusz Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracje z Polski 1949–1989 (A Country with No Way Out? Migrations from Poland 1949–1989)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN), Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2010, p. 355.

- [82] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit. pp. 22–25.
- [83] Paweł Kowal, *Koniec systemu władzy. Polityka ekipy gen. Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego w latach 1986–1989 (The End of the System of Power. The Policy of the Team of General Wojciech Jaruzelski in 1986–1989)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN), Warsaw 2012, p. 48.
- [84] Janusz Kaliński, *Economy in Communist Poland. The Road Astray*, transl. by Joanna Rohozińska-Michalska, Warsaw 2014, pp. 28–29.
- [85] *Ibid.*, pp. 34–38.
- [86] Marcin Zaremba, “Klimat emocjonalny w Polsce lat osiemdziesiątych” (“Emotional Climate in Poland in the 1980s”), [in:] Natalia Jarska, Jan Olaszek (eds), *Spółczesność polskie w latach 1980–1989 (Polish Society in the Years 1980–1989)*, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2015, pp. 28–32.
- [87] Mirosława Marody, *Długi...*, op. cit., pp. 54–55.
- [88] Inka Słodkowska, *Spółczesność obywatelskie na tle historycznego przełomu. Polska 1980–1989 (Civil Society against the Backdrop of a Historic Breakthrough. Poland 1980–1989)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN), Warsaw 2006, pp. 261–262.
- [89] Paweł Kowal, *Koniec systemu władzy...*, op. cit., pp. 89–95.
- [90] Tadeusz Mazowiecki, *Rok 1989 i lata następne. Teksty wybrane i nowe (The Year 1989 and the Following Years. Selected and New Texts)*, Prószyński i S-ka, Warsaw 2012, p. 23.
- [91] *Ibid.*, pp. 225–233.
- [92] Adam Michnik, *Takie czasy...: rzecz o kompromisie (Such are the Times...: the Thing About Compromise)*, Aneks, London 1985.
- [93] More on the importance of the referendum, see: Paweł Kowal, *Koniec systemu władzy...*, op. cit., pp. 125–132.
- [94] Paulina Codogni, *Okragły Stół czyli polski Rubikon (The Round Table, or the Polish Rubicon)*, Prószyński i S-ka, Warsaw 2009, p. 59.
- [95] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit. pp. 131–132.
- [96] Paweł Kowal, *Koniec systemu władzy...*, op. cit., p. 377.
- [97] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., pp. 143–144.
- [98] Paulina Codogni, *Wybory czerwcowe 1989 r. – u progu przemiany ustrojowej (June 1989 Elections – On the Threshold of Systemic Transformation)*, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2012, pp. 29–30.
- [99] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., pp. 170–172.
- [100] Paulina Codogni, *Wybory czerwcowe 1989 r. ....*, op. cit., p. 34.
- [101] Krzysztof Dubiński, *Okragły Stół (The Round Table)*, Krajowa Agencja Promocyjna, Warsaw 1999, p. 53.
- [102] Andrzej Friszke, “Okragły stół. Geneza i przebieg” („The Round Table. Genesis and Course”), [in:] *Polska 1986–1989 – koniec systemu*. Vol. I, op. cit., p. 89.
- [103] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit. p. 179 – 180.
- [104] Janusz Kaliński, *Economy...*, op. cit., p. 30.

- [105] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., p. 187.
- [106] Maciej Bałtowski, Maciej Miszewski, *Transformacja gospodarcza w Polsce (Economic Transformation in Poland)*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2006, p. 144.
- [107] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., p. 189.
- [108] *Ibid.*, p. 197.
- [109] For more on the subject of the nomenklatura enfranchisement, see: Jan Kofman, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Transformacja i postkomunizm (Transformation and Post-communism)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 1999, pp.179–185; Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., pp. 193–197.
- [110] Already in November, Rakowski submitted a motion to the court to declare the Gdańsk Shipyard bankrupt, which caused outrage among all workers employed there as well as a sharp attack of the opposition, who accused the prime minister of being motivated by politics, not the economy.
- [111] Paulina Codogni, *Okrągły stół...*, op. cit., pp. 155–156.
- [112] Full debate is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHOL2Jlfs0o>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kb9aZfLyBtk> (last accessed on 08.10.2018).
- [113] Andrzej Friszke, *Rok 1989 (The Year 1989)*, Wydawnictwa Sejmowe (Sejm Publishers), Warsaw 2009, p. 79.
- [114] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., p. 219.
- [115] Paulina Codogni, *Okrągły stół...*, op. cit., p. 159.
- [116] The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, after receiving a note from the Polish Ambassador in Moscow, Włodzimierz Natorf, refused the Soviet magazine access to Wałęsa. *Zmierzch dyktatury. Polska lat 1986–1989 w świetle dokumentów. Tom I (lipiec 1986-maj 1989) (The Dusk of Dictatorship. Poland in the Years 1986–1989 in the Light of documents. Volume I (July 1986-May 1989))*, introduction, selection and edited by Antoni Dudek, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2009, pp. 303–304. In January 1989, a similar request came from *Novoe Vremya (Новое Время)* magazine. *Ibid.*, pp. 376–377.
- [117] As Polish ambassador Włodzimierz Natorf wrote in a cryptogram: “Of course, discussants express their concern, but kind, with perspective of understanding of situation. I do not think they predict anything, I was not met with any ‘warnings’ or ‘advice’”. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
- [118] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit. pp. 237–240.
- [119] See: “Protokół nr 107 z posiedzenia Biura Politycznego po zakończonej dyskusji w dniu 17 stycznia 1989 r.” (“Report No. 107 from the meeting of the Politburo after the discussion on 17 January 1989”), [in:] *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego i Sekretariatu KC. Ostatni rok władzy 1988–1989 (Secret Documents of the Politburo and Secretariat of the Central Committee. Last Year of Power 1988–1989)*, edited by: Stanisław Perzkowski, Aneks, London 1994, pp. 229–231.
- [120] Paweł Kowal, *Koniec systemu władzy...*, op. cit., pp. 439–449.
- [121] Wojciech Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski. 1980–2002 (The Latest History of Poland. 1980–2002)*, Świat Książki, Warsaw 2003, p. 99.
- [122] As Tadeusz Mazowiecki recalled, for the opposition, the legalisation of Solidarity was fundamental, as “only the return of possibility of legal acting of a mass civic movement, which Solidarity was, could cause that the concessions and changes achieved would not be temporary, but became a solid element of the new situation.” Tadeusz Mazowiecki, *Rok 1989...*, op. cit., pp. 25–26.

[123] Cf. Paulina Codogni, *Okrągły stół...*, op. cit., pp. 165–166.

[124] Krystyna Trembicka, *Okrągły stół w Polsce, studium o porozumieniu politycznym (Round Table in Poland, a Study on Political Agreement)*, Maria Skłodowska-Curie University, Lublin 2003, pp. 132–137.

[125] Members of the communist party leadership were aware of those shortcomings. Janusz Kubasiewicz, deputy member of Politburo stated, “Confusion within the party deepens”, and another deputy member of the Politburo, Zdzisław Balicki added: “an impression is mounting among our allies and the opposition that we are unarranged as a party. I share this opinion. I am disappointed about participation in the Politburo”. Quotations after: “Protokół z posiedzenia Sekretariatu KC PZPR w dniu 16 lutego 1989 r.” (“Report from the Meeting of the PUWP Central Committee Secretariat on 16 February 1989”), [in:] Stanisław Perzkowski (ed.), *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego i Sekretariatu KC...* op. cit., pp. 280–281.

[126] Paweł Smoleński, *Szermierze Okrągłego Stołu. Zwątpienia i nadzieje (Swordsmen of the Round Table. Doubts and Hopes)*, Spotkania, Paris 1989, p. 32.

[127] Krzysztof Dubiński, “Podziemie okrągłego stołu” (“The Round Table Underground”), [in:] idem, *Magdalenka, Transakcja epoki. Notatki z poufnych spotkań Kiszczak-Wałęsa (Magdalenka, Transaction of the Era. Notes from Confidential Meetings between Kiszczak and Wałęsa)*, Sylwa, Warsaw 1990, p. 3.

[128] Paulina Codogni, *Okrągły stół...*, op. cit., p. 176.

[129] Quoted after: *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[130] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

[131] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

[132] *Ibid.*, pp. 201–202.

[133] Paulina Codogni, *Wybory czerwcowe...*, op. cit., p. 59.

[134] Aleksander Kwaśniewski (born in 1954) – Communist activist and post-Communist politician. During Roundtable Talks was minister without portfolio, a member of the Government Presidium and chairman of the Socio-Political Committee of the Council of Ministers. President of the Republic of Poland (1995–2005). See: Wojciech Roszkowski, Jan Kofman, *Biographical Dictionary of Central and Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, second edition, Routledge, London-New York 2015.

[135] Paulina Codogni, *Wybory czerwcowe...*, op. cit., pp. 59–60.

[136] *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

[137] More: *Ibid.*, pp. 62–68.

[138] Paulina Codogni, *Okrągły stół...*, op. cit., pp. 215–216.

[139] *Ibid.*, pp. 219–221.

[140] *Ibid.*, p. 224.

[141] *Ibid.*, p. 226.

[142] *Ibid.*, pp. 234–235.

[143] As Tadeusz Mazowiecki recalled: “Solidarity as a trade union could not have abandoned the question of people’s living conditions and, taking into consideration all the controversial nature of the solution from economic point of view, not to demand the indexation”. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, *Rok 1989...*, op. cit., p. 27.

- [144] Paulina Codogni, *Okragły stół...*, op. cit., pp. 230–231.
- [145] *Ibid.*, p. 243.
- [146] *Ibid.*, p. 257.
- [147] Quoted after: Jan Skórzyński, *Revolucja Okrągłego Stołu (The Round Table Revolution)*, Znak, Cracow 2009, p. 223.
- [148] *Migawki z przeszłości. Opowieści świadków historii (Snapshots of the Past. Tales of Eyewitnesses of History)*, collective work, Institute of National Remembrance, Warsaw 2010, p. 240.
- [149] Igor Janke, *Twierdza. Solidarność Walcząca...*, op. cit., p. 376.
- [150] Paulina Codogni, *Okragły stół...*, op. cit., p. 257.
- [151] *Ibid.*, p. 250.
- [152] *Ibid.*, p. 251.
- [153] Marek Wierzbicki, “Federacja Młodzieży Walczącej na tle politycznych, społecznych i kulturowych trendów epoki (1984–1990)” (“Federation of Fighting Youth against the background of political, social and cultural trends of the era (1984–1990)”), [in:] Marek Wierzbicki [ed.], *Federacja...*, op. cit., p. 27.
- [154] P. Codogni, *Okragły stół...*, op. cit., p. 254.
- [155] *Ibid.*, p. 255.
- [156] Paweł Smoleński: *Szermierze Okrągłego Stołu...*, op. cit., pp. 22–23.
- [157] In this context it seems interesting that support for Solidarity was most accurately estimated by the Americans – Ambassador John R. Davis Jr. on 19 April 1989 reported that the crushing victory of the opposition seemed the most likely, and the completely democratically elected Senate would become a counterbalance for the non-representative Sejm. See: “Warszawa, 19 kwietnia 1989 – ambasador Davis do sekretarza stanu o szansach obydwu stron na zwycięstwo w wyborach” (“Warsaw, April 19, 1989 – Ambassador Davis to the Secretary of State about the chances of both sides to win the election”), [in:] *Ku zwycięstwu ‘Solidarności’. Korespondencja Ambasady USA w Warszawie z Departamentem Stanu styczeń – wrzesień 1989 (To the victory of ‘Solidarity’. Correspondence of the US Embassy in Warsaw with the State Department from January to September 1989)*, introduction and selection Gregory F. Domber, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN), Warsaw 2006, pp. 179–187.
- [158] These groups included such organisations as Fighting Solidarity, the Workgroup of the National Committee, the Solidarity Independent Self-governing Trade Union, Polish Socialist Party – Democratic Revolution, as well as the ‘Independence’ Liberal-Democratic Party.
- [159] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., pp. 291–292.
- [160] According to the election regulations, votes of Poles abroad were counted in this particular constituency. Urban counted on big support among the staff of Polish diplomatic posts, which was supposed to ensure him a victory over the opposition candidate – actor Andrzej Łapicki. However, in the event this was not the case and Urban did not obtain a seat in parliament.
- [161] Paulina Codogni, *Okragły stół...*, op. cit., p. 266.
- [162] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 8 May 1989.

[163] Jan Skórzyński, Marek Pernal, *Kalendarium Solidarności 1980–1989 (Calendar of the Solidarity)*, Świat Książki, Warsaw 2005, p. 188.

[164] Paulina Codogni, *Okrągły stół...*, op. cit., p. 264.

[165] A few days before the election, during the session of the PZPR Central Committee, Jaruzelski decided that results of the Senate election should be assessed as follows: “51–60 per cent – a good result; 41–49 per cent – a bad result; and below 40 per cent – a very bad result”. See: Minutes no. 63 from the session of the Secretary of the Central Committee of PZPR on 30 May 1989, [in:] Stanisław Perzkowski (ed.), *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego i Sekretariatu KC...*, op. cit., p. 371.

[166] Interestingly, the opinion polls were not that favourable to them – in a survey conducted on 23 May 1989, only 24 per cent of respondents wanted to support coalition candidates in the Senate election and as many as 55 per cent – the opposition (with 21 per cent undecided). Similar results could have been expected during a Sejm election. “Informacja Ośrodka Badania Opinii Publicznej z badań przedwyborczych” (“Information from the Public Opinion Research Center from Pre-election Surveys”), [in:] *Zmierzch dyktatury. Polska lat 1986–1989 w świetle dokumentów. Vol. I*, op. cit., p. 504.

[167] For example, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs expected the opposition to win only about  $\frac{1}{4}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$  of 161 places accessible in the Sejm and about 50 per cent seats in the Senate, and was even convinced that defeat could lead to changes in leadership of Solidarity. Patryk Pleskot, “Nie wyrzucać socjalizmu zaokno”. Francja wobec wyborów czerwcowych 1989 r.” („Don't Throw Socialism out the Window: France and the June 1989 Election”, [in:] Sebastian Ligarski and Michał Siedziako (eds), *Wybory i referenda w PRL*, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Szczecin 2014, pp. 777–778.

[168] Teresa Bochwic, *III Rzeczpospolita w odcinkach. Kalendarium wydarzeń styczeń 1989 – maj 2004 (Third Polish Republic in Episodes. Calendar of Events January 1989 – May 2004)*, Arcana, Cracow 2005, p. 39.

[169] Minutes no. 64 from the extended session of the Secretariat of the Central Committee PZPR on 5 June 1989, [in:] Stanisław Perzkowski (ed.), *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego i Sekretariatu KC...*, op. cit., pp. 390–398.

[170] Antoni Dudek: *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., p. 319.

[171] See e.g.: Zbigniew Bereszyński, *NSZZ “Solidarność” i rewolucja solidarnościowa na Śląsku Opolskim 1980–1990 (NSZZ „Solidarność” and the Solidarity Revolution in Opole Silesia 1980–1990)*, Vol. II, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Opole 2014, pp. 424–425.

[172] Tadeusz Mazowiecki named it “a silent acceptance” and explained it: “It was about not to break everything by immediate clash”. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, *Rok 1989...*, op. cit., p. 31.

[173] The Coordination Commission was appointed during the Round Table negotiations in order to straighten out possible contentious issues regarding the interpretation of particular agreements. The Commission consisted of the leadership of both political camps. The Commission met only three times, with the final meeting on 8 June.

[174] Paulina Codogni, *Okrągły stół...*, op. cit., p. 269.

[175] See: Paulina Codogni, *Wybory czerwcowe 1989 roku...*, op. cit., pp. 353–372.

[176] Antoni Dudek: *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., p. 341.

[177] Quoted after: Paulina Codogni: *Okrągły stół...*, op. cit., p. 273.

- [178] Tadeusz Mazowiecki, *Rok 1989...*, op. cit., p. 32.
- [179] Cf. Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., pp. 349–350.
- [180] Quoted after: Andrzej Paczkowski, *Pół wieku dziejów Polski 1939–1989 (Half a Century of Polish History 1939–1989)*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2005, p. 394.
- [181] Quoted after: Antoni Dudek: *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., pp. 352–353.
- [182] Information obtained during the talk of A. Gubrynowicz with Adam Michnik, May 2010.
- [183] On 22 June 1989, during dinner with Solidarity activists, Davis, using notes made on a match box, showed them how lowering the quorum would solve the issue of electing Jaruzelski without the necessity of voting for him. The American ambassador explained that despite a big absence of opposition MPs, a quorum could still be maintained and the number of votes for the election would be obtained. See: “Warsaw, 23 June 1989 – ambassador Davis to the Secretary of State in possible difficulties with obtaining a majority of votes in the parliament necessary for electing Wojciech Jaruzelski for president”, [in:] *Ku zwycięstwu ‘Solidarności’*, op. cit., p. 271.
- [184] Wojciech Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski. 1980–2002...*, op. cit., p. 120.
- [185] Antoni Dudek: *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., p. 381.
- [186] Maciej Bałtowski, Maciej Miszewski, *Transformacja gospodarcza w Polsce*, op. cit., p. 171.
- [187] Such an offer was made on 9 June, after Kiszczak’s talk with Michnik, but then “Michnik was reluctant and said that they would not go for it”, see: Minutes no. 65 from the working session of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PZPR on 9 June 1989, [in:] Stanisław Perzkowski (ed.), *Tajne dokumenty Biura Politycznego i Sekretariatu KC*, op. cit., p. 400.
- [188] See: Jan Skórzyński, *Ugoda i rewolucja. Władza i opozycja 1985–1989 (Settlement and Revolution. Power and Opposition 1985–1989)*, Presspublika, Warsaw 1995, p. 288.
- [189] Quoted after: Teresa Bochwic, *III Rzeczpospolita w odcinkach...*, op. cit., p. 34.
- [190] “Warsaw, 11 August 1989 – ambassador Davis to the Secretary of State on his talk with general Czesław Kiszczak”, [in:] *Ku zwycięstwu ‘Solidarności’*, op. cit., pp. 337–341.
- [191] Quoted after: Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., p. 389.
- [192] Robert Krasowski, *Po południu. Upadek elit solidarnościowych po zdobyciu władzy (After the High Noon. The Fall of Solidarity Elites after Gaining Power)*, Czerwone i Czarne, Warsaw 2012, p. 65.
- [193] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- [194] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., pp. 392–393.
- [195] Quoted after: *Ibid.*, p. 394.
- [196] The Soviets openly rejected the Romanian call. A Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikolai Slunkov commented to the Polish ambassador: “only the Poles know best how to solve their domestic problems”. The same stand was presented by the Foreign Affairs Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to his Romanian counterpart Ioan Totu in Sochi. *Zmierzch dyktatury. Polska lat 1986–1989 w świetle dokumentów. Tom II (czerwiec-grudzień 1989) (The Dusk of Dictatorship. Poland in the Years 1986–1989 in the Light of documents. Volume II (June–December 1989))*, introduction, selection and edited by Antoni Dudek, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2010, pp. 240 and 243.
- [197] Antoni Dudek: *Reglamentowana...*, op. cit., pp. 400–401.

- [198] *Ibid.*, p. 398.
- [199] Antoni Dudek, *Pierwsze lata III Rzeczypospolitej 1989–2001 (The First Years of the Third Polish Republic 1989–2001)*, Arcana, Cracow 2004, p. 75.
- [200] “Let us separate ourselves from the past with a thick line”, from a speech made by Tadeusz Mazowiecki in the Sejm, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25 August 1989.
- [201] Antoni Dudek, *Reglamentowana...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 398–399.
- [202] Jan Kofman, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Transformacja...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–150.
- [203] According to the model presented by professors Kofman and Roszkowski, the transition to market economy involved six stages: 1. Incomplete reform initiated downwards by the former regime, 2. Its failure, 3. Political transformation, 4. Economic collapse connected with it, 5. Stability, 6. Growth based on the driving powers of a market economy. See: *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- [204] See: Maciej Bałtowski, Maciej Miszewski, *Transformacja gospodarcza w Polsce*, *op. cit.*, pp. 133–139.
- [205] Janusz Kaliński, *Economy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- [206] Wojciech Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski 1980–2002*, *op. cit.*, pp. 121–122.
- [207] Maciej Bałtowski, Maciej Miszewski, *Transformacja gospodarcza w Polsce*, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
- [208] Data: the Main Statistical Office, [http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/5840\\_1634\\_PLK\\_HTML.htm](http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/5840_1634_PLK_HTML.htm) (retrieved on 25 August 2010).
- [209] Maciej Bałtowski, Maciej Miszewski, *Transformacja gospodarcza w Polsce*, *op. cit.*, pp. 182–183.
- [210] *Ibid.*, pp. 188–189.
- [211] *Ibid.*, pp. 193–194.
- [212] The crucial argument of sceptical economic circles was that too sudden a suppression of demand (by too high reduction of payments), combined with a restrictive monetary policy would lead to a deeper recession than was necessary. One of the most fervent critics of Balcerowicz was the later deputy prime minister and minister of finance Grzegorz Kołodko, who maintained that the stabilisation programme ‘missed the target’, both in terms of quantity as far as the forecasts were concerned, and in its excessive restrictiveness. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
- [213] It should be added that foreign debt after the times of the People’s Republic of Poland has not been paid off to this day, burdening at least one generation of Poles with the necessity to pay debts for the economic madness dating from the time of Gierek and Jaruzelski. Only in March 2009 was the debt to the Paris Club paid off (not including Japan), but there still are some outstanding debts towards private creditors from the London Club, which are to be paid until 2024.
- [214] Wojciech Roszkowski, Jan Kofman, “Economic Transformation”, [in:] Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, Piotr Dutkiewicz, with the support of Agnieszka Orzelska (eds), *New Europe. The Impact of the First Decade*, Vol. I: *Trends and Perspectives*, Warsaw 2006, p. 167.
- [215] Cf.: Jan Kofman, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Transformacja...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–185.
- [216] See the chapter on Hungary.
- [217] Wojciech Roszkowski, Jan Kofman, *Poland*, [in:] Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, Piotr Dutkiewicz, with the support of Agnieszka Orzelska (eds), *New Europe. The Impact of the First Decade*. Vol. II: *Variations on the Pattern*, Warszawa 2006, p. 400.

- [218] See: Maciej Bałtowski, Maciej Miszewski, *Transformacja gospodarcza w Polsce*, op. cit., pp. 221–239.
- [219] Wojciech Roszkowski, Jan Kofman, *Economic Transformation*, op. cit., p. 148.
- [220] Robert Krasowski, *Po południu...*, op. cit., pp. 108–109.
- [221] Jan Kofman, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 173.
- [222] See e.g.: Warszawa, 16 June 1989 – ambassador Davis to the Secretary of State on the rumours of negative approach of the USA towards the election of Wojciech Jaruzelski for president, [in:] *Ku zwycięstwu ‘Solidarności’*, op. cit., pp. 261–266
- [223] Artur Wołek, *Demokracja nieformalna: konstytucjonalizm i rzeczywiste reguły polityki w Europie Środkowej po 1989 roku (Informal Democracy: Constitutionalism and Real Policy Rules in Central Europe after 1989)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN), Warsaw 2004, pp. 66–69.
- [224] Wojciech Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski 1980–2002*, op. cit., p. 130.
- [225] Artur Wołek, *Demokracja nieformalna...*, op. cit., pp. 71–73.
- [226] Antoni Dudek, *Pierwsze lata III Rzeczypospolitej*, op. cit., p. 134.
- [227] *Ibid.*, pp. 153–161.
- [228] The Act adopted by the Sejm of the Polish Republic on 21 September 1990 on shortening the 10<sup>th</sup> term of office of the Sejm, the Senate and the President of the Polish Republic, M.P. 1990 vol. 36 item 289, <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WMP19900360289> (last accessed on 18.03.2010).
- [229] Artur Wołek, *Demokracja nieformalna...*, op. cit., p. 80.
- [230] The SLD (the Democratic Left Alliance) until 1999 was an election alliance, which later transformed itself into a party.
- [231] The Peasants’ party was transformed from the ZSL into the PSL during a congress in November 1989, taking the name of the only strong opposition party in Poland in 1945–1949, the liquidation of which was the foundation of the ZSL. Wojciech Roszkowski, *Najnowsza historia Polski. 1980–2000*, op. cit., p. 135.
- [232] Ideas of “rebranding” appeared already earlier – some party members perceived leaving the old name during the elections in June 1989 as one of the reasons of a weak result. See: “Comments on the elections in the ZSL activists circles and among people’s press journalists”, [in:] *Zmierzch dyktatury*, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 65.
- [233] “Ustawa za łapówkę, czyli przychodzi Rywin do Michnika” (“The Act for a Bribe, i.e. Rywin Comes to Michnik”), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26 December 2002.
- [234] Antoni Dudek, *Historia polityczna Polski 1989–2015 (Political History of Poland 1989–2015)*, Znak, Cracow 2016, pp. 487–503.
- [235] Paweł Śpiewak, “Koniec złudzeń” (“The End of Illusions”), *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 January 2003.
- [236] Paweł Kowal, Paweł Ukielski, “Ćwierć wieku polskiej polityki zagranicznej (1989–2014)” (“A Quarter Century of the Polish Foreign Policy (1989–2014)”, [in:] *Horyzonty polityki. Horizons of Politics*”, 2014, Vol. 5, No. 11, p. 43.

[237] Antoni Dudek, *Historia polityczna...*, op. cit., p. 537. See also: Robert Krasowski, *Czas Kaczyńskiego. Polityka jako wieczny konflikt (Kaczyński's Time. Politics as an Eternal Conflict)*, Czerwone i Czarne, Warsaw 2016, pp. 40–45.

[238] Antoni Dudek, *Historia polityczna...*, op. cit., p. 560.

[239] Jarosław Kaczyński declared: "Only the one who plays above his possibilities wins in Europe. This is the way to defend the national interest". Piotr Zaremba, *O jednym takim... Biografia Jarosława Kaczyńskiego (About One Such... Biography of Jarosław Kaczyński)*, Czerwone i Czarne, Warsaw 2010, p. 323.

[240] It is worth noticing that the PiS gained many more votes than two years earlier; however, the mobilisation of the opposition's electorate was much stronger. Robert Krasowski, *Czas Kaczyńskiego...*, op. cit., p. 187.

[241] "TK: Ustawa lustracyjna jest częściowo niezgodna z konstytucją" ("The Constitutional Tribunal: the Lustration Law is Partly not Compatible with the Constitution"), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 11 May 2007.

[242] "Prezydent odwołał wicepremiera i ministra rolnictwa Andrzeja Leppera" ("The President Dismissed the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture Andrzej Lepper"), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 9 July 2007.

[243] This phrase was used by Jarosław Kaczyński in February 2006 in the address on the occasion of 100 days of Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz's government. Transcript from the works of the Sejm: 5 office term, 10 session, 3 day (17 February 2006), <http://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/Debata5.nsf>. (last accessed on 23.06.2011)

[244] Paradoxically, this case did not help the PiS, rather the opposite. Robert Krasowski, *Czas Kaczyńskiego...*, op. cit., p. 187.

[245] Antoni Dudek, *Historia polityczna...*, op. cit., p. 592.

[246] *Ibid.*, p. 615.

[247] Paweł Kowal, Paweł Ukielski, *Ćwierć wieku...*, op. cit., pp. 46–48.

[248] Antoni Dudek, *Historia polityczna...*, op. cit., p. 643.

[249] *Ibid.*, p. 688.

[250] Marek Cichocki, "Szkice z polskiej podmiotowości" ("Sketches on Polish Recognition"), [in:] Jacek Kłoczowski, Tomasz Żukowski (eds), *Rzeczpospolita na arenie międzynarodowej. Idee i praktyczne dylematy polityki zagranicznej (The Polish Republic on the International Stage. Ideas and Practical Dilemmas of Foreign Policy)*, Chancellery of the President – Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, Warsaw – Cracow 2010, p. 70.

[251] It should be remembered that in the initial phase, the conflict was mainly about the issue of unity – in the autumn of 1989, Adam Michnik suggested transforming Solidarity into a political movement, which would be a combination of various traditions. As any political conflicts might threaten a very fragile democracy, so they should not go beyond the debate inside the camp advocating transformations. It was supposed to additionally involve former communists, who would be given an opportunity to join 'the right side'. Opponents of this concept emphasised that establishing a standard political stage only strengthens and not weakens democracy, whose very essence is the dispute about concepts. They also noticed that implementing the vision proposed by *Gazeta Wyborcza* or *Tygodnik Powszechny* under the banner of Solidarity would mean establishing another mono-party. See: Paweł Śpiewak, *Pamięć po komunizmie (Memory After Communism)*, Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, Gdańsk 2005, pp. 48–60.

[252] Ibid., p. 63.

[253] Quoted after: Ibid., p. 70.

[254] Jarosław Gowin, "Wstęp: Kościół, religia, demokracja" ("Introduction: Church, Religion, Democracy"), [in:] *Spór o Polskę 1989–1999. Wybór tekstów prasowych (Dispute over Poland in 1989–1999. Selection of Press Texts)*, introduction, selection and preparation Paweł Śpiewak, PWN, Warsaw 2000, pp. 365–367.

[255] Although in the People's Republic of Poland there were two other parties besides PZPR, i.e. the farmers' party – the United People's Party and the intelligentsia's party – the Alliance of Democrats, the communist party did not need to compete with them for voters anyway.

[256] Quoted after: Antoni Dudek, *Pierwsze lata III Rzeczypospolitej*, op. cit., p. 105.

[257] As Robert Krasowski comments, the new party leaders "knew that the SdRP would be charged with the mortgage of the PZPR, but thought that it was better to enter the war of life with a big battleship rather than with a small lifeboat. They were cold and calculating, because their life path led so that they never touched the idealism, neither communist nor anti-communist", and adds, "resigning of sprinkling ashes, the Alliance fell into other extreme, foolish ostentation". Robert Krasowski, *Czas gniewu. Rozkwit i upadek imperium SLD (The Time of Anger. The Rise and Fall of the SLD Empire)*, Czerwone i Czarne, Warsaw 2014, pp. 18 and 20.

[258] See: Arnošt Bečka, Jacek Molesta, "Sprawozdanie z likwidacji majątku byłej Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej" ("Report on the Liquidation of the Assets of the Former Polish United Workers' Party"), Sopot-Warsaw 2000,.

[259] Robert Krasowski points out one more factor that played a role: "More important than the property inherited after the PZPR was the stigma of the PZPR. It built something stronger than a party. It built a community of fate. A compact team". Robert Krasowski, *Czas gniewu...*, op. cit., p. 22.

[260] Antoni Dudek, *Pierwsze lata III Rzeczypospolitej*, op. cit., pp. 153 and 221.

[261] Jan Kofman, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 170.

[262] Antoni Dudek, *Pierwsze lata III Rzeczypospolitej*, op. cit., p. 348.

[263] "But the past was still behind them. Seemingly, they were owners of the Polish democracy, but the Alliance's leaders were still judged not for what they were doing at the moment, but for what they had done before. Every member of the parliament thought that he had the right to look down on them, every journalist began interviews with biographical malice". Robert Krasowski, *Czas gniewu...*, op. cit., p. 19.

[264] Ibid., p. 238.

[265] Antoni Dudek, *Historia polityczna...*, op. cit., pp. 508 and 536.

[266] Ibid., pp. 676 and 687.

[267] See: Piotr Grzelak, *Wojna o lustrację (A War over Lustration)*, Wydawnictwo Trio, Warsaw 2005, pp. 18–21.

[268] Artur Wołek, *Demokracja nieformalna...*, op. cit., pp. 106–107.

[269] Piotr Grzelak, *Wojna o lustrację*, op. cit., pp. 22–25.

[270] Ibid., p. 40.

- [271] Transcript record from the third session of the Sejm, 21 December 1991, quoted after: *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- [272] Antoni Dudek, *Pierwsze lata III Rzeczypospolitej*, op. cit., p. 260
- [273] Piotr Grzelak, *Wojna o lustrację*, op. cit., pp. 62–63.
- [274] *Ibid.*, pp. 135–138.
- [275] *Ibid.*, pp. 145–154.
- [276] *The Act of 18 October 2006 on the disclosure of information on the security service files from years 1944–1990 and their content*, Journal of Laws 2006 no. 218 item 1592, [standardized text], available at: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU20062181592> (last accessed on 8.03.2010).
- [277] *Ibid.*
- [278] Artur Wołek, *Demokracja nieformalna...*, op. cit., p. 111.
- [279] See e.g.: Sławomir Cenckiewicz, Piotr Gontarczyk, *SB a Lech Wałęsa. Przyczynek do biografii (The SB and Lech Wałęsa. A Contribution to the Biography)*, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Gdańsk–Warsaw–Cracow 2008; Paweł Zyzak, *Lech Wałęsa – idea i historia. Biografia polityczna legendarnego przywódcy Solidarności do 1988 roku (Lech Wałęsa – Idea and History. Political Biography of the Legendary Solidarity Leader until 1988)*, 3S Media, Cracow 2009; Jan Skórzyński, *Zadra. Biografia Lecha Wałęsy (Splinter. Biography of Lech Wałęsa)*, ECS, Gdańsk 2009; Piotr Semka, *Za, a nawet przeciw – zagadka Lecha Wałęsy (For and Even Against – the Puzzle of Lech Wałęsa)*, Wydawnictwo M, Warsaw 2013.
- [280] *Informacja dotycząca opinii biegłych na temat akt TW „Bolka”*, IPN’s communique, available at: <http://www.ipn.gov.pl/pl/dla-mediow/komunikaty/38559,Informacja-dotyczaca-opinii-bieglych-na-temat-akt-TW-Bolka.html> (last accessed on 7.02.2017).
- [281] *The Act of 4 April 1991 on the amendment of the Act on the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland – the Institute of National Remembrance*, Journal of Laws 1991 vol. 45 item 195, available at: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19910450195> (last accessed on 10.03.2010).
- [282] *The Act of 18 December 1998 on the Institute of National Remembrance – the Commission for Persecuting Crimes against the Polish Nation*, Journal of Laws 1998 no. 155 item 1016, available at: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19981551016> (last accessed on 10.03.2010).
- [283] Bronisław Wildstein, *Dekomunizacja, której nie było (Decommunisation That Was Not There)*, Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej, Cracow 2000, p. 67.
- [284] *15 lat Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej w liczbach (15 Years of the Institute of National Remembrance in Figures)*, available at: <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/dla-mediow/komunikaty/12091,15-lat-Instytutu-Pamieci-Narodowej-w-liczbach.html> (last accessed on 10.02.2017).
- [285] *The Act of 29 December 1989 on amendment of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Poland*, Journal of Laws 1989 no. 75 item 444, available at: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19890750444>, (last accessed on 17.02.2010).
- [286] *The Act of 26 April 1950 on establishing a public holiday on 1 May*, Journal of Laws 1950 no.19 item 157, available at: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19500190157>. (last accessed on 17.02.2010).
- [287] *The Act of 22 July 1945 on creating the National Day of the Rebirth of Poland*, Journal of Laws 1945 no. 32 item 194, available at: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19450320194>, (last accessed on 17.02.2010).

[288] *The Act of 18 January 1951 on non-working days*, Journal of Laws 1951 no. 4 item 28, [standardised text] available at: <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/DetailsServlet?id=WDU19510040028>, (last accessed on 17.02.2010).

[289] Bartłomiej Kozłowski, "Próba wysadzenia pomnika Lenina w Nowej Hucie" ("An Attempt to Blow up the Lenin Monument in Nowa Huta"), available at: <http://kalendarium.polska.pl/wydarzenia/article.htm?id=252302>, (last accessed on 18.02.2010).

[290] Andrzej Zawistowski, "Armia Czerwona do Czerwonego Boru" ("Red Army to the Red Forest"), *Rzeczpospolita* No. 14 (19 January 2016), p. 11.

[291] Some changes were of symbolic character, comparing both patrons implies that it was not accidental. In Warsaw, the Avenue of the October Revolution was replaced by the Avenue of the Millennium Primate, Gen. Karol Świerczewski by Solidarity, Julian Marchlewski by John Paul II, and Paweł Finder by Captain Witold Pilecki; the street patron who was the executioner was replaced by the victim: in Warsaw the Avenue of Bolesław Bierut was changed for the Alley of Gen. Emil Fieldorf 'Nil', who had been sentenced by the communist court to the death penalty and Bierut refused to pardon him. In Łódź, the most famous figures of the anti-communist underground army were honoured – Maj. Zygmunt Szendzielorz 'Łupaszka' replaced Alfred Lampe, and Maj. Józef Kuraś 'Ogień' – Rosa Luxemburg.

[292] The website of the Institute of National Remembrance: <http://ipn.gov.pl/portal.php?serwis=pl&dzial=397&id=8625>, (last accessed on 18.02.2010).

[293] Perhaps the most famous and widely debated example of the lack of changes is the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw, built in the very centre of the town as 'a gift from the Soviet nation for the Polish nation' in the years 1952–1955. The Palace, which initially was named after Stalin, was for many people actually a symbol of the Soviet domination in Poland, and its location broke the uniform urban layout of the Polish capital. The advocates of its demolition invoked the historic event from the times of the Second Polish Republic, when the gigantic Saint Alexander Nevsky cathedral, built at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on Saski Square (now Piłsudski Square), was demolished despite its unquestionable architectural value because it was a symbol of the Russian rule. The opponents, on the other hand, besides crucial economic and logistic arguments (the necessity of moving numerous institutions which are located in the Palace), emphasised that for several decades this monumental structure grew into the city and became its symbol. In 2007, the Palace was placed on the list of monuments, which practically closed the issue of its possible demolition.

The issue of street names in Poland was vivid and emotive. A lot of controversy was raised by the hoax conducted by a group of internet users who posted a fictitious entry on Wikipedia devoted to Henryk Batuta/Baton, an alleged communist fighter, who was supposed to be a patron of one of Warszawa streets (actually its name comes from a music accessory – a baton). The fake entry did not raise any suspicion for over a year, whereas after the hoax was revealed, the originators of this idea presented their action as 'mocking the fact that many Polish names still have names of people and institutions not worthy of it'.

[294] *Act of 1 April 2016 on the prohibition of promotion of communism or other totalitarian system through the names of buildings, objects and public facilities*, Journal of Laws Dz. U. 2016.744, available at: <http://www.lex.pl/du-akt/-/akt/dz-u-2016-744> (last accessed on 7.02.2017).

[295] "Dekomunizacja ulic cofnięta. 600 tablic do wymiany" ("Streets Decommunisation Overturned, 600 Street Name Boards Have to be Changed", available at: <https://tvnwarszawa.tvn24.pl/informacje,news,dekomunizacja-ulic-cofnieta-br600-tablic-do-wymiany,280952.html> (last access on 19.02.2019).

[296] In 2010, The Cross of Freedom and Solidarity (*Krzyż Wolności i Solidarności*) was established. It honours members of the democratic opposition in Poland, who between the years 1956 and 1989 were killed, seriously wounded or injured, arrested, imprisoned or interned for at least 30 days, who lost jobs or were expelled from school or university for at least 6 months as a result of their activities for the benefit of a free and democratic Poland. Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 15 listopada 2010 zmieniające rozporządzenie w sprawie opisu, materiału, wymiarów, wzorów rysunkowych oraz sposobu i okoliczności noszenia odznak orderów i odznaczeń (Ordinance of the President of the Republic of Poland of November 15, 2010 amending the ordinance on description, material, dimensions, drawing patterns and the manner and circumstances of wearing badges, orders and decorations), Dz.U. 2010 nr 221 poz. 1448.

[297] <http://poszukiwania.ipn.gov.pl/sz1/odnalezieni?t=123>. Among the identified are such symbolic victims of communist court crimes as Danuta Siedzikówna 'Inka' or Major Zygmunt Szendzielorz 'Łupaszka'.

[298] For more, see: Karolina Wichowska, *The Soldiers' Field*, Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), Warsaw 2016.

[299] For more on this issue, see the chapter on Czechoslovakia.

[300] The website of the European Network of Memory and Solidarity: <https://www.enrp.eu/> (last accessed on 13.02.2019).

[301] "Kto wolałby żyć w PRL? Komunikat z badań CBOS" ("Who Would Prefer to Live in the People's Republic of Poland? Message from CBOS research"), Warsaw, May 2000, available at: [https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2000/K\\_o82\\_00.PDF](https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2000/K_o82_00.PDF), (retrieved on 19 February 2010).

[302] See: Beata Tadla, *Pokolenie '89, czyli dzieci PRL-u w wolnej Polsce (Generation '89, or the Children of the People's Republic in Free Poland)*, Burda Media Polska, Warsaw 2009.

[303] Bartek Koziczyński, *333 popkultowe rzeczy... w PRL (333 Pop-Cult Things... in People's Republic of Poland)*, Vesper, Poznań 2007; Beata Tadla, *Pokolenie '89...* op. cit.

[304] See: <http://www.nostalgia.pl/>, <http://www.spodlady.com/>, <http://www.muzeumdobranoczek.com.pl/p/>, <http://www.polskaprl.rejtravel.pl/> (last accessed on 13.02.2019).

[305] See: Przemysław Zieliński, *Scena rockowa w PRL...* op. cit.

[306] Janusz Wróblewski, "Recenzja filmu Dom zły" ("Film Review – Dom zły"), *Polityka* 26 November 2009.

[307] Debate about the show on the website of *Teologia Polityczna*: <https://teologiapolityczna.pl/pokaz-spektaklu-teatru-tvp-norymberga>, (last accessed on 23.02.2010).

[308] <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/227782,Controversial-Polish-communist-Kiszczak-to-be-buried-without-honours> (accessed on 3.02.2017).

[309] See: e.g. Piotr Semka, *Lech Kaczyński. Opowieść arcywłoska (Lech Kaczyński. An Arch-Polish Tale)*, Czerwone i Czarne, Warsaw 2010; Piotr Zaremba, *O jednym takim...* op. cit.; Sławomir Cenckiewicz, Adam Chmielecki, *Prezydent: Lech Kaczyński 2005–2010 (President Lech Kaczyński 2005–2010)*, Fronda, Warsaw 2016.

[310] The website of the Comprehensive University of Jan Józef Lipski in Teremiska: <http://teremiski.edu.pl/content/view/2/3/> (last accessed on 9.02.2010).

[311] Sławomir Cenckiewicz, *Anna Solidarność: życie i działalność Anny Walentynowicz na tle epoki (1929–2010)* (*Anna Solidarity: the Life and Activities of Anna Walentynowicz against the Backdrop of the Era (1929–2010)*), Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2010.

[312] Quoted after: Beata Płonka, "Anna Walentynowicz – apokryf historii" ("Anna Walentynowicz – Apocrypha of History", available at: <http://pismozadra.pl/archiwum/zadra-3/384-anna-walentynowicz-apokryf-historii>) (last accessed on 13.02.2019).

Aleksander Gubrynowicz

# Hungary – from Dictatorship through the Process of Transformation

In all of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe the legacy of the inter-war period (1918–1939) had influenced the shape of the communist period that followed in the aftermath of the WWII. In the case of Hungary, the legacy with which the communist party, and also the opposition in later years, had to cope involved a few key events. These included, firstly, the year 1918 and the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, pursuant to which the neighbouring countries were given the lands considered in the Hungarian tradition as the cradle of Magyar state identity,<sup>[1]</sup> and secondly, another civil war in the country's history leading to bitter fighting between the left and the right, which has actually not been overcome to this day.

Additionally, Hungarians entered the communist period among those who were defeated in the Second World War, in which they supported the Third Reich despite hesitation of some political elites. The war's late stage was marked by the deportation of Jews to Auschwitz (in which Hungarian administrative organs took an active part), and then by the government of the Arrow Cross Party, led by Ferenc Szálasi, who, together with the Nazis, participated in murdering both Jews and opposition activists as well.<sup>[2]</sup> And this only preceded another wave of terror introduced by the communist regime of Mátyás Rakósi, which was one of the most brutal dictatorships in the history of Europe (every sixth adult citizen of Hungary was a victim of repressions).<sup>[3]</sup> Having cracked down on the fascists and

persons considered as ‘class enemies’, Rakósi turned against the highest ranking party members, including the former Interior Minister László Rajk, who was executed after a show trial in 1952.<sup>[4]</sup> The process of de-Stalinisation, the ousting of Rakósi by Moscow, and the outbreak of yet another revolution in 1956, which was violently suppressed by Soviet intervention, led to the next and, finally, the last great wave of terror: the first years of the rule of János Kádár.<sup>[5]</sup> The reformist leader Imre Nagy and his closest collaborators were sentenced to death by hanging; many other criminal lawsuits were filed and resulted in death sentences and prison terms. Two hundred and twenty eight people were executed, scores of thousands were imprisoned, with a similar number put in detention camps,<sup>[6]</sup> and about 180,000 decided to emigrate.<sup>[7]</sup> However, from the mid-1960s onwards it was clear that Kádár was changing the course of internal policy. Perhaps nobody (including Kádár himself) could have predicted that in 2009 János Kádár, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkaspárt – MSZMP*), as the communist party in Hungary was called since 1 November 1956, would be remembered by the majority of the country’s citizens as the most outstanding figure in the national history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. No opposition leader or politician active before 1945 could compare with him.<sup>[8]</sup>

## The Conditions of Opposition Activity

The ideological climate prevailing in Hungary after 1956 was not favourable for anti-system opposition. Undoubtedly, the terror of communist special services had left scars on the society’s psyche. However, Kádár turned out to be a politician who was both cynical and intelligent. Aware that the policy of ‘putting the screws on’ had not worked, mostly due to an inability to satisfy fundamental economic needs, the new leader of the CP decided to win Hungarians over by providing them with a proper standard of living.<sup>[9]</sup> The correction of the political course meant in practice that by the mid-1960s most of those imprisoned for taking part in the 1956 revolution had been released. Changes to the economic policy permitted a more lenient approach towards market economy mechanisms than in any other country

of the Socialist Bloc. Thus, a strictly licensed space for social activity was established, which could be developed by Hungarians at their discretion, thereby increasing consumption, or, in more general terms, the standard of living, or prosperity.<sup>[10]</sup> Theoretically, the New Economic Mechanism (*új gazdasági mechanizmus*) introduced in 1968 by Rezső Nyers, a former finance minister and a trusted collaborator of Prime Minister Jenő Föck, was a clear, albeit slight, aberration from the communist doctrine. However, the mechanism was not implemented in full, due to negative attitudes on the part of a substantial majority of the MSZMP Politburo (including Zoltán Komócsin, Sándor Gáspár and others). Moreover, the response of the USSR remained negative, so in the mid-1970s Kádár decided to suspend the reforms indefinitely, ousting Nyers (in 1974) and his ally Prime Minister Jenő Föck (in 1975).<sup>[11]</sup> Although Kádár's economic policy was inconsistent and its results rather limited, according to a renowned Polish expert on Hungary, the exhausted Hungarians, seeing that the conditions proposed by the government opened a real opportunity to improve their situation, embraced a certain 'deal' between the governed and the governing in which the authorities were occupied with politics while the citizens were busy building their dachas by Lake Balaton.<sup>[12]</sup> This peculiar depoliticisation of the society or a 'division of duties' turned out for Hungarians to be an effective inhibition against taking any action that was forbidden by the authorities. When their material situation had improved and time had passed, many (if not most) Hungarians started to revise their attitude towards the regime. Having in memory the 1956 revolution and its consequences, Hungarians were increasingly reluctant in their attitudes towards any initiatives, which could destroy that small but tangible prosperity achieved within the strictly licensed set of liberties given by the Central Committee.<sup>[13]</sup> As a consequence, in the first half of the 1970s, in Hungary there was, with a few exceptions, almost no opposition activity. The first ideas for the country's reforms appeared no earlier than the end of that decade, and involved only narrow circles of the intelligentsia, without any support from wider social groups.<sup>[14]</sup> As one of the later leaders of the emerging democratic opposition, Csaba György Kiss, admitted a bit ashamedly, the events of the 'Polish August' were not an incentive to start any activity of this kind on the Danube.<sup>[15]</sup> On the contrary, Kádár's propaganda,

which for the whole period of Poland's 1980 'carnival of Solidarity' went to great lengths to portray every Pole as idle, an alcoholic, a troublemaker or a thief proved to be extremely efficient. In 1981, not only Kádár but also the average Hungarian were convinced that the events on the Vistula posed a threat to the system's stability (which, despite its clear flaws, was seen as acceptable) and could not see any benefits in the Polish initiative.<sup>[16]</sup> In that period Hungarians could go to the West more frequently (in 1978, visa-free travel between Hungary and Austria was introduced)<sup>[17]</sup>, so automatically all dissatisfied citizens could leave Hungary without any obstacles, which additionally limited the activity of the opposition.

Historian Ignác Romsics rightfully reminds that the sociological research conducted in 1980 indicated that, when asked 'Is life better in Hungary or in the West?' the average Hungarian gave much nuanced answers and was rather not impressed by the living conditions on the other side of the iron curtain. The vast majority of society thought that the solutions proposed by the Kádár regime were mostly better than the standards of democracy and market economy in Western Europe.<sup>[18]</sup>

It should be emphasized that this 'satisfaction' or passive acceptance ('let us hope it won't be worse') covered all levels of Hungarian society, including the creative intelligentsia. The relations between this last group and the authorities were different than in Poland, where the Gomułka regime responded to the intelligentsia's protests with mere repressions, not offering anything else. The propaganda apparatus, directed efficiently by György Aczél, the omnipotent Central Committee secretary for ideology and culture, could effectively win the writers' support for the authorities. The same pragmatism, which forced Kádár to abandon Marxist dogmas in the economy, where that was necessary for preserving social calm, told him to pamper gifted artists by offering them high material status. Another point of this informal agreement between the intelligentsia and the regime concerned tolerance for criticism or addressing certain taboo topics, but within the boundaries, which were strictly set by censorship. Therefore, as Barbara J. Falk points out, this reality dramatically hindered any activities aimed at establishing structures alternative to the party state. In fact (and unlike Poland, where the division between 'us' and 'them' was quite clearly

marked), in Hungary even in the late 1980s the division between the loyal opposition and the dissidents not tolerated by the party remained flexible.<sup>[19]</sup>

There were also other obstacles in the way of the Hungarian opposition. Unlike in Poland (but also – to a degree – in the GDR), where the conflict between the state and the Church could easily become a catalyst of social protests, that was not the issue on the Danube. Until the fall of the regime the Catholic Church did not play any major role in the social transformation, although two thirds of Hungarians identified as being Catholic and the clergy sometimes belonged to the opposition (such as the *Bokor* ('Bush') community led by Father György Bulányi). After 1956, the Church followed a path of co-operation with the government, which for some was connected with the recruiting of most bishops as agents.<sup>[20]</sup> Undoubtedly, confessional disintegration (in 1945, about 30 per cent of Hungarians identified as members of various Protestant denominations) was a major obstacle as – in addition to mutual resentment and hostility accumulated over the years – religion was not a factor, which could unite the whole of society. The pro-government stance of the Episcopate (especially the primate László Lekai)<sup>[21]</sup> went hand in hand with the rapidly growing secularisation of society.<sup>[22]</sup> The fact that the Kádár regime allowed people to improve their standard of living and simultaneously expanded the social sector effectively pulled many away from religion, which was increasingly perceived as a burden interfering with private life. Consequently, unlike the situation which was observed in religiously homogenous countries such as Poland, or even the GDR, in Hungary the Church remained much closer to the 'throne'. Opposition initiatives were not well received by the Episcopate<sup>[23]</sup>, and the less important religion became in everyday social life, the more closely the Church clung to the authorities.<sup>[24]</sup>

On the other hand, the circles which were dissatisfied with the strict censorship and limited freedom of speech had to overcome the divisions stemming from the ideological past in order to devise a common plan of action for the future. That ideological legacy proved to be extremely challenging in Hungary. The older generation remembered who had been a socialist, who had belonged to the Arrow Cross Party and who had supported Horthy, which left significant marks. The problem which could not be addressed until the 1970s in any official publications, even though

every Hungarian knew about it and treated it as a great national injustice, i.e. the 1920 Treaty of Trianon and its consequences, was a serious hindrance for the debates of the opposition milieu.

## The Crisis of the Kádár System

Despite the circumstances, which were favourable for the authorities, ousting Föck and Nyers coincided with an increasing economic downturn following 'the 1973 oil crisis'. According to Romsics, additional factors also played a role in the case of Hungary. Strenuous industrialisation in the 1950s and 1960s had shifted a significant part of the labour force from agriculture to industry. In a country whose population reached 10 million only in 1961,<sup>[25]</sup> this scarcity of labour had automatically hindered economic development. The efficiency of the labour utilisation would determine whether the 6.5 per cent economic growth recorded at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s could be maintained in the longer term.<sup>[26]</sup> In the meantime, succumbing to the pressure from the party hardliners who had obtained support from Moscow, Kádár decided to hold back the reforms.<sup>[27]</sup> The drastic increase in oil prices on the world market also affected Hungary. The USSR increased the prices of this commodity delivered to its satellite countries; between 1976 and 1983, the oil price rose four-fold.<sup>[28]</sup> In the conditions of an extensive economy such a shock, which could not be absorbed by the country's own resources (almost three quarters of the oil used in Hungary was imported, mostly from the USSR), must have led to serious trouble. Hungarian industry, whose heavy sector had not been modernised for years, played a crucial role and it could not catch up with the competition on the world market. Agriculture, which until then had been perceived as relatively modern, also fell into trouble. The government started the process of switching energy production from oil – to coal-based, but the results proved unsatisfactory. Even worse was the outcome of the project of building, together with Czechoslovakia, a hydroelectric power plant in Nagymaros. For one thing, the project's partners did not manage to reach any agreement regarding the costs involved, and, for another, the project caused huge controversy due to its negative impact on the environment. Although in Kádár's time

Hungarians were not too eager to rebel, the project sparked a wide response from society and became a good reason to mobilise citizens to protest against the authorities.<sup>[29]</sup>

In search for increasing work efficiency, after the whole series of reforms introduced in 1979–1980, Hungarians were allowed to set up workers' co-operatives. Thus, people were encouraged to take on multiple jobs at a time, which was characteristic for Kádár's time and enabled them to earn a 'second salary'.<sup>[30]</sup> Liberalisation of almost 70 per cent of prices of consumer goods, as well as a subsequent introduction of the bankruptcy law, became clear signs of deeper changes to the former policy line. Simultaneously, the government, based on the Yugoslavian experience, attempted to decentralise the enterprise management process: the right to make decisions was delegated to individual enterprises managed by enterprise councils consisting of the representatives of both the executives and the workers.<sup>[31]</sup> Nevertheless, all of these ideas could not hide the fact that the key decisions concerning industry were still made by the Central Committee, and this, according to János Kornai, distorted the concept of enterprise self-management, given the party's monopoly on power.<sup>[32]</sup> In order to maintain social calm, the authorities had to subsidise enterprises, even those whose existence was not economically viable in the reality of the 1980s. As a consequence, although in theory Hungarian law allowed unprofitable businesses to declare bankruptcy, in practice such situations did not occur. Enterprises usually had a lot of opportunities to appeal to relevant party organs against any unfavourable decisions in their regard.<sup>[33]</sup>

Subsidies absorbed almost one-third of the national budget and, additionally, thwarted the positive results of the earlier market reforms. One should bear in mind that in Hungary, even as late as in 1988, the lion's share of the GDP (92 per cent) was produced by the public sector (by comparison, in the People's Republic of Poland it was only 81 per cent).<sup>[34]</sup> Thus, such a mixed system could not escape from the necessity for 'manual steering', which was manifested by drastic price increases on crucial products, such as petrol or bread. The price increases ate into the surplus profit which Hungarians painstakingly made from their firms or vegetable gardens, thus hindering the growth of society's affluence. Thus the 'legalisation of the second economy', as the reforms from 1979–1980 were sometimes

called, helped to cushion the impact of the economic crisis, which otherwise would have affected Hungary long before 1989. Thanks to the private sector, shop supplies were much better in Hungary than in the People's Republic of Poland in the same period. Undoubtedly, this helped the authorities to endure the economic difficulties and contributed to relieving social tensions. Instead of going on strikes, Hungarians got down to work in their second jobs, in their own firms or gardens, with even greater enthusiasm. The problem was that these reforms could only postpone revealing the inherent contradictions and conflicts, in which the regime got entangled, but they could not prevent its eventual collapse.<sup>[35]</sup>

To sum up: The government tried to introduce some moderate changes which aimed to add some flexibility to the more and more retarded economic system. However – at the end of the day – those efforts failed to bring the effects simply because those small reforms were not radical enough to influence the overall performance of the more and more redundant Hungarian economy. By the mid-1980s, it became clear that without some additional financial support, the state would go bankrupt. In those circumstances, there was only one solution left: incurring more and more debts abroad so that the state could maintain all social spending and keep the population calm. This is why just like Zhivkov in Bulgaria, Honecker in the GDR, Gierek in Poland, or Ceaușescu in Romania, Kádár asked the West for money. Consequently, national debt grew from 3.9 billion USD in 1975 to 9.1 billion in the early 1980s, and on to reach the astronomical sum of 21 billion USD in 1990.<sup>[36]</sup> But problems with financial liquidity continued to plague the country's economy, and opening further credit lines had to involve Hungary's accession to the IMF and the World Bank (in 1982), which Kádár accepted – despite the opposition from Moscow and the majority of his Central Committee – thereby acknowledging that he had reached a dead end.<sup>[37]</sup> It seems that such course of action saved Hungary from the insolvency, which already threatened the country in the early 1980s.<sup>[38]</sup>

However, the IMF granted loans to the Kádár regime on the condition that it would introduce an austerity policy, which the party boss was not inclined to accept. As a result, as early as the beginning of the 1980s the Hungarian economy started to send signals of imminent difficulties. The fall in investment was particularly disturbing. In addition, unexpectedly for the party

leadership, in 1981–1986 consumption fell by 2.9 per cent, instead of growing by 7 per cent as planned. According to Jerzy Kochanowski, it became obvious in 1985 that not only had Hungary been deprived of any currency reserves, but even worse, the production started to seriously falter, for the first time since the beginning of the 1960s. In 1985 alone, it fell by nearly 10 per cent!<sup>[39]</sup> In the late 1980s, inflation also became a noticeable problem, as its rate increased sharply from 8.6 per cent in 1987 to 15.5 per cent in 1988.<sup>[40]</sup>

Inevitably, an invisible halter started to squeeze on the neck of the regime. Further economic growth was impossible without making painful cuts in social spending and that was what Kádár feared most. His moral legitimacy to wield power was not particularly strong (considering the circumstances in which he had taken power in 1956), and lowering the standard of living was bound to cause dissatisfaction. Kádárism, if characterised as a certain political system, had many features distinguishing it from other communist regimes of that time. In no way did it appeal to faith in communism (which was aptly illustrated by the slogan ‘Whoever is not against us is with us’), and thus it did not have such ambitions as Walter Ulbricht or Erich Honecker to create “a new Hungarian”. According to Barbara Falk, “Kádár legitimized his rule not through a new political approach but in a sense the absence of one-by removing politics and the obtrusive nature of the party from people’s daily lives, the perception of liberal and open society could be cultivated”.<sup>[41]</sup>

On the other hand, unlike Ceaușescu or general Mieczysław Moczar with his ‘Partisan’ faction in Poland, Kádár could not – at least officially – appeal to any patriotic tradition from the time between the wars. Governing a country, which had remained an ally of Hitler until 1945, the leader of the MSZMP understood only too well that, with three million Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries, reaching for the ‘national argument’ could wake up the ‘demons of Trianon’. At best, it could lead to worsening of relations with Hungary’s neighbours (which were not particularly good anyway), and, if things took a worse course, it could cause another rebellion and a Soviet intervention.<sup>[42]</sup> As a consequence, the only justification for maintaining power by ‘the old man’ (as Kádár was commonly called) and his team were the external circumstances (enforced affiliation to the Socialist Bloc) and the policies of the MSZMP, which were fuelled by

a higher standard of living than in many other Soviet satellite countries.<sup>[43]</sup> Simultaneously, the promise of constant increases of consumption went hand in hand with a peculiar fostering of 'historical amnesia' or, as some would put it, national nihilism.<sup>[44]</sup> Hungary, which in the period between the wars had been in bitter territorial conflicts with virtually all of its neighbours and was a former ally of Hitler, became in a way '*ex officio* suspected' of nationalism. This was a convenient excuse to censor any information about the past (particularly the recent past) on the pretext of a peculiar 'fight with fascism', and more particularly a fight against any re-birth of fascism on the Danube. However, as cynically it may sound, Kádárism promoted 'a new type of Hungarian', who was neither a communist nor a patriot, but a person focused solely on building up his meagre wealth and was interested in neither the past nor the future.<sup>[45]</sup>

Theoretically, society, tired of historical turmoil, willingly accepted such a state of affairs. Holding back information or lying about recent history in the media was tolerated because the authorities offered the possibility of accumulating wealth as a reward. As long as the state made additional earnings possible and real wages continued to constantly increase (albeit by small amounts), the propensity to express objections or to protest was practically non-existent. What is more, Hungarians rather appreciated the efforts made by the government to ensure there were bearable living conditions, considering the complex international situation, and they even thought that their living standards were better than in the West.<sup>[46]</sup> The 'small stabilisation' basically suited well the young generation, who did not have any high aspirations. It was generally recognised that the only entity entitled to initiate changes and set impassable boundaries was the communist party.

But what to do in a situation where the crisis eats into savings, queues in shops are becoming increasingly bigger, and society becomes immersed in growing pessimism? Neither the government nor the party could answer this question. The fight to 'delete' social memory ended in an obvious failure; people knew better about the events of 1956. A peculiar, albeit very popular, alternative appeared to the widespread propaganda which vilified the past: 'dance houses' ('*Tanházák*'), where young people gathered not only to learn folk dances (some of which were of 'ideologically suspicious' origin as they came from Transylvania), but also to speak freely without the vigilant party

watching them. These gatherings were definitely not of a political kind. But the fact that they were organised outside of the official cultural channels approved of by the authorities, their relaxed atmosphere and the fact that the Communist Youth Association (*Komunista Ifjúsági Szövetség* – KISZ) could not propose an effective counterbalance was enough for the party authorities to qualify these events as ‘a manifestation of nationalism’.<sup>[47]</sup> Yet such defamation of the *Tanházák* by the party could not hide the reality. Although the young generation entering their adult life in the conditions of Kádárism at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s was theoretically unwilling to rebel, the boundaries imposed by the system turned out to be (particularly for the young intelligentsia, which was, for obvious reasons, overrepresented at ‘dance houses’) decidedly too tight. The staggering popularity of the Polvax club established at the Karl Marx University, where it was possible to discuss current affairs in a relatively free manner, and also the attempts of reforms within the KISZ, which were crushed by the authorities in the bud in 1980, clearly indicated that the young generation growing up in the 1970s considered the system to be much less attractive than the previous generation, which had embraced the offer of Kádárism.<sup>[48]</sup> In the 1980s, it also turned out that by influencing literature Aczél had ensured a higher degree of loyalty of the people involved in culture, but that that did not guarantee peace. The 1981 Congress of the Writers Association made observers aware that writers were increasingly discouraged, and during the 1986 Congress one could see open protests against the dictatorship by many outstanding people of culture.

The general secretary of MSZMP realised that the sentiments of national dissatisfaction prevailing on the Danube might lead to another rebellion, which he tried to avoid at all costs. However, the world economic conditions, the changing relations with Moscow, and the requirements of the IMF and the World Bank created a particular cul-de-sac. The aging Kádár did not notice these difficulties or he did not intend to solve them, as he was used to flattery and convinced that he was right by the yes-men sitting in his Politburo by his appointment. And still, the time was a factor working not for him, but against him: even if, by improving slightly the material conditions, he managed to buy society’s passive acceptance, it was nevertheless clear to everybody that even in the 1970s, during the hay-day of the Kádár

era, his state was unable to create standards of living comparable with the more and more affluent Western European countries, and – at least for some clever observers – the idea that one day the life in Hungary will be as comfortable as in the countries of the more affluent West – was out of question.<sup>[49]</sup> And this gap dividing Hungary from the rest of Europe, (of which Hungarians had felt to be the part since always) was to emerge as a true challenge for the regime as early as in the 1980s.

## Beginnings of the Opposition

The circumstances described above make it possible to explain why conducting opposition activity in Hungary proved very difficult. Even in the 1980s there were practically no strikes recorded in Hungary, the legalisation of ‘the second economy’ had temporarily relieved social tension and the opposition would have had to unite and to offer an alternative programme of reforms if they were to be partners in talks with the authorities.

This turned out to be extremely difficult in Hungary and – to simplify the picture somewhat – the attitude towards the Treaty of Trianon was a crucial axis of dispute within the opposition. In the late 1970s, the opposition was divided into two essential camps. The first had its roots in the Marxist philosophical tradition of the ‘Budapest School’. It gathered mostly the circles from the milieu of the former party intelligentsia which remained under the influence of leftist ideas, and György Lukács, a Marxist philosopher deceased in 1971 (whose Budapest School students included János Kis and György Bence who subsequently became active dissidents) played a crucial role here. Taking into consideration factors such as ideological inspirations, social backgrounds and the goals shared by the members of that group, a reader acquainted with modern Polish history will note similarities with ‘the Commandos’ or other participants of the protests in March 1968. However, one should not go too far when looking for analogies between the Hungarian and the Polish left wings: there were quite significant discrepancies between Karol Modzelewski or Jacek Kuroń and their Hungarian contemporaries, mainly due to the fact that Lukács (unlike his contemporaries from the Polish intelligentsia) remained an avowed

Marxist until the end of his life. In 1967, not long before his death, Lukács re-joined the party and provided strong support to Kádár's policy, probably hoping that the process of reforms, which had already begun, would make the ideas of real socialism come true.<sup>[50]</sup>

The conviction that the Marxist idea is capable of evolving in spite of all difficulties was quite prevalent among Budapest's intelligentsia and persisted for a long time. In Poland (and also in Czechoslovakia after 1968), the hopes for any reform of the system slowly died out, whereas Hungarian dissidents were not discouraged, not even by prison sentences. Kádár's evolution in economic matters also influenced the range of issues addressed by the left-wing opposition. Due to a fairly homogeneous personal milieu (mostly graduates of philosophy and sociology, and, to a lesser extent, also law), attention was paid mostly to such matters as the lack of civil rights and liberties, as well as social problems. Less emphasis was placed on the economy, because in this respect the government policy received some support, or at least some understanding.<sup>[51]</sup>

Having a high level of social support, the party considered itself completely relieved from the duty to enter into any discussions with anyone and filed criminal lawsuits against the few who were disobedient. Thus, already in 1973 seven persons, including János Kis and Mihály Vajda, were sentenced to several years' imprisonment in the so-called 'trial of philosophers'<sup>[52]</sup>. On the other hand, rebellious academics and writers were banned from publishing for much longer periods of time (e.g. since the mid 70ties until 1989, the dissident writer György Konrád did not publish a single book in Hungary).<sup>[53]</sup> Even if the regime treated economic freedoms as a certain safety valve, it was much less tolerant towards any debates concerning ideological issues when those crossed the boundaries set by the censors. The monopoly of the MSZMP on holding power was an impassable barrier. This was indisputable for Lukács, but his disciples had another opinion on that matter. The fear that the new economic mechanism introduced by Nyers would contribute to creating social inequalities, without introducing any political reforms at the same time, was one of the reasons why Kádár's policy became subject to sharp criticism on the part of Lukács's followers.<sup>[54]</sup>

Expectations connected with the system's evolution also determined to some extent the attitudes towards the Hungarian minorities living

in the neighbouring countries. Actually, Budapest left-wing elite were very cautious with their comments on that subject, accepting the international reality, which could not be changed, according to the knowledge of Hungarian intelligentsia in the 1970s. They remembered that the issue of borders (the main drive of Hungarian nationalism in the inter-war period) had laid the basis for social pressure to which Horthy's regime had finally bowed and subsequently supported Adolf Hitler.<sup>[55]</sup>

The above milieu was not the only one in the Hungarian opposition camp. It was not about the fact that the clearly leftist profile must have discouraged the vast majority of those for whom nation or religion were of the utmost priority in terms of ideology. In practice, it turned out that Lukács' legacy, continued for some time by János Kis and his colleagues, did not appeal even to former Marxists. The "56 Generation" (those who took an active part in the Hungarian Uprising and gathered people a dozen-or-so years older than Kis, often closely connected with the ousted Prime Minister Imre Nagy) also included those who had begun their careers in the communist party and in the Stalinist period had often actively supported Rakósy's dictatorship (György Litván, Ferenc Donáth, Miklós Vásárhelyi, etc.). The tragedy of 1956 and the death penalty for Nagy and his comrades contributed to the sending of many representatives of that group straight to a torture chamber or to death row, from which they escaped only by some miracle. Those experiences efficiently cured many representatives of that generation of any delusions concerning the reform of the system. Although until the end of the 1970s that generation did not take up any opposition activity, in the next decade some changes to the matter were seen. But that did not go hand in hand with the ideology proposed by the 'Beszelő circle' (as Kis and his colleagues came to be called, from a dissident journal *Beszélő* that they published). However, both groups remained in relatively close contact with each other.

There were also other, smaller left-wing camps, such as pacifist groups and the ecological movement, which gained momentum due to the construction of the Gabčíkovo–Nagyymaros dam.<sup>[56]</sup> The approach of Kis and his group to the latter was at best ambiguous.<sup>[57]</sup> Moreover, there were no books published in Hungary that would attempt to bridge the gap between left-wing circles and groups of believers which had a critical approach to reality,

such as the books published in Poland, including *Rodowody niepokornych* by Bohdan Cywiński, and later *Kościół, Lewica, Dialog* by Adam Michnik. However, there were some circles in the Hungarian Church, as the aforementioned 'Bokor' led by Father György Bulány, which might have been interested in such an initiative. To sum up, the Hungarian left never formed a group that would resemble the Polish Workers' Defence Committee (KOR), or the Czechoslovak Charter 77 and until 1989 it acted in great dispersion.

At the other end of the opposition's political spectrum, there was a movement, which was traditionally perceived as national peasant or even national populist.<sup>[58]</sup> However, the ideological connotations of this group could hardly be considered right-wing. In fact, this group consisted mostly of people from the cultural milieu who were of clearly rural origin (therefore people belonging to this group were sometimes called *néps* from the word '*nép*', Hungarian for 'from the people') that had started their writing careers in the inter-war period or immediately after the Second World War. They were mainly interested in rural affairs. An outstanding Hungarian poet Gyula Illyés, who died in 1983, was considered their spiritual leader, and his poem *Egy mondat a zsarnokságról* ('One sentence on tyranny') played a crucial role in the 1950s, similarly to the Polish *Poemat dla dorosłych* (Poem for Adults) by Adam Ważyk.<sup>[59]</sup> Before 1945, Illyés had belonged to radical intellectual circles which sympathised with communism (and periodically even fascism). After the Second World War he finally defied the dictatorship, nevertheless the reasons of this protest were different to those of the Budapest intelligentsia, and his relationship with the authorities was different.

Illyés' rural origin made him very anxious about the brutal collectivisation process in rural areas and then about Ceaușescu's policies. The latter, appealing to nationalist sentiments, were clearly aimed at wiping out the Hungarian influence in Transylvania (whose significance for Hungarian cultural development through the ages cannot be overestimated). Simultaneously, global mass industrialisation and the related social transformation led the writers from this group to the conclusion that changes occurring all over the world posed a fatal threat to Hungarian culture as a whole. Therefore, these changes had to be resisted at all costs: a premise that, once adopted, automatically ruled out taking a stance in opposition to Kádár. Access to proper infrastructure was needed to protect Hungarian culture and

to prevent its disappearance. In order to effectively counter Ceaușescu's denationalisation policy, it was necessary to maintain contacts with the party organs responsible for the country's foreign policy. The above circumstances explain the basic discrepancy between the group of Lukács' followers and the supporters of the national trend: it stemmed from different stratification of ideological goals which both of those groups tried to achieve. János Kis and his colleagues – seeing that the authorities respond to their arguments only with prison sentences, decided to start clandestine activity, while the national populist group never decided to do that.

The firm emphasis on social and minority issues caused that the populist movement, although sometimes more critical towards the passive approach of Kádárism than Kis and his group, remained in a very peculiar relationship with the government apparatus. Tőkés claims that after 1956 the leading representatives of the populist movement decided to strike an unwritten deal with the regime (in 1962). Namely, in return for the ability to publish their works, members of this group initially offered far-reaching support to the regime's policies, which allowed them to enjoy all of the privileges that the authorities granted to the writers under its protectorate.<sup>[60]</sup>

For a long time, criticism towards the authorities was limited to 'Aesopian language', which was also used in other countries of the Eastern Bloc. This meant resorting to veiled allusions or vaguely phrased suggestions, the meaning of which was obviously clear for a smart reader. Nevertheless, it was strictly limited to fall within the boundaries set by the censors, and events such as dinners attended by Illyés or other writers from this group with party notables were not uncommon. Although the younger generation of writers who belonged to this movement (such as Sándor Csoóri and István Csurka) proclaimed the necessity to break ties with Kádárism, they still maintained close contacts with Imre Pozsgay, the budding star of the communist party in the 1980s.

Critics accused populists of flirting with nationalism on one hand, but on the other, the price they paid for writing about the nation's problems was too high after all, as the party was not eager to respond to their proposals.<sup>[61]</sup> The accusation that Kádár's system demanded too much while not giving a lot in return was not completely unfounded. Because the leaders of the populist group (particularly their younger generation, such as Csoóri

and Csurka mentioned above) were aware of this, in the late 1970s they became increasingly critical towards the regime. Actually, it turned out that their influence on the country's foreign policy was practically non-existent, while the policies of Bucharest in Transylvania caused increasing bitterness among both Hungarians living there and the members of Illyés' populist group. Finally, in 1978, the poet condemned Bucharest's policies and Kádár's passive attitude in a whole series of publications.<sup>[62]</sup> Illyés' texts were significant because they referred directly to a subject which since 1945 had been an absolute taboo in the official line of policy, i.e. the issue of the country's borders. As Ceaușescu did not intend to change the internal policies, this triggered a certain verbal 'attrition warfare' between Romanian and Hungarian media, as well as stormy debates among the Hungarian émigrés who as late as the 1980s still nurtured some hopes for revising the Treaty of Trianon.<sup>[63]</sup>

Independently of the issue of the borders and the situation of Hungarian minority, another aspect influenced the evolution of the national group's approach towards the system: the populist camp was deeply concerned about the increasing pessimism of Hungarian society. Plummeting population growth, the scourge of alcoholism and, finally, the very high suicide rate<sup>[64]</sup> (particularly among young artists, often at the height of their popularity)<sup>[65]</sup> induced another leader of this group, István Csurka, to question the price being paid for Kádár's 'small stabilisation'. Csurka did not hide the fact that in conditions such as the dramatically low birth rates and the policy of denationalisation of Hungarians in Romania, as well as (albeit to a lesser extent) in other countries, the vision of the Hungarian nation 'becoming extinct' (which since 19<sup>th</sup> century has been an obsession of the nationalist circles) seemed very possible.<sup>[66]</sup>

As a consequence, in the 1980s, the notable representatives of the national camp, even if it did not decide to break off their contacts with the regime, nevertheless assessed Kádárism more and more severely, mostly because the regime resorted to an extremely treacherous trick: in return for a relative wealth, in comparison with other Eastern Bloc countries, the average citizen of Hungary had surrendered to conformism, which reduced their existence to satisfying rudimentary material needs, even if the trickery used by the authorities was felt at the subconscious level. As the 'small stabilisation'

did not bring solutions to any problems faced by Hungary, and the possibilities of increasing income were also limited given the restrictions imposed by the communist ideology, it turned out that the system did not bring wealth (as that was impossible), but contributed substantially to the disintegration of traditional social bonds. Under the circumstances, the national camp, fearing the nation was threatened with extinction, occasionally started to judge Kádár's regime much more harshly and also demanded (unlike Kis and his colleagues) not so much evolution of the system, which had led the nation to disaster, but a radical change of the existing status quo, even if until the late 1980s they were unable to submit any concrete (let alone – coherent) project of political or social reform.<sup>[67]</sup>

When writing about the Hungarian opposition, it should be emphasized that the division into Budapest-bowed '*urbánusok*' and the rural-populist '*népi*' did not create insurmountable barriers in the social sphere. Leaders of both movements, despite appealing to completely different sensitivities, had their roots in leftist progressive traditions. Therefore, they maintained certain contacts despite the differences, which allowed them to undertake some actions together. Moreover, none of the opposition camps (regardless of their orientation) was able to gain support of a wider mass of society or even a broader range of the intelligentsia circles. Consequently, both factions of the Hungarian opposition had no other choice than to take the situation in the party as their reference point, and they expected the party itself to address the issue of reforms, in the way, which was considered the most desirable, depending on the group.

The distance kept by a group of professionals (including technocrats and economists) towards the ideas of an open protest could not be boiled down to simple opportunism (although MSZMP, as any other party in power, abounded in careerists). The thing was that Kádár's economic policy since 1968 had consisted of gradual reforms, which differed greatly from the Marxist and Leninist dogmas adopted by the other countries of the Eastern Bloc. Clearly, that policy was incoherent and inconsistent, and for a long time it was strictly controlled by Moscow. Nevertheless, consecutive packages of changes introduced every few years, which were supposed to make economic life more flexible, must have convinced many non-party people as well as masses of members of the MSZMP that communism was

amendable, or at least that social processes could be steered effectively by using the appropriate party organs. On the one hand, this conviction ruled out adopting a resistant stance *en bloc* and discouraged undertaking any illegal activity. On the other, the same conviction effectively deterred many intellectuals from breaking off their ties with the Communist Party which, they felt, was not a perfect political instrument, but still it constituted an organization which – sooner or later – could be reformed “from within”.<sup>[68]</sup>

## The Commemorative Book

The key event, which influenced the forming of the democratic opposition was the publication of the *Commemorative Book* devoted to honouring the works of István Bibó,<sup>[69]</sup> a distinguished political scientists, sociologist and expert in the philosophy of law. It was crucial for two reasons. First of all, commemorating the works of a writer and academic who had liberal views, a former minister in Imre Nagy’s government who after 1956 had fallen into disgrace with the new regime, was bound to cause the party to be displeased. Secondly, the authors included persons representing various views, mostly left-wing (Kis, Bence, Árpád Göncz), but sometimes definitely nationalist (Csoóri, Csurka); therefore the significance of the work extended beyond one group of intelligentsia. Publishing it led to a scandal. Despite the fact that there were many distinguished representatives of the academia and culture among the authors, the state publishing house rejected the idea of publishing the commemorative book. As a result, the originators of the idea published it in 1980 as a *samizdat* and distributed it to major libraries in the country. The reaction of the authorities (other than classifying the work as *sui generis*: an ‘ideological assault against socialism’) was this time rather calm.<sup>[70]</sup> Hungarian communists did not want to damage foreign relations by taking too strict reprisals (at that time the government was already thinking about negotiating with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank). Besides, the book’s release did not, in any way, influence any countrywide increase of negative attitudes towards the authorities.

Society remained passive. But the authors of the *Commemorative Book*, many of whom (Miklós Haraszti and János Kis, among others) had observed the methods applied by the Polish and Czechoslovak democratic opposition<sup>[71]</sup> and decided to establish an illegal journal, *Beszélő*, which aimed to break the communist monopoly on information. The declared opposition members were not the only ones who published their texts in this journal. Periodically, *Beszélő* also published pieces by some critical observers of Hungarian reality, who sometimes, e.g. Lajos Bokros or Tamás Bauer, occupied quite high positions in the state administration, particularly in the economic sector.

The authorities' reaction to the more dynamic activity of the opposition (*Beszélő* was the first *samizdat* journal but it was followed by others) was ambiguous. On the one hand, they tried to intimidate persons who engaged in clandestine activity (László Rajk Jr. and Gábor Demszki, among others, were beaten up;<sup>[72]</sup> Csurka, who was increasingly discouraged, received a ban on publishing; etc.<sup>[73]</sup>). On the other hand, it was difficult to find any extensive plan in the actions of the security services, which aimed at a systematic eradication of the opponents of the system. Kádár's regime, restricted by the need to obtain loans in the West, could not afford to go too far. Moreover, in the mid-1980s the activity of the opposition was limited to the Budapest elite. Society felt that the economic situation had significantly deteriorated (more and more often, trips to the West showed that Hungarian reality was worse in comparison), nevertheless in 1986 it was still not convinced about the necessity of introducing deeper reforms of the system. With some derision, albeit quite aptly, Kádár commented at a Politburo meeting as follows:

'The system and policies have persisted because they have to resist three dozen people who complain somewhere. There are also other reasons; international connections, economic relations and exchange are on the agenda. This is the crucial issue as the assessment of the Hungarian People's Republic on the international stage is significantly influenced by the fact that there are no problems with human rights in our the territory, that there is freedom of movement and that, merited or not, there are no reprisals by the authorities. Generally speaking, this is part of the image projected internationally by the Hungarian People's Republic, and we have to take it into account. I will also add that the system may actually benefit from such a small safety valve regarding some issues'.<sup>[74]</sup>

Kádár's diagnosis was largely spot on. The opposition realised that so far they had not managed to establish a rapport with the nation, although they agreed that the dictatorship's situation had deteriorated. It turned out, however, that various opposition factions drew entirely different conclusions from these assessments, and coming up with a common vision of reforms was impossible.

## The 13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, Monor, Lakitelek

The symptoms of the approaching social and economic crisis raised more and more concerns, not only from the opposition, but also within the party itself. The 13<sup>th</sup> Congress of the MSZMP in March 1985 revealed the failure of Kádár's programme. Contrary to the expectations of the party intelligentsia, no clear information was released regarding how he was going to deal with the crisis. Economic reformers were also disappointed with the composition of the new Politburo, which included neither Rézső Nyers nor Imre Pozsgay, a representative of the young party apparatus generation that supported the reforms. The latter, having been 'banished' after a sharp conflict with the Politburo in 1981, tried to use his position as the head of the Patriotic People's Front (*Hazfiás Népfront* – HNF) and return to the political stage, relying on the back-up of the administrative and media apparatus subordinated to him. However, in 1985 his influence was not strong enough to push the party towards any significant changes.<sup>[75]</sup>

Dissatisfaction with the decisions made during the congress and the lack of any specific solutions soon became evident. In May 1985, during the non-democratic and fully controlled parliamentary election, it turned out that the party's domination of Hungarian political life was not total. Although the MSZMP 'won' the election and the bureaucratic machine had efficiently removed from the lists those associated with the opposition, the observers were bound to notice that more than 10 per cent of the deputies who entered the parliament did not have any party authorisation. Additionally, the defeat of Mihály Komócsin, the notorious local party baron from Csongrád, was a huge sensation.<sup>[76]</sup>

MSZMP archives do not leave any doubt that the signs of stagnation had contributed to the growth of dissatisfaction within the party itself, as its members were increasingly frustrated by having to explain the reasons for the crisis to people and using propaganda clichés. They did not believe in their credibility themselves. On the other hand, bureaucratic mechanisms introduced to govern relations within the MSZMP had long before led to the decay of any internal discussion.<sup>[77]</sup> The fact that economic experts were increasingly pessimistic could be indicated by the presence of two famous specialists, Támás Bauer and Mihály Laki, at the June 1985 conference organised by various contesting circles in Monor.

For several reasons the conference was an important event in the history of the Hungarian opposition. First of all, it was the first, and the only, serious attempt to reconcile conflicting factions of the critics of the regime and to work out not even a programme of action but, rather, a diagnosis of the situation indicating the sources of the crisis. It transpired that even such a bare minimum would cause significant problems. As well as the economists mentioned above, the following groups also took part in the sessions in Monor: representatives of the *Beszélő* group headed by Kis, representatives of the populist movement (with Csurka and Csoóri); and also representatives of the '56 generation, with the main organiser of the conference, Ferenc Donáth.<sup>[78]</sup>

The representatives of the liberal movement representing the urban intelligentsia demanded, first and foremost, political freedoms and forming the state which would be based on the German doctrine of the state of law. The consequence of this approach was counting on the regime's evolution. Kis or János Kenedi basically saw a possibility for talks with the authorities about reforms within the framework of the existing system. Csurka and Csoóri represented a more complex approach: in their opinion only a complete overthrowing of the system would make sense, as history did not show any evidence that communism could be reformed. Despite this (rather accurate) diagnosis, the populist movement did not manage to propose any specific political programme. The idea that every citizen 'should live their independent life in the given circumstances and conditions', independently of what the government was doing and that politics should be left to itself, was as noble as it was idealistic.<sup>[79]</sup> But writer Csurka could not answer the question 'What

to do?'. Another issue to be discussed in Monor was that of the Hungarians living in neighbouring countries. Even if for the liberal camp this problem was crucial, it was only one of many other issues, whereas for the national and populist movement it was of the utmost priority and, according to them, it was supposed to be the focal point of reference for Hungary's foreign policy. The differences regarding this issue could not be overcome either.<sup>[80]</sup>

The meeting had serious consequences. In practice, it turned out that Monor was the last joint conference of this type. Afterwards, each group started to consider, independently, entering into talks with the authorities who with time were more and more inclined to accept such proposals. The 'Beszélő' circle made the first move. In June 1987, they published a text titled *Társadalmi Szerződés* (Social Contract), in which firstly, they demanded János Kádár to step down from the post of the Secretary General of the Communist Party, and, secondly, they tried to put the postulates espoused by Kis in Monor into a specific political programme.<sup>[81]</sup> As Kis (the main author of the programme) did not invite anyone from the populist camp to create the concept of the programme (it is still not clear whether he did that consciously or not), the latter group understood that Lukács' followers were essentially going to start talks with the authorities behind the back of the competitive opposition and responded to Kis in kind by organising the founding Congress of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum* – MDF) in September 1987.

The party did not take any unambiguous stand concerning these developments. In the autumn of 1987, János Kádár despite his deteriorating health still remained the head of the MSZMP and did not consider any talks with the opposition; those party functionaries who would like to enter into such talks had to take disciplinary sanctions into account. On the other hand, the young apparatchiks who were getting ready to fight for the legacy of the old man – after some initial hesitation – clearly indicated the populist movement as a more valuable partner. The populist faction had never crossed the boundaries of legal activity and hence, from the point of view of the party apparatus, they seemed more reliable than the group represented by Kis and his friends, who had decided to start clandestine activity. The group of MSZMP politicians who were preparing to take over the power noticed that Ceaușescu's policy towards the Hungarian minority triggered

off considerable resentment in Hungary, and that the passivity of the aging Kádár in this respect had caused much more dissatisfaction than the lack of democratic freedom which, Kis postulated in *Beszélő*, should be introduced.<sup>[82]</sup> Kis (who had to settle his personal moral dilemma as to whether he should get engaged in party politics, although, being a thoroughly educated graduate of philosophy, he resisted this idea) was not able to take an unambiguous approach concerning the issue of the post-Trianon legacy. Likely, historical experiences would have hinted that the developing national resentment, used by the MDF as a political weapon, in the Hungarian reality was a power which was both tremendous and destructive. The liberal camp also realised that the international situation of the late 1980s put the Forum in a position of a hostage of the party-controlled state. It is true that the slogans of defending the interest of the persecuted Hungarian minorities were much catchier towards the end of the decade than were those promoting the establishment of a law-based state patterned on the Western model. It could not have been otherwise, considering the relatively low level of repressiveness of Kádár's dictatorship in which the average Hungarian did not feel a lack of freedom on a daily basis. But having more powerful national slogans did not mean that the MDF could count on being considered a partner equal to the governing party.

These ponderings will lead to a better understanding of several issues, which were essential for the process of reform. The power of national slogans and the weaker response to the postulates proposed by Kis explain why, according to the party reformers getting ready to take power, it was the populist movement that was perceived as a more valuable partner.<sup>[83]</sup> Eventually, the MDF would have a bigger chance to win the hearts and minds of those who did not approve of the surrounding reality and, in the face of fading faith in communism, to provide the party with a new legitimacy for its continued leading role in the state. That hope was further supported by the fact that although the MDF emphasised both the issues of Hungarian identity and democracy, it was not a secret that the attitude of some leaders, including István Csurka, to the Western-style democracy was at best questionable.<sup>[84]</sup> Therefore in the long run they could accept some model of 'reformed authoritarianism', or 'limited pluralism',<sup>[85]</sup> which was entirely out of the question for Kis and his colleagues. These processes could

not be prevented by Hungarian liberals; unlike in Poland, where the state monopoly on information had been broken long before the 1980s, in Hungary the *samizdat* press was not able to be published in more than one to two thousand copies,<sup>[86]</sup> and they drew only meagre support outside of Budapest.

In such a context, it was no accident that Imre Pozsgay himself visited Lakitelek, where the representatives of the populist group came together with Csurka and Csoóri, and he brought with him regards from the Prime Minister, Karoly Grósz, who was getting ready to take power.<sup>[87]</sup> The populist camp gave party reformers some hope that national slogans would help them to gain power in the MSZMP, and the Forum (whose popularity was, even in mid-1989, heavily limited) would turn out to be weak enough for the party to incorporate it into the system in which communists would still play the leading role.

Seeing that their offer had fallen on stony political ground, 'Beszélő' activists initially did not react with a clear response, which should have consisted of forming an alternative party. Hungarian liberals found that extremely difficult. For the whole of 1988 the 'Beszélő' group watched quite passively the new political groups, labour unions and ecology associations forming on the Hungarian political stage. In March 1988 the liberals' attempt to take auspices over civic initiatives ended in failure, so in November 1988 Kis and his colleagues established the Alliance of Free Democrats (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége* – SzDSz).<sup>[88]</sup> However, at that time the country's situation was slightly different than it had been the year before. Although the MDF still did not receive any official recognition from the authorities, for 12 months it had functioned as an organisation, which was fairly well tolerated by the party. Ten thousand members joined the Forum, which made it the largest and the best recognised opposition organisation in the country.<sup>[89]</sup> Given that the national slogans were somehow 'taken' and contact between the MDF and the representatives of the authorities had indicated that some cooperation between the MSZMP and the MDF was still intended, the SzDSz decided to change their tactics. As the MSZMP did not see any partners for talks in the Kis group, Kis, who until then had supported reforms within the system, gradually radicalised his views and discourse, moving towards an anti-communist rhetoric. The liberals, who felt that the reluctance towards the current version of dictatorship had significantly increased in society, decided to propose a complete breaking

up of the system. Slogans such as ‘Down with communism!’ were supposed to muster all efforts to establish a state of law, or at least ensure a better negotiating position in the case of possible talks with the authorities.<sup>[90]</sup>

It turned out that the thoughts of a certain group of the younger generation of the Hungarian intelligentsia were also aimed in the same direction. On 30 March 1988, a group of students led by Viktor Orbán, who until then had been unknown, established the Alliance of Young Democrats (*Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége* – FIDESZ). The group had a clear liberal-libertarian, and decidedly anti-communist, approach. János Kis and his circle preserved a certain moderation in their demands addressed at the ruling party (the SzDSz still had not given up hope that overthrowing the system could happen in co-operation with the reformist wing of the MSZMP), but the idea of any settlement with communists was – at least at the beginning – completely out of the question for Viktor Orbán, unless the talks were supposed to lead to an ‘unconditional surrender’ with no transition period, which was acceptable for Kis.<sup>[91]</sup>

Pre-war social democrats and activists from the Independent Smallholders’ Party (*Független Kisgazdapárt* – the FgK), with the aging Tivadar Pártay and the younger József Torgyán, tried to regain their previous influence.

There were also some ecological and conservative Christian organisations. Initially those were moderately popular among citizens who still expected some action on the part of the party and the government. As has been mentioned earlier, the largest of the opposition groups, the MDF, counted no more than 10,000 members in 1988,<sup>[92]</sup> while the MSZMP had 871,000 members in 1986.<sup>[93]</sup> Therefore, the ‘division of power’ within the Politburo remained the key factor in the battle for leadership, and the groups, which sprang up were aware of that. It soon became clear that the appearance of Pozsgay in Lakitelek did not mean that the reformers within the MSZMP could be certain of coming to power after Kádár’s departure. The latter, seeing that the initiative might actually get out of control, decided to launch a counteroffensive. Several people were expelled from the party and Pozsgay himself was threatened with sanctions. For the opposition it was a clear sign that as long as Kádár remained in power, they could not count on any serious changes and only his departure might open the way to possible talks with the circles which had a critical approach towards his regime.

## Succession

The aforementioned 13<sup>th</sup> Congress of the MSZMP did not give any impulse to start reforms, but the opposition did not take advantage of the moment and did not speak with one voice. The results of a shuffling at the top, which took place in March clearly indicated that the conservative party wing had strengthened and attempted to tighten the course of internal policy. The departure of the relatively liberal Aczél from the function of the Central Committee secretary for ideology and his replacement, a younger, but quite narrow-minded, apparatchik named János Berecz, did not herald any improvement in the relationship with artistic circles.

It was also difficult to consider Grósz entering the Politburo as a pro-reform move, although he was rumoured to become the successor to the aging Kádár. Grósz had become a member of the communist party at the age of 14 and was a political officer by profession. Despite the fact that he had been arrested in 1956 as a result of post-revolutionary purges, he was a 'disciplined party soldier', who in the 1970s had been responsible for one of the key units of the Central Committee, the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, and since 1984 had been the head of the Greater Budapest Party Committee, managing a quarter of the MSZMP's members.<sup>[94]</sup> Thus, he was a typical careerist without charisma; however, he played a crucial role in the following years as the prime minister and the first secretary of the Central Committee.

Personnel changes could not prevent the increasing resentment of society caused by the deteriorating economy. Since 1985, such phenomena as inflation and a decrease in real income had been topped by new problems on the macroeconomic scale. Maintaining peace, which was crucial for Kádár, turned out to be costly. Even if at the beginning of the decade Hungary's foreign debt had stopped growing and even fell slightly, astronomical growth in it was recorded in the years 1984–1987, from USD 8 billion to 17.7 billion.<sup>[95]</sup> Incurring debts, against all of the hopes of the government led by a trusted colleague of the first secretary György Lázár (who seemed to be against further indebting the country), did not contribute to any increase in real incomes, neither did it prevent a fall therein.<sup>[96]</sup> Thus, the promises of investments and pay increases made during the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress turned out to be a 'rubber cheque'.

Therefore, it is not surprising that, in the face of advancing stagnation in the party apparatus, more and more Hungarians expressed their dissatisfaction in various ways. The faith in the propaganda slogans assuring people that Hungary was not like Poland, and that they would not be affected by the crisis, all but disappeared over the next two years. Kádár's obstinacy turned out to be the biggest obstacle in the path to reforms at that time. The ageing general secretary had clearly decided to fight for political survival, although it became clear to everyone that his health (both physical and mental) was deteriorating. So, from 1986 the dictator's absence from party meetings was more and more frequent, and the Politburo, which was used to approving of everything that the party leader wanted, did not dare to solve any urgent problems without his blessing.

Kádár was aware of his ill health. He also understood that the country was bound to undergo some changes, but until the end he did not want to lose control over the process and, naturally, wished to appoint his successor. Some significant personnel changes started in November 1986. As Rudolf L. Tőkés observed, they consisted of allowing younger party technocrats to gain some power. Thirty-nine-year old Miklós Németh became the Central Committee secretary for the economy and Péter Medgyessy took over the ministry of finance. At the end of June 1987, Lázár, who was perceived as a Kádár's loyalist, submitted his resignation and Grósz became the new prime minister.<sup>[97]</sup> Kádár's strategy involved slowly 'harnessing' the know-how of the government technocrats to conduct the process of changes and, simultaneously, maintaining full control over the triggered processes by using party organs subordinated to the leader of the MSZMP.<sup>[98]</sup>

It is also Tőkés' observation that this policy was defied by several independent actors. For the opposition (and also for an increasingly wider group of society) changes which involved reshuffling the same figures did not bring any hope for a breakthrough. The replacement of one Politburo member with another in the position of the head of the government was considered to be a stopgap measure. However, some Central Committee members responded critically when Nyers and Föck, who counted on regaining power, openly criticised the party leader for his personnel decisions.<sup>[99]</sup>

The polemics during the June session of the Central Committee were bound to have far-reaching consequences. For the increasingly embittered

Nyers (who originated from the non-communist tradition; before 1945 he had been a member of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party<sup>[100]</sup>) and for Pozsgay, who was getting ready to return to politics, it was a clear sign that as long as Kádár remained the party leader, no serious change of direction would take place. Both politicians drew similar conclusions. Remaining in the Central Committee, they decided not to waste time and started to support opposition actions more and more frequently. In 1987, Pozsgay appeared at the founding meeting of the MDF in Lakitelek and Nyers agreed to endorse the reactivated New March Front (*Új Március Front*), which appealed to left-wing traditions from pre-war times.<sup>[101]</sup> Even if neither of the initiatives could have been considered to be an imminent threat for the MSZMP's position in the country, they still indirectly de-legitimised one of the cardinal principles of communism, which until then had been treated as sacrosanct, i.e. the monopoly the Party held on political power.

The hard-line party wing tried to retaliate. Several people who had taken part in the Lakitelek convention were expelled from the party (including György Matolcsy, László Lengyel, and Mihály Bihari), and rumours about possible sanctions being imposed on Nyers and Pozsgay went round Budapest.<sup>[102]</sup> But the situation of the party hardliners was greatly weakened by several factors. Firstly, as the economic crisis got worse society became increasingly embittered, and the slogans promulgated by Pozsgay became more and more popular. Secondly, Prime Minister Grósz started a counteroffensive: in November 1987, he revealed his intention of running for party leader, without consulting that decision with the Politburo, and according to Tökés he was supposedly in a temporary tactical alliance with Pozsgay and Nyers.<sup>[103]</sup> Thirdly, the conservative wing had neither a leader, other than the aging Kádár, nor a clear programme. The theses published by the Central Committee secretariat headed by Berecz in November 1987 unambiguously indicated that, although democratic centralism was bound to remain untouched and the leading role of the party was unquestionable, ideas such as the decentralisation of decision-making processes, and even a priority of professionalism over loyalty, would be acceptable for the Central Committee secretary for ideological matters, even though he was perceived as a hardliner.<sup>[104]</sup>

Therefore, at the end of the year, some observers noted that the media, which remained under the influence of various party cliques, had ceased

to present the boring and uniform vision of the state and the party, and the newspapers subordinated to Pozsgay had launched a frontal attack on Kádár.

Finally, at the end of April 1988 Kádár resigned himself to his fate, feeling that his health was deteriorating and even Moscow began to insist he left office. According to the version of events generally accepted by Hungarian historiography, the resignation scenario was prepared with the support of the head of the KGB in the USSR, Vladimir Kryuchkov, who visited Hungary in May 1988 specifically for that purpose. According to the prepared scenario Kádár was going to submit his resignation, nevertheless his supporters, for example Mihály Olvári and György Aczél, were still supposed to be members of the Politburo and other crucial party authorities. That would have constrained Grósz as the new leader of the party.<sup>[105]</sup>

However, it turned out that these plots behind the scenes had not taken into account the fact that during the year, which had passed after the change of the prime minister the level of frustration among MSZMP members dramatically increased, and the prepared spectacle only aggravated the party delegates gathered in the congress hall. It is debatable how much Kádár himself was to blame, as he made a biting speech abundant in traditional clichés such as ‘enemies’, ‘class conflict’ and ‘party discipline’. The fact remains that the assembly reacted very nervously. So, instead of confirming the settlement negotiated with the approval of Moscow, the delegates at the May conference simply removed the entire old membership of the Politburo and elected Grósz to become the general secretary of the MSZMP, and the people who only a month earlier had been punished by party reprimands for talking to the opposition were chosen to be the members of the new Politburo. The new Politburo consisted of such people as Nyers, Németh and Imre Pozsgay, the latter two elevated to this body for the first time.<sup>[106]</sup>

Thus the handing over of power ended in a ‘coup d’état’, which put the party in a very awkward position. Grósz, who had become the leader of the party and the head of the government, focused power completely in his hands. It turned out, however, that that was a much more limited power than he had expected.

As far as international policy was concerned, Grósz did not achieve the desired success. By the late 1980s, the diplomatic relations between Hungary and Romania drastically deteriorated: the harsh conditions of day-to-day life in Romania, coupled with the more and more oppressive

policy of the Romanian communist regime towards the Hungarian minority (marked by the visible curtailing of its cultural, educational or religious rights) triggered the first wave of refugees who were arriving in Hungary with the purpose to stay there for good.<sup>[107]</sup> Meanwhile, Romanian propaganda very often accused (as it seems now – baselessly) Kádár’s regime of revanchist or even fascist tendencies. The spring of 1988 was marked by the open crisis in mutual relations as President Ceaușescu announced the acceleration of his plans of “systematization”, aiming at demolishing of c. 8000 villages over the following twelve years. Those plans were vehemently contested abroad and sparked open protests within some Hungarian-speaking protestant denominations in Romania: the most notable action took place in the region of Timișoara, as well as in Western Transylvania where at the initiative of two Calvinist pastors, János Molnár and László Tőkés, a letter of protest duly undersigned on behalf of the deanery of the city of Arad was sent to the local bishop, László Papp.<sup>[108]</sup> The harsh response of the bishop who preferred to stay loyal to Ceaușescu, even if the latter’s plans threatened the very existence of the Hungarian (and not only Hungarian) cultural heritage in Transylvania and elsewhere, supported in his disciplinarian actions by state officials, additionally fuelled the indignation within the society and caused an international outcry as well.<sup>[109]</sup> In those circumstances, the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs lodged an official protest at the hands of the Romanian Ambassador in Budapest but this diplomatic *démarche* brought no effects. Having regard to the sensitivity of the topic, the public opinion in Hungary reacted very emotionally. Thousands took part in the mass demonstration organized in Budapest on the 27 June 1988. In response to this event, the Romanian authorities closed down the Hungarian consular office in Cluj Napoca.<sup>[110]</sup>

It seems that the escalation of the conflict with Hungary’s Eastern neighbour took Grósz by surprise. His visit in Moscow in July 1988 not only did not bring the expected economic results, but – to add bad to worse – Gorbachev forced the Hungarian delegation to mitigate the conflict with Romania. Grósz made a concession and agreed to meet Ceaușescu in Oradea (known in Hungarian as Várad) in October; the meeting ended in the Grósz’s visible diplomatic failure. Not only the Romanian dictator did not budge one inch, but the communiqué published after the meeting was formulated in a way

which could have been understood that the First Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party agreed with the Romanian policy.<sup>[111]</sup>

As a result, the MDF bitterly criticised the prime minister for the inefficient policy concerning the protection of Hungarian minorities abroad. This issue was perceived by the Forum as a priority. Therefore, Grósz, explicitly underestimating the opposition, effectively excluded the possibility of reaching any agreement with its national populist element.<sup>[112]</sup> That mistake was even more serious, since at the beginning of 1988 it had already been clear that the slogan of defending fellow Hungarians in Romania was a strong enough stimulus to cause citizens to take to the streets and organise mass protests. Suffice it to state that the above-mentioned demonstration organised on 27 June 1988 by the MDF attracted, according to various estimates, between 40,000 to even 150,000–200,000 people.<sup>[113]</sup>

It was not merely a demonstration defending the interests of Hungarians in Transylvania, nor was it the only reason for more and more Hungarians taking to the streets. In 1988, pictures showing protests against the construction of the Nagymaros power plant went round world news services from time to time, and the dynamics of those protests was on the increase.<sup>[114]</sup> Apparently, Grósz could not find an appropriate solution for either of those two problems, and talks with the opposition were still out of the question at that stage.

The new party head experienced another failure when the issue of re-evaluation of the events of 1956 was addressed. Grósz consistently persisted with the line previously presented by the media, which described the Hungarian Uprising as a 'counter-revolution', and thus he did not withdraw by even an inch from the miasma of Kádár's untrue propaganda.

Having concentrated complete power in his hands, Kádár's successor did not intend to share it with anyone. Therefore, he firmly rejected any mentions of a possible legalisation of an opposition party or any possibility to transform the MSZMP into a federation of particular factions which could enjoy some independence.<sup>[115]</sup>

Conservative policy was completely unacceptable not only to the Hungarian opposition but even to influential party comrades. Nyers returned to the concept of building the New March Front meant to bridge the gap between the opposition and the government, which would trigger the process of transforming Hungary into a state of democratic socialism.<sup>[116]</sup> On the other

hand, Pozsgay tried to force the adopting of several bold reforms by the parliament, which the head of the MSZMP did not like, such as establishing the office of the President of the Republic and the Constitutional Tribunal, passing an act on the liberalisation of the media and introducing new electoral regulations. The reason for the failure of this project was that the Ministry of Justice had prepared a similar idea at the same time and Pozsgay did not want to duplicate their work. Regardless of these discussions, he carefully observed the 'circles of reform' emerging within the MSZMP since the autumn of 1988 and which – according to him – were supposed to lay the foundations for transforming the party from the centralist model to a federation of several bodies that would receive internal independence but would remain under one management.<sup>[117]</sup>

The 'actions' taken by Pozsgay and Nyers (who were after all members of the Politburo) outside the party had some influence on the general situation of the whole party. From May 1988 onwards, there were many resignations from the MSZMP. Even larger personnel losses were suffered by the organisations affiliated with the MSZMP (the KISZ, union organisations, etc.).<sup>[118]</sup>

Seeing that the strongest tools of power were slipping from his hands, Grósz decided to change tactics. Being a committed communist, the head of the MSZMP definitely did not share the views represented by Pozsgay, seeing them as overly social-democratic, and certainly he would not agree to introduce in Hungary a multi-party system, which he perceived as a threat to the country's stability. But in order to suppress the increasingly powerful movement of the opposition outside the party and to crack down on the opposition within the MSZMP, Grósz would have to regain the political initiative. That turned out to be extremely difficult. The economic situation after one year of governing the country did not look rosy. Although the government had adopted several important acts, including the code of commercial companies, those changes, which constituted a crucial stage of the transformation from the centrally planned economy to one based on the free market, could not immediately improve the material situation of the average citizen. Aware that the economy was taking a dangerous turn, Grósz decided to submit his cabinet to resignation and appointed Miklós Németh, until then the Central Committee secretary for the economy,

to take over his post (24 November 1988). Grósz was going to concentrate on rescuing the sinking party, even if it meant opposing the government.<sup>[119]</sup>

Ceding power to Németh, who was deprived of his own political backup, was intended to make him a docile executor of the party secretary general's orders. Grósz tried to begin a propaganda offensive. The opportunity for a conflict came in November 1988, involving a discussion about legalising opposition parties and the new law on associations. Pozsgay reiterated his opinion regarding the multi-party system, but the reaction of the head of the MSZMP was hysterical to say the least. In a famous speech he stated that it was a threat to the stability of Hungary and it would open the way to 'white terror'.<sup>[120]</sup> According to Romsics, he actually started preparations for taking power by using force, as had happened in Poland during martial law. If this thesis is true such a solution was not possible, because Brezhnev was no longer the resident of the Kremlin and Gorbachev decidedly did not approve of such ideas.<sup>[121]</sup> It was also not quite clear whether the military and law enforcement ministries would support the head of the party (it was known that István Horváth, who was in charge of the Ministry of the Interior, supported Pozsgay rather than the head of the party, and the situation within the army, which was troubled by corruption scandals, was also not entirely clear). But it is a fact that at such a difficult moment the reformers also lost their nerve. In theory at this stage of development the general disappointment within some rural basic organizations of the communist party could not have been overlooked: Pozsgay knew very well that younger generations of activists felt their professional careers obstructed by elder generations of less-educated communist hard-liners remaining still at the helm within the party and public administration.<sup>[122]</sup> This inter-generational conflict within the Communist family became public, when at the end of November 1988 a group of younger reformers from Csongrad sought to set up the first official "reform circle" within the MSZMP. This group issued a declaration condemning, in strong and not-uncertain words, the current political and social situation, and demanded reforms.<sup>[123]</sup> At that moment Pozsgay, who had no idea what strength was at his disposal, was evasive, and, hearing the rumours about a possible coup d'état, cancelled a great assembly of all the proponents of reform in Hungary, initially scheduled for the end of November.<sup>[124]</sup> Meanwhile Karoly Grósz,

strongly condemned this initiative portraying it as a sort of “subversive” activities negatively influencing the political role of the Communist Party as a whole. For fear of the possible reaction of the still strong hard-liners led by the Secretary General himself, the activities of the party reformers were – but temporarily only – put on hold<sup>[125]</sup>.

In late 1988 and early 1989, it was certain that in the conflict between Pozsgay and Grósz the initiative belonged to the former. The reasons were quite simple: although Németh's government had made sensible economic decisions, he could not boast about improving the conditions of Hungarian families and 1988 ended with a fall in the GDP,<sup>[126]</sup> which had not been anticipated in even the bleakest scenarios. Opposition rallies, strikes in work-places, no progress in the negotiations with Romania and the slowly deteriorating party structures gave Pozsgay a much bigger scope for political manoeuvres. In the meantime, Grósz, who was dependent on the apparatus that he headed, was somehow destined to defend the status quo. As Németh wanted to shorten the frontline, he decided to suspend, indefinitely, the construction of the unpopular hydropower plant in Nagymaros (in May 1989),<sup>[127]</sup> a decision which did not increase the popularity of Grósz, but instead that of the prime minister himself. It also did not translate into any improvement in citizens' living conditions and this was the most important thing, which the increasingly annoyed Hungarians expected from the authorities.

The head of the MSZMP suffered a complete defeat on 28 January 1989. On that day, during the *168 óra* radio programme, by uttering one single sentence, Pozsgay undermined the entire doctrine, which legitimised the MSZMP and its claims to hold the leading role in Hungary. Answering a journalist's question about the events of 1956, he said that it was not a counter-revolution, as Kádarian propaganda had called it, but rather a people's uprising, which carried a democratic message directed against the party oligarchs.<sup>[128]</sup>

After that statement, the MSZMP had to undergo changes. The furious Grósz, who was abroad when his competitor gave the interview, did not even try to hide his anger and, after returning to the country, demanded an explanation from Pozsgay. The general secretary could not take any other action without exposing the party to a deep division. Settlement by force was out of the question at that time. Other countries would not have accepted that. In addition, to Grósz's great disappointment, the USSR sent

a message that a reassessment of the 1956 events was by all means acceptable.<sup>[129]</sup> Németh's government, seeing the party's dramatic loss of popularity, started to sympathise with the popular Politburo member. Soon it was to turn out that even the members of the Central Committee did not share Grósz's eagerness to preserve the rotten system. On 11 February 1989, the Committee not only supported the interpretation of the events of 1956 proposed by Pozsgay but also, following a motion put forward by Nyers, adopted a resolution that the rightful procedure of governing the country should take place within democratic structures and a multi-party system should become the rule.<sup>[130]</sup>

Theoretically, the consequences of these events could not be overestimated. After 11 February 1989 the party, deprived of moral legitimacy to wield power, began to disintegrate, forming several factions, which had less and less influence on the current policy of the Németh government. The prime minister not only stopped taking into consideration directives from the Politburo, but also conducted a purge in the government. At the beginning of May, he got rid of the ministers associated with the party hard line. He also introduced several bold reforms, such as abolishing censorship and the obligation to teach Russian in schools. The office for religious denominations was closed down as well.<sup>[131]</sup> In April, the conservative party wing suffered another setback when the Central Committee removed Berecz, who was the secretary for ideology, from the Politburo; although he still remained in the Central Committee secretariat.<sup>[132]</sup> These events seemed to indicate that reformers' gaining power in the MSZMP was only a matter of time.

However, it turned out that the situation within the party was much more complex than had been expected after the whole series of Grósz's political failures. Pozsgay encountered serious difficulties when he attempted to consolidate power. On the one hand, the old party apparatus clearly did not trust him at all. Even though the Central Committee had withdrawn Grósz's negotiations mandate, the too close contacts between Pozsgay and the opposition, and his political tricks, which were not consulted with anyone and deprived the MSZMP of its legitimacy, caused the party comrades to have serious doubts whether Pozsgay would not act behind their backs. On the other hand, even if – in theory – the emerging reform circles could have been an effective political tool in his hands, it was clear that because of the visible general mistrust of provincial activists towards

“a man from Budapest” and the reluctance to subordinate their local activities to any political centre (whatever that “centre” could have been), it would be a formidable task for Pozsgay to gain their confidence, so that he could transform those local platforms into a mature political vehicle.<sup>[133]</sup> As a consequence, the more conservative Nyers became the main negotiator,<sup>[134]</sup> but – as a matter of fact – throughout July the main role in the negotiations on the party’s side was played by György Fejti, who was Grósz’s confidant.<sup>[135]</sup>

The situation within the party was not very different to the situation within the opposition. Instead of acting as an efficiently functioning apparatus that would pursue political goals, since June the opposition functioned as several conflicting cliques competing with one another, which was bound to influence the course of the Round Table talks.

Secondly, and even more painful for the ambitious member of the Politburo, despite the fact that Pozsgay had sent clear signals to the opposition, the newly forming Hungarian parties still preserved a great deal of distance towards him. To Kis, and to the even more radical Orbán, he still remained merely a communist, a member of the *nomenklatura* who was looking for contacts with the opposition only for opportunistic reasons, not with honest intentions of conducting a dialogue about a fair division of power. As a result, despite his success at the Central Committee meeting in February, Imre Pozsgay was still in a peculiar trap. To put it succinctly: he remained a ‘traitor’ to the apparatus, which was threatened with the loss of power; while for wide circles of the opposition, which was becoming increasingly radical, he remained ‘the red’. So it is not surprising that Pozsgay’s actions after the Central Committee meeting in February were very cautious, sometimes bordering on a Hamlet-like approach and inability to make decisions. Being an MSZMP politician, he could not count on any support from the street in his conflict with Grósz, as the demonstrations organised at that time were led by the ever-stronger opposition. Moreover, appealing directly to the crowds would mean openly challenging the rest of the apparatus, which, considering Grósz’s intention of solving the crisis by using force, could have led to a further escalation of the conflict the results of which would be unpredictable. Most of all, such a challenge would have made Pozsgay a hostage of the opposition and perhaps could have paved for them a way to power. However, the political programme proposed by Pozsgay did

not involve the MSZMP giving up power, even if it assumed the necessity of introducing a sort of party pluralism in Hungary, and all of the changes were supposed to be introduced by the reformed party.<sup>[136]</sup> As a consequence, reaching a compromise with the apparatus in order to remove Grósz and gain power over the huge assets of the MSZMP, and then steering the transformation process in the direction chosen by him, became for Pozsgay an essential element of implementing his own political concept. However, as long as the key to all of the resources, the means of propaganda, and the entire infrastructure remained in Grósz's hands, the party reformer did not have necessary means to move forward his political plan.<sup>[137]</sup>

The course of events seemed to indicate that sooner or later control over the party would have to be taken by the reformers. Mass resignations from the party (during just the first nine months of 1989, that is until September, c. 120,000–200 000 people returned their party membership cards)<sup>[138]</sup> and the tremendous shock experienced by both society as a whole and many members of the MSZMP caused by the exhumation and funeral, with full state honours, of Imre Nagy and his comrades indicated that the situation was developing in the direction of reform. The latter ceremony was broadcast by Hungarian state television and gathered a crowd of almost 250,000 people. The ceremony provided a peculiar recovery from the years of Kádarian propaganda, when the leaders of the 1956 Uprising were dubbed thugs or, at best, counter-revolutionaries. In a famous speech Viktor Orbán demanded that the Soviet army be withdrawn from Hungarian soil, and accused the party activists who stood at the tomb of the murdered prime minister of hypocrisy, which further inflamed sentiments. It seemed that the political influence of the conservative party wing had been crushed. However, when several days later Pozsgay approached the party boss to demand his resignation, Grósz simply refused. The events at the Central Committee meeting on 23–24 June showed that the refusal was not completely unfounded. However, the assembly incapacitated the general secretary and transferred the party leadership to the Presidium of the Politburo, which consisted of four members: Nyers, Németh, Grósz, and Pozsgay.<sup>[139]</sup> As was to transpire later, in the face of the approaching Round Table sessions, the MSZMP had chosen the worst of all possible options, as none of those four managed to gain control over the entire MSZMP and its huge assets and apparatus,

which would have allowed a more efficient management of the talks with the opposition and the transformation process. When average Hungarians listened to the statements made by the Presidium members, they increasingly frequently asked themselves about the party's stance on particular issues (starting from political ones, such as the multi-party system and the party's presence in enterprises, through to economic issues and, finally, foreign policy). The MSZMP, which was divided into conflicting cliques, was less and less capable of giving any coherent responses to these questions.

## The Round Table

The opposition welcomed the resolutions proposed by the Central Committee on 11 February 1989 and, following the Polish pattern, a week later suggested forming a Round Table. The party/government side responded positively. Since in Hungarian conditions the forming of a homogenous organisation similar to the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union 'Solidarity' had been impossible, the authorities decided to take advantage of such a situation. As Fejti, who was close to Grósz, had taken the leadership of the Round Table negotiations, in March the Central Committee started separate talks with particular groups, intending to invite only those political forces, which seemed 'constructive', in the opinion of the MSZMP. It turned out that, in Fejti's assessment, FIDESZ, led by Viktor Orbán, definitely did not meet this criterion. The intentions of the authorities were quite clear: they wanted to exclude the most radical groups and to start talks only with the more submissive MDF, which would allow a more moderate systemic transformation without any questioning of the leading role of the party.

The reaction of the opposition was firm. In spite of the fact that Orbán's radical approach did not suit everyone, the attempt to generate conflict within the opposition was met by a refusal from the rest of the parties to take part in the Round Table talks. The meeting planned for 8 April transpired to be a false start, as no group turned up.<sup>[140]</sup> The opposition, happy about the success of the mass demonstrations, which had taken place on 15 March to commemorate the anniversary of the 1848 revolution (almost 75 000 people took part in it), could for the first time in history observe that its political

potential is much greater than one could have had presumed earlier, and decided to unite, even though it had practically no serious structures across the country and had been convinced about its weakness until then.<sup>[141]</sup>

On 22 March, at the initiative of the Independent Lawyers' Forum (*Független Jogász Forum* – FJF) led by Imre Kónya, a lawyer sympathising with the MDF, the Opposition Round Table (*Ellenzéki Kerekasztal* – EKA) was formed. As well as the FJF, it included the following parties and organisations: the MDF (where an increasingly important role was played by József Antall, who had been unknown before but later overshadowed Csurka and Csoóri); the SzDSz; FIDESZ; the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (*Magyar Szocialdemokrata Párt* – MSzDP); the FgK; the Hungarian People's Party (*Magyar Néppárt* – MNP); and two liberal-democratic associations, the Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Friendship Society (*Bajcsy Zsilinszky Baráti Társaság*) and the Democratic Union of Scientific Workers (*Tudományos Dolgozók Demokratikus Szervezete* – TDDSZ). They were later joined by the Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions (*Független Szakszervezetek Demokratikus Ligája* – FSZDL) and the Christian-Democratic People's Party (*Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt* – KNDP). According to the plan of its founders, the EKA was supposed to protect the participants against the disintegrating influence of the authorities and to work out a common concept for the Round Table in terms of the procedures and the subject matter.<sup>[142]</sup>

The task seemed daunting. It is certain that for the majority of the MDF's leadership the idea of forming only one opposition force, following the Polish example, was difficult to embrace and therefore from the beginning they were looking for a solution which would not deprive the party of the privileged position it had gained during its one and a half years of existence, and consequently the capability to strike an agreement with the MSZMP without the other partners.<sup>[143]</sup> Moreover, although the EKA undoubtedly represented all significant organisations, which had attracted the opponents of communism in Hungary, many people did not feel any affinity with this initiative, as they felt overlooked by the EKA, which was natural, considering the great number of various parties and organisations that had sprung up at the turn of 1988 and 1989. Finally, the importance of particular organisations which belonged to the EKA varied, depending on factors such as the influence which a given organisation or party had

on a particular milieu, the number of months since its establishment, its financial resources, and the political skills of its leadership. As a consequence, the EKA clearly showed from the beginning that the MDF and the SzDSz were the parties which could, and wanted to take the lead in the negotiations with the government and the MSZMP, while the role of permanently conflicted social-democrats was practically non-existent. The MNP did not make a great contribution, and neither did the KNDP, which joined later. Moreover, although theoretically united in the EKA, the opposition never trusted one another, and the fears among the liberals from the SzDSz and FIDESZ that the MDF would try to strike an agreement with MSZMP reformers on its own were very deep-seated.<sup>[144]</sup>

The communist party, immersed in increasing chaos, also did not send clear signals. Fejti, who was leading the talks, counted on protracting the negotiations, which would enable him to cause the disintegration of the EKA before the Round Table sessions started. But the result achieved by his transparent 'divide and rule' policy was counterproductive, because the opposition parties were not going to make things easier for the communists by conducting negotiations single-handedly (as Fejti wanted them to). Although hopes that the EKA would fall apart sooner or later persisted among the communists for some time, they were in the end forlorn hopes.<sup>[145]</sup> As the economic situation of the state was getting worse, the frustration among citizens was increasing and stalling for time had not brought the desired results, it was finally decided in May that the Round Table sessions would be attended by representatives of the party and government on the one side and the parties associated with the EKA on the other. The satellite organisations of the MSZMP, such as trade unions and the KISZ, would be also present at the MSZMP's invitation. Thus the Round Table was more similar to a triangle than an oval. The talks were conducted behind closed doors, which caused great bitterness among numerous smaller parties that had started to spring up (at the end of 1989 their number exceeded 100). Some accusations of a certain plot in which EKA members allegedly participated started to be made. The plot was alleged to deliberately exclude those who did not participate in the EKA.<sup>[146]</sup>

The date of the beginning of the Round Table talks, 13 June, was not without influence on the issues covered by the negotiations and their outcome. It was already clear that the Polish United Workers' Party had suffered a crushing

blow in the contractual election. After the funeral celebrations commemorating Nagy on 16 June 1989, the political dynamics were increasingly more favourable to the opposition,<sup>[147]</sup> although the MSZMP still had strong support. As a consequence, the announcing of a free election in Hungary was unavoidable and a coup d'état inside the party, which took place on 23 and 24 June, further weakened (but did not eliminate) the party's hard-line wing.

Consequently, the EKA parties were first and foremost interested in negotiating changes, which would remove any obstacles to conducting general elections according to democratic standards. Those involved, undoubtedly, not only binding election regulations and criminal code provisions, which set forth penalties for political crimes, but also limited access to the media and the issue of financing of political parties. The communists would have willingly accepted those demands if the opposition had decided to talk about the economic situation in the country and the reconstruction of the whole of the state in the spirit of a democracy in which a strong presidential office would play a major role. The party/government side demanded that some changes be made to the constitution, involving the re-establishing of the presidential office, the creation of a Constitutional Tribunal and the adoption of other regulations which would determine the political shape of the state, not to mention an economic package which Pozsgay or Németh would willingly discuss with the opposition, even before the election started.<sup>[148]</sup>

The EKA did not intend to accept such a programme of negotiations. It was already certain that the MSZMP would have to share power after the election (although even in October most opinion polls gave it a chance of winning the greatest number of seats in the future Parliament)<sup>[149]</sup> and therefore it wanted to prepare 'in advance' a constitutional framework which would ensure the party had some control over the process of the transformation. The opposition, which predicted that it would get stronger after the election, was not going to address the issues concerning the political system or economy, as they argued that the current parliament did not have any moral legitimacy and only a legislative body verified by an election could make changes regarding such crucial matters as the political structure.

Leaving the election calendar aside, there were serious differences between the debating parties regarding the future political system of Hungary. The MSZMP was determined that the presidential office should be strong

(counting that the presidential election would be won by the most popular politician in the country, namely Imre Pozsgay); the opposition, also predicting the victory of that candidate and further because of certain political views, was rather inclined to prefer a model of parliamentary democracy patterned on the Federal Republic of Germany.

Finally, after dramatic negotiations, a compromise was reached on 18 September 1989; however, it was not acceptable for all of the participants of the debate. The main provisions of the agreement concluded were to prepare six essential acts, which would open the way to free general elections: amending the constitution; an act on political parties; new electoral regulations; an act on the Constitutional Tribunal; and amendments to the criminal code and the criminal proceedings code.<sup>[150]</sup>

The final provisions of Point 2 turned out to be grounds for disagreement. In that point, the sides agreed that, in the interests of political stability, conducting a presidential election in 1989 was necessary, although the next point left open the issue of how the election should be conducted. The SzDSz and FIDESZ were not going to address this issue.<sup>[151]</sup> During the ceremony of the signing of the Round Table agreements, the parties led by Kis and Orbán were absent.

If the results of the Round Table talks were to be assessed in August 1989, it would have seemed that the MSZMP had achieved an enormous success. The way to a free election was open, and in August the opinion polls indicated that every third person entitled to vote was going to cast a vote for the communists, whereas, at best, only 20 per cent of the voters were going to opt for the strongest opposition group, the MDF. Also, the Forum had expressed a willingness to co-operate with the governing party. Meanwhile only 10 per cent of the electorate would perhaps cast a vote for the SzDSz, and FIDESZ could expect to receive similar support.<sup>[152]</sup> Such a balance of power clearly indicated the coalition which would be established after the parliamentary election, not to mention the presidential election, which had been moved, according to Pozsgay's wish, to 1989. Additionally, the entire opposition was weakened by speculations about 'Antall's betrayal' (who had supposedly negotiated with Pozsgay behind the EKA's back about the division of power between the MSZMP and the MDF, which would exclude other opposition parties). The actions of the MDF leaders were perceived mostly as attempts to enter an alliance with the communists and

a violation of the EKA agreements.<sup>[153]</sup> The issues facing the opposition were further complicated by the fact that the parties which had started springing up were not unanimous in their assessment of the Round Table results, and internal conflicts between arguing homebred politicians who were unknown to public opinion did not create a positive image for the parts of Hungarian society which were looking for an alternative.

However, it turned out that Pozsgay's success was merely a Pyrrhic victory. The Round Table did not bring any crucial economic resolutions, despite the pressure of the government, which was losing support and had to make unpopular decisions in the interests of the state. Consequently, the relationship between the MSZMP's candidate for president and the prime minister worsened. Németh probably started to suspect that such an 'old party hand' as Pozsgay might try to appease the anger of the people, should social dissatisfaction increase (which was almost certain), by sacrificing the prime minister as a scapegoat.

The old party members were outraged by the provisions of the agreement, according to which the Workers' Militia (*Munkásőrség*) was supposed to be 'transformed'.<sup>[154]</sup> They also did not accept the intention to dissolve basic party units in enterprises, which was implied even if not articulated.<sup>[155]</sup> In particular, Nyers did not want to embrace that, as he was quite different from Pozsgay in terms of ideology. Although the main negotiator on the party's side wanted to transform the party in a civic and middle-class spirit, the former social democrat Nyers insisted on preserving its worker's character and he actually saw the core of the support for the reformed party in the workers of the large industrial enterprises. Consequently, it was revealed that Pozsgay was somewhat alone in the party: not only did the conservative wing oppose him, as they always had, but now also his former allies.<sup>[156]</sup>

The 14th Congress of the MSZMP, held on 6–10 October 1989, did not solve these problems. Theoretically, the majority of the delegates supported Pozsgay's policy and he had already secured Nyers's promise to support him as a candidate for the post of president. But it was merely relative sympathy and in the end Pozsgay did not manage to convince anyone to support his ideas. It also transpired that the mythical number of 700,000 members that the MSZMP allegedly counted on was merely wishful thinking on the part of some corrupt party activists. The change of name from the former

MSZMP to the Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt* – MSzP) involved the re-registration of members so as to eliminate the fictitious ‘dummy memberships’. The effects of that operation exceeded the expectations of the bleakest pessimists. The giant to which every sixth adult citizen of Hungary used to belong eventually had only 20,000 members ready to apply for their new party membership cards.<sup>[157]</sup>

This meant serious trouble for the post-communists. Nyers, whose standpoint increasingly evolved towards the party’s hardliners, was elected as party leader at the congress, according to the expectations. Only thanks to a compromise reached with Pozsgay at the very last moment did he manage to avoid the splitting up of the party.<sup>[158]</sup> Simultaneously, although Miklós Németh still played a significant role in the MSzP, the address made by the party’s leader did not leave room for any delusions. The government, which struggled with the deficit and inflation and was willing to embrace the idea of privatisation, in other words defied socialist ideals on many points, could not count on the MSzP’s support. Moreover, the speech made by Nyers during the congress was received by many as a contradiction of democratic ideals or at the very least as a statement of intent to continue the authoritarian policy which had been a characteristic of the former era.<sup>[159]</sup> Perhaps the tone of the address stemmed from the desire to prevent a division within the party and to prevent Grósz and Berecz from leaving the MSzP and setting up their own organisation. If that was the case, the effort was in vain, as later both politicians decided to abandon the party (considering it, despite the conservative elements in the address of the new MSzP leader, as being too distant from communist ideals) and established a new group, which was known by the old name: the MSZMP.<sup>[160]</sup>

The conflict between the party and the government developed dramatically. Nyers bitterly attacked the government and insisted on retaining the Workers’ Militia, which was known to be the bastion of the party hardliners who not only opposed any reforms but were also involved in scandals and were responsible for the grave crimes committed by members of that organisation while suppressing the Uprising in 1956, which further burdened the reform wing of the party. In response, on 23 October Németh ordered the army to seize the barracks of the Workers’ Militia and confiscate the ammunition stored there. The organisation itself was dissolved.<sup>[161]</sup> Meanwhile, the Hungarian

parliament did not have any difficulty with changing the regulations in force which resulted in dissolving basic party units in enterprises and adopting the law which imposed an obligation on the MSzP to disclose information about the assets left behind by the MSZMP.

This was clearly a consequence of the fact that none of the communist politicians had managed to gain control over the entire party. The congress did not solve any problems regarding future MSzP policies. The conflict with the government (which originated from the party after all!) led to further chaos. Citizens had already had problems understanding what the MSzP actually supported and what it opposed, and the outcome of the congress, which was not able to solve the dilemma of whether it was 'for' or 'against' the reforms, only added to the confusion. The irritation of Hungarian citizens was increased by the fact that the chaos within the party and Pozsgay's inability to solve the conflict to his advantage had coincided with sharply worsening economic conditions in the country. In November Miklós Németh revealed that the national debt exceeded USD 20 billion.<sup>[162]</sup> That news came as a huge shock to the majority of the population, in part because the prime minister also disclosed that the debt had grown at the fastest rate during the 1980s, which society had perceived as a period of 'tightening the belt', and thus it was even more difficult to understand how the country had found itself in such a dramatic situation. The frustration of Hungarians was further intensified by the growing inflation rate. As a result, there was a more and more prevailing conviction on the Danube that the party and the government were not able to solve the problems the country faced and, something which was still not conceivable for most citizens in the middle of 1989, only the ousting of the communists from power might bring about any improvement of the situation.

The reduction in the membership of the post-communist organisation to 20,000 members<sup>[163]</sup> of a less than motivated apparatus blew some wind into the sails of the opposition parties. Comparing the numbers of their members, the leadership of the MDF could gladly conclude that although the assets of the post-communists theoretically gave them a huge advantage, the party's disintegration was so serious that the conflicts within the opposition (which were also numerous!) constituted a smaller problem after all. At the beginning of November, the MSzP's leadership started to see alarming results of opinion polls, which indicated that for the first

time in history the MDF enjoyed more support from voters than the post-communists, who were immersed in chaos (27 per cent and 25 per cent of the vote, respectively).<sup>[164]</sup>

Simultaneously, the MDF regrouped its forces. On 21 October, Zoltan Biró, the leader of the party, who sympathised with Pozsgay, was replaced by József Antall. This change within the strongest opposition party could be hardly perceived as a minor one which did not have any deeper meaning. Indeed, the appearance of the new leader involved either a change in the party's political direction or the placing of emphasis on different issues as far as the party's ideology was concerned. Theoretically, the Forum still remained an organisation of the Hungarian right wing; however, the departure of Biró, who was very strongly attached to traditional national populist ideology and his replacement by Antall, who originated from the pre-war Hungarian elite, brought a clear shift of nationalist tendencies and placed emphasis on traditional conservative values.<sup>[165]</sup> The shift of the party's ideological profile automatically entailed a decidedly greater distance towards the concept of cooperation with the communists who were trying to reform their camp, although it is fair to say that in August 1989 the new leader of the MDF had also taken part in discussions with Imre Pozsgay concerning potential cooperation between the two groups.<sup>[166]</sup> Back then, he certainly did not expect that nearly a year later he would form the first government in the post-WWII history of Hungary, in which communists did not participate.

The breakthrough came at the end of November. Among the laws adopted to reform the state, the Hungarian parliament had passed an act on a referendum at the beginning of October (several days before the party congress). At that time, the polls showed that support for the MSzP was going down, while the MDF gradually climbed up the popularity rankings. From the point of view of the SzDSz and FIDESZ, which suspected that Antall intended to form a coalition with the post-communists after the parliamentary election when Pozsgay became a president, this was still a bad situation. The election regulations negotiated during the Round Table talks had introduced a four-per cent threshold clause. Despite the fact that at the beginning of November both parties enjoyed popularity which was sufficient to cross that threshold (each of them could count on about 8 per cent of the vote),<sup>[167]</sup> neither of them had any chance of gaining power.

If a coalition between the MSzP and the MDF was formed, both FIDESZ and the party led by Kis would be marginalised.

Considering the confusion in the MSzP and the growing pessimism in the society, both parties, following a promise made during the Round Table talks, submitted a motion to conduct a referendum, which was supposed to answer four questions. The first three aimed to check whether the intentions that had been expressed by parliamentary laws concerning such issues as abolishing basic party units and the Workers' Militia and the disclosure of the assets left behind by the MSZMP were supported by society. The last question concerned the issue of the chronological order of the presidential and parliamentary elections.

Kis and Orbán did not hide the fact that they were against holding a presidential election (no matter what mode was used for it) before the parliament had been chosen. The motion to conduct a referendum was quite quickly supported by the required number of 100,000 people. The result of the referendum certainly astonished observers.

The political line adopted by the MSzP, which did not give their supporters any advice as to how to cast their votes, turned out to be a complete failure. Hungarians knew that Nyers theoretically supported Pozsgay but practically was rather against him.<sup>[168]</sup>

The stance taken by the MDF must have been a bitter disappointment for the post-communists. The communists, previously treated as an attractive partner, were after the October congress perceived by Antall to be a burden from the bygone era. The leadership of the Forum found out just in time that the SzDSz and FIDESZ had managed to evoke anti-communist resentments in a significant majority of the society. The MDF decided to dodge the problem and called for a boycott of the referendum, calculating quite rightly that such an opportunistic approach might be beneficial. In the event of a victory for Kis and Orbán, Antall would automatically become the most important politician in the country. It was certain that when parliamentary elections were held, the post-communists, frightened by their leader's defeat in the referendum, would vote for the MDF, if only to block the radical FIDESZ and the less aggressive SzDSz. However, if the question asked in the referendum was to be answered favourably for Pozsgay, then,

with the increasing chaos in the MSzP, Antall would continue to be a crucial partner for the reform wing of the party.

The radical option won. On 26 November, as many as 95 per cent of the voters expressed their opinion that the acts adopted by the parliament rightly reflect the will of the people. In the matter of the fourth question, the supporters of conducting the presidential election after the parliamentary election won by 6,000 votes.<sup>[169]</sup>

The results of the referendum appeared to be a real earthquake for the Hungarian political stage. They meant the end of Imre Pozsgay's political career. His inability to deal with the economic crisis and the increasing frustration of the usually peaceful and phlegmatic Hungarians contributed to the growing popularity of anti-communist slogans and effectively improved the ratings of the SzDSz.

Therefore, the 26 November referendum marked a significant breakthrough, which definitely put the political initiative in the hands of the opposition, pushing the post-communists onto the defensive. It was also the beginning of a new open war between opposition parties that was bound to influence the whole of Hungarian political life and whose effects in a way persist to this day.

## Epilogue

The events of 1989 certainly contributed to the victory of the opposition in the March 1990 parliamentary election. Pozsgay's failure in the referendum led to a wave of resignations from the MSzP and the departure of prime minister Németh (who, despite the low level of support from the electorate for the government, was quite popular as a man and politician) was in this context another defeat of the party. The conflicts within the MSzP lasted continuously until the election in March, discouraging voters. Dramatic increases in the prices of staple goods introduced by Németh and the infamous 'Dunagate' affair, which was discovered by the SzDSz and revealed that the security service still in December 1989 bugged and followed some opposition activists, heated up the atmosphere in the country, and greatly contributed to a further fostering of anti-communist slogans. Despite the fact

that Minister of the Interior István Horváth and several other prominent officials of the ministry were dismissed,<sup>[170]</sup> the affair showed tired Hungarians that the communist party had not drawn literally any conclusions from the past experiences. What is worse, unlike the opposition, it did not have any programme, which would convince people that the MSzP knew how to lift the country out of the crisis. Under the circumstances, the results of the first democratic election in Hungary were not particularly surprising to anyone. 24.73 per cent of the electorate cast a vote for the MDF. After Duna-gate the support for the SzDSz had increased dramatically, and it achieved a huge success, winning 21.39 per cent of the vote, which in November had still seemed hardly likely. The ignominious defeat suffered by the MSzP, which drew 10.89 per cent of the vote, was undoubtedly due to the chaos into which the party had fallen after the May conference in 1988. The good result of the FgK, 11.73 per cent (as the only party appealing to pre-communist traditions), proved that there was a place for a party representing rural interests in Hungary. The KNDP received the support of 6.46 per cent of the voters, which indicated that, despite many years of forced atheism and secularisation, a group appealing to the traditions of Christian democracy from the 1940s could still rely on some of the electorate.<sup>[171]</sup>

The election campaign was extremely aggressive and, to some extent, shaped the Hungarian political arena for years to come. After all, it was in 1990 when the unalterable division into the right and the left wings emerged which was so characteristic for Hungary and which has remained until this day, albeit in a different party configuration. As the fall in popularity of the MSzP became obvious to observers, the former opposition parties more and more frequently played campaigning tricks against each other. The mutual dislike caused by suspicions of disloyalty stemming from the Round Table period was intensified by another 'dose of poison' in the 1990 election campaign, when one of the magazines which was politically close to Csurka reminded the leaders of the SzDSz that their parents had been communists during the rule of Rakósi. For the vast majority of the MDF's electorate it was more than obvious that this was actually all about the Jewish origins of many prominent activists, including Kis.<sup>[172]</sup> In response, SzDSz activists started to describe the MDF's rhetoric as 'fascist'. It did not take long before the mutual aggressivity escalated to unprecedented levels. Soon

the inscription 'Jew' started to appear on the posters of SzDSz candidates and swastikas or other suggestions assimilating the MDF with fascism were drawn on the posters of the Forum's candidates.<sup>[173]</sup> The atmosphere of this extremely emotional campaign, which, just like in Poland, clearly went beyond any boundaries of decency, was heated by the anti-communist approach of the SzDSz, which, despite the attacks from Csurka, still perceived the MSZP as the primary enemy, and by the radical programme represented by FIDESZ, led by Viktor Orbán.<sup>[174]</sup>

The results indicated that Hungarians, although frustrated by the economic situation, were not willing to embrace radical ideas. The MDF coming to power was the result of **three** factors: the dislike of the communists and fears of the radical FIDESZ, which received only slightly below 7 per cent of the vote. If the SzDSz failed to win this "founding elections" – as Rudolf Tókécs called the parliamentary race of 1990 – it was because of their aggressive campaign, as well as their political programme which, instead of putting a greater emphasis on moral values, focused primarily on a critique of the existing system, simultaneously proposing solutions which were considered by many as too reformist in their character to be accepted by the voters' majority.<sup>[175]</sup> The brutal election campaign greatly harmed the relationships within the opposition. Forming a coalition cabinet including mainly the SzDSz and the MDF was out of the question, although both sides tried to make up for the bad impressions, which the first election campaign in democratic Hungary had made on foreign observers. In the end Antall formed a coalition government including the MDF, the FgK and the small KNDP. The SzDSz, after Árpád Göncz was appointed to the post of President, a role which fulfilled mainly representative functions, remained in opposition, as did the radical FIDESZ.

## 30 Years Later – the Unfinished Transformation and a Wave Back?

At the beginning of the process of political transformation, the Hungarian political class might have felt rather comfortable in comparison with other

countries of the Eastern Bloc. Naturally, the legacy of Kádár was rather painful: a twenty-billion-dollar debt, a breakdown in exports resulting from the former Comecon countries' entering their own periods of transition, the collapse of the USSR, as well as growing unemployment and inflation rates. All this constituted a real problem that had to be dealt with.

However, compared with the situations in other countries (the events in Romania, which ended with the execution of the dictator and his wife; the mess in Poland, kaleidoscope changing of the governments in Warsaw, and Poland's 'war at the top'; corruption in public administration; the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, and the authoritarian excesses of Vladimír Mečiar), Budapest seemed to be an oasis of peace and stability. The negotiated revolution, the free election and the instant stabilisation of the party landscape, which (unlike Poland) until 2010 had functioned in an almost unchanged form since 1989, could indicate that Hungary would be the winner of the race to reach European standards which started in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc in 1989. As early as 1994 foreign direct investment which flowed into Hungary totalled USD 6.9 billion, far in excess of that attracted by other countries in the region.<sup>[176]</sup> The international situation seemed more favourable for Hungarians than for the other satellite states of the USSR. Considering its geographic location, since 1989 onwards the idea of Hungary's neutrality was under ongoing discussion, and the perspective of the membership in the EEC did not seem to be too remote.<sup>[177]</sup> Both Németh's and Antall's governments were inclined to embrace that.

But, in spite the above-mentioned assets, the 'top student' of the transformation received over time increasingly worse marks from the most important financial institutions. In 2009, nobody doubted that in such circumstances as the collapse of public finances and the forint's foreign exchange rates, which were saved only by loans from the World Bank and the IMF, accelerating inflation and increasingly worse results of the Hungarian economy as a whole, the accession to the Euro zone had to be postponed indefinitely and the perspectives for overcoming the crisis were at best unclear. Further, the results of the 2010 general elections marked the beginning of the totally new period in the history of Hungary. More importantly, it is not a secret that the official narrative of the Orbán's regime has always sought to dissociate itself from any traces left by the era of transformation, which today

is considered by the Hungarian government as a period in the modern history of Hungary which brought, first and foremost, disillusion, unemployment, lack of stability and other social malaises. How did this come about? The answer to that question is not easy, but several crucial elements should be highlighted here.

When János Kádár died on 6 July 1989, the country had still not recovered from the shock caused by the exhumation and reburial of Imre Nagy and his comrades. More than 250,000 people took part in those commemorations, but the funeral of the deceased dictator was also attended by many Hungarians. As Ignacs Romsics points out, almost 60,000 people accompanied his coffin to the cemetery.<sup>[178]</sup> The crowds, who were not forced to participate in the ceremony, gave some food for thought. After all, in July 1989 it was already clear that Kádár bore direct responsibility for the court-ordered murder of Imre Nagy. The symbolic coincidence commonly emphasised was that the dictator died on the very day the Supreme Court rehabilitated Nagy and his comrades, thus breaking any legal ties with the policy of historical lies which had legitimised the previous system! However, despite being aware of all that, Hungarians participated in large numbers in the funeral of the man who had blood on his hands and had led the country to the brink of economic disaster.

In hindsight, it seems to have been a crucial signal. When, in May 1988, the Politburo dismissed Kádár, Hungarians did appear to be tired of the old ruler. However, when his successors could not cope with the deepening economic and social crisis (phenomena unknown before, such as unemployment, emerged in the period from 1988 to 1990), nostalgia for the times of relative prosperity and stability, which did not require independent thinking and decision making at one's own risk and responsibility, automatically grew.

The results of opinion polls from that time also give cause for reflection. The long-lasting high level of the popularity of the MSZMP, which received more support than any of the opposition parties, started to break down only when it turned out that Kádár's successors could not cope with the crisis and were not able to offer any specific programme to solve the problems faced.<sup>[179]</sup> It seems arguable whether the victory of the MDF in March 1990 should be understood as the result of the maturity of the opposition enabling

them to gain power or the indecision of MSZMP/MSzP members as to who was supposed to lead the party and what its final shape should be.

The situation of the MSzP, if compared to the one in Poland, gave food for thought. In Hungary, with its 10 million citizens, the party, after it had changed its name, had been joined by as many as 20,000 members. The result of the election in March 1990 was decidedly below expectations, but it was nevertheless far from the defeat suffered by the PZPR during the local elections in 1990, when the communists were practically eliminated from the local self-government. Most importantly, the problem lay not only in the fact that none of the opposition parties had been able to gain a sufficient advantage to influence the political arena to such an extent that would make it possible to introduce bold reforms capable to radically improve the desolate state of Hungarian economy (like the Balcerowicz Plan in Poland). The problem was that such a project did not exist in 1990 in Hungary. Why was that?

One might speculate whether it stemmed from the characteristics of Kádárist era, which shaped the conditions in which the activities of democratic opposition were developed (where the borderline between collaboration and passive opportunism, and opposition was much more fluid than in Poland),<sup>[180]</sup> or perhaps whether Kádár, using the leeway given by the USSR, had turned out a better manager than Poland's Gierek, Kania and Jaruzelski. The accusations sometimes put forward in literature could be summarised by the thesis that 'Antall is to blame for everything' as he was completely incompetent in economic matters.<sup>[181]</sup> However, such an approach not only overly emphasises the role of an individual in history, but also fails to take into consideration the fact that Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who was the contemporary of the MDF's leader, was equally incompetent when it came to economic issues, but that did not prevent him from triggering the process of economic revolution. The relationship between the minister of finance and the prime minister was no easier in Poland than the relationships between Antall and consecutive Hungarian ministers of finance.<sup>[182]</sup> Bogdan Góralczyk offers a better explanation when he writes that perhaps the phenomena of the 'shock therapy' in Poland and 'gradualism' in Hungary could be explained by the fact that – in spite of the hard blow, which the crisis inflicted in the late 1980s to the majority

of the Hungarian citizens – Kádár left the economy in a better condition than did Jaruzelski's clique. This concept suggests that Poles decided to break ties with the previous system because they had no choice.<sup>[183]</sup> After all, in 1989 Budapest did not experience an inflation rate exceeding several hundred per cent per annum as Poland did, which automatically made that issue a priority for the Polish government. Moreover, the scope of activity, which Warsaw had in its contacts with international financial institutions was much more limited than the Hungarians had at their disposal.<sup>[184]</sup> This assessment, albeit quite right, does not entirely answer the question of why on the Danube there was no social base on which a radical reformer could rely. After all, as Romsics points out, the sentiments of social frustration grew throughout the whole of 1989. Undoubtedly, the situation in Warsaw was thoroughly scrutinised, both on the opposition side and on the party/government side, and Poland, with its attempts to abandon the one-party system, was a crucial reference point for the Hungarian elite.<sup>[185]</sup> But it is a fact that social frustration about the economic situation did not translate into any specific plans for reforms. And, what was worse, many Hungarian economists treated the Balcerowicz Plan as a sign of 'Polish backwardness', which was completely irrelevant on the Danube.<sup>[186]</sup> This reluctance to use the Polish experiences as a reference point went so far as to reject an idea to request Western creditors for substantial external debt relief,<sup>[187]</sup> which was granted to Poland on the basis of the Agreement with the Club of Paris concluded in 1991. How can this be explained?

Undoubtedly, József Antall's personal convictions and ideological views could have played an important role. Indeed, one should never forget that in many aspects – the first democratically elected Parliament and the government were distinguishable in their "quasi counter – revolutionary" character: some authors went so far as to suggest that what the MDF's leadership really wanted to achieve was no more no less but to restore pre-war social and political order (as far as it was possible in 1990 only).<sup>[188]</sup> Continuing this line of reasoning, one must come to the conclusion that the neoliberal economic policy obviously clashed with the ideological fundamentals of the MDF, which were based more on Christian-democratic values, and this is why the solutions taken out from the toolbox suggested in the text of von Hayek or von Mises had to be rejected. Still – in hindsight – it seems

that ideological questions, even if they had to play some role in the decision-making process cannot offer the full explanations and some other factors should be taken into account. Firstly, attention should be paid to the issue of the perception of Kádárism. In Hungary, faith in the ability of the state and the party leadership to solve the crisis started to break down only around 1986.<sup>[189]</sup> Before then, for 18 years the relative prosperity had given enough satisfaction to discourage people from emigrating. This silent “social contract” was effectively broken not earlier than in the late 1980s. Németh’s government, having no other option but to yield to demands of Western creditors, decided to embark on the neoliberal experiment, and adopted a set of austerity measures which were necessary in the economic terms but they were also felt painfully by the Hungarian society.<sup>[190]</sup> It is safe to say that this visible departure from the Kádárist economic policy was one of the principal factors, which determined the sharp drop of support for the MSZMP in 1989 and brought the final collapse of communism in Hungary. Additionally, the moment when Antall came to power coincided with increasing problems of the Németh government, which tried to maintain some balance in the Hungarian economy. Despite the efforts to maintain control over the budget deficit, it was clear that the expenses exceeded the financial capabilities of the state. The conflict with the IMF, which threatened Németh with withholding the next tranche of its loan until Budapest decided to adopt the policy of dramatic cuts in public expenses, pushed the government between a rock and a hard place. The proposal of cuts, which the government eventually decided to include in a draft budget, under the pressure from the IMF, stirred up a storm in the parliament. December 1989 was from the point of view of the MSzP a very bad moment to cut public spending, particularly given that an election had been announced for March 1990 and the post-communists’ ratings in the polls had been falling dramatically since November. As is commonly known, Németh was rescued by none other than Helmut Kohl, who visited Budapest at a critical moment and, by making a famous speech in front of the Parliament, in which he unfolded a mirage of the quick accession of Hungary to the European structures, contributed hugely to the government’s victory in the budget vote.<sup>[191]</sup>

However, what is necessary from the economic point of view is often very hard for society to accept. The dramatic price increases imposed on society

by the previous government, which entirely originated from the MSZMP, and whose legitimacy to wield power was in December 1989 at the very least doubtful, led to an immediate reaction from the MDF, whose leaders criticised the prime minister, accusing him of neglecting social justice.<sup>[192]</sup> Although in the following months the burden of the election campaign was definitely moved to strictly political issues, the strikes by taxi drivers, the growth of unemployment and the protests of the homeless (all of which took place during the campaign) could not have been overlooked. This is why, the legacy of the Kádárism, understood as a system granting a small stability to everybody, did not lose its appeal. On the contrary, just because of the austerity imposed by the last communist government it remained attractive for many or perhaps most of Hungarians who on the eve of 1990 general elections were, indeed, perplexed by the deteriorating conditions of their day-to-day life.<sup>[193]</sup> So it is not surprising that the average Hungarian expected from the Antall government a 'fixing of the system', not breaking with it. The prime minister realised that, even in comparison to other European countries, Hungarian acceptance of state interventionism was record-breaking,<sup>[194]</sup> and therefore it would be very hard to obtain any social permission for 'shock therapy' on the Danube.

Consequently, after the election and following up on pre-election promises, Antall's cabinet simply broke with the policies of the predecessor and announced that the Hungarian economy would pursue the model of a 'social market economy', and the ministers in favour of a more radical course of economic policy (Ferenc Rábár and Mihály Kupa) were dismissed. From the perspective of a foreign observer, the actions of the prime minister seemed shocking, to say the least.<sup>[195]</sup> Nevertheless, a more thorough analysis indicates that the very logic of the Hungarian democratic system pushed Antall in that direction. Hungary did not have a 'contractual parliament' in which two-thirds of the seats would be taken by the representatives of the party and the head of state (unlike in Poland, where Jaruzelski had become president) was not Pozsgay, but Árpád Göncz, who came from the SzDSz. Therefore, the first non-communist Hungarian government not only found a better economic situation than Leszek Balcerowicz had in Poland, but also did not have any inhibitions left by the party state which would force it to break with the legacy of Kádárism in economy. Neither the number of deputies

in the Parliament that supported the government, nor the Round Table agreements forced it to do so. In Hungary, as has been mentioned previously, economic issues, other than privatisation, were pushed aside.<sup>[196]</sup> Finally: one should never forget that by casting their ballots in 1990 Hungarians voted and elected a political party which campaigned plainly on the anti-austerity platform, and – more generally – against neo-liberalism in general, no matter if the latter was to be implemented by the post-communist MSzP or the SzDSz that constituted the core of the anticommunist opposition. In this sense, the adoption of a neo-liberal course in economy would have been tantamount to a flagrant breach of the electoral bid. Moreover, keeping in mind that, in the early 1990s, the liberal-democracy in Hungary was still very young, one should seriously ask what would have been – at least potentially – consequences for the future stability of the still emerging political system had the first post-communist government acted in open contradiction to the pledges it made during the electoral race.

What was worse, the prime minister, a conservative who led the party originating from the traditions of the Hungarian national populist movement, which was very much concerned about the future of the Hungarian nation (as István Csurka, in 1990 a high ranking MDF party activist and therefore a party colleague of Antall, had claimed during the conference in Monor), had to ask himself a question about the social consequences of continuing the reforms launched by Németh. If we assume that the prime minister and his party, whose ideological code descended partially from the traditions of Illyés and his successors, shared the opinion about the threat looming over Hungarians as a nation, then it becomes understandable why, already in the election campaign of 1990, the Forum supported the process of privatisation much more cautiously than the competing SzDSz, and the issue of family protection provided by the state became one of the trademarks of Antall's campaign.<sup>[197]</sup> When Hungary entered the period of transformation, the country had negative population growth, which was huge for that time and stood at almost 20,000 annually.<sup>[198]</sup> It was commonly known that the introduction of some elements of the market economy by the regime in 1979, through the legalisation of the 'second economy', had entailed dramatic social consequences. Hungarians, exhausted by working two jobs, seeing that their efforts did not bring any measurable results, more

and more frequently took to alcohol or tranquilizers, or in the worst case, as mentioned previously, committed suicide.<sup>[199]</sup> So, one might venture to claim that the choice of the direction of the changes in 1989 was to some extent influenced by the discredited idea of working on one's own, a relic of Kádárism. In 1989, it was mercilessly revealed that, although Hungarians had worked hard for their whole lives to increase their small personal wealth, their efforts had been in vain. Taking into consideration this ideological legacy, it is easier to understand why the ideas of the free market could not attract any enthusiasm in Hungary. The free market economy was bound to be associated with only harder work than before, but this time without any protection from the state. As the attempts to introduce the elements of the market economy during the time of Kádár had seemed to be unsuccessful in the opinion of Hungarians, it should not be surprising that in 1989 they clung even more tightly to the idea of the welfare state. Only a few could notice that the economic reality from 1956–1989 had little to do with the free market; it seems that for the average citizen of the Hungarian People's Republic this lack of correlation was not obvious.

Under the circumstances, the prime minister needed think carefully about the effects of getting rid of the whole range of social benefits provided by the state. After all, such a decision could lead to a further drop in the birth rate, with results for the country that would be difficult to overestimate. It was also clear that in 1989 the aging of society had already become very advanced. Unlike Poland, where only in 1988 did the fertility rate dropped below the magic number of 2.1, which assures a simple generation replacement, Hungary in the early 1970s already had a fertility rate of 1.97; and by 1990, it was down to 1.84. Only in the decade of 1980–1990, the population of the country fell by nearly 350,000 people,<sup>[200]</sup> which was bound to be a cause for concern to any political figure.

This data (the dramatic meaning of which did not seem to be clear to everyone in the liberal camp<sup>[201]</sup>) must have to some extent discouraged the Hungarian national populist movement from the free market idea as a method for managing the economy. This would also explain the behaviour of the prime minister, judged by many to be irrational, who did not intend to abolish the wide range of social benefits provided by the state and additionally promised to extend their spectrum.<sup>[202]</sup> If this hypothesis

proved to be correct, it would mean that Antall did not approve of rapid changes, not only because he met with some social resistance, or because he had little knowledge about economics, but also because he thought that rapid social changes which would have resulted from a competitive economy without strong correction means on the part of the state, could have led to a further drop in the birth rate and even more disintegration of the traditional bonds which, for him, as a Hungarian conservative, were a safeguard that Hungarians as a nation would survive for another 100 years. Independently of the personal views of the prime minister, it remains obvious that demographics were a much more unfavourable factor for reformers in Hungary (irrespective of who they were) than for supporters of the transformation in Poland. In the Polish case, a natural (and immediate) target of such a reform programme were generations from the late 1950s and the early 1960s, followed by another population boom from the 1970s and the time of martial law.<sup>[203]</sup> In Hungary in turn, the problem was that from the early 1960s the birth rate had been fixed at around 145,000 *per annum* and those generations were less numerous than the generations of the 1940s and 1950s (a difference of about 25 per cent).<sup>[204]</sup> This considerably narrowed the social base of the prospective beneficiaries of the political transformation. As a consequence, it turned out that while in Poland the numerous generations of the then thirty-year-olds and young people had guaranteed the success of the 1989 transformation, in Hungary Viktor Orbán was doomed to failure with his programme addressed at young people. His supporters were simply too few, faced with the more numerous generation of fifty-year-olds, to implement radical economic transformations proposed by FIDESZ in 1989. So the bottom line was that regardless of the fact of whether prime minister Antall had any economic background or what his personal views on the role of economy were, the social forces in Hungary which could be interested in 'shock therapy' patterned on Polish solutions were too weak in 1989 to pursue their ideas. The demographic factors and the concern for the fate of the nation as a whole must have narrowed down the room for manoeuvre for every politician in power at that time.

Such a perception of the national problem was bound to lead to a conflict with the liberal SzDSz and also makes it possible to understand why in 1990

the Hungarian opposition did not manage to form a government of national unity which could carry out the necessary economic reforms. The election campaign must have been very painful for both sides of the conflict; calling the opponents 'Jews' or 'fascists' effectively poisoned the atmosphere and made the co-operation even more difficult.<sup>[205]</sup> Perhaps Hungarian politicians could have overcome their mutual aversion, but for their differences in their assessments of the situation in Hungary after 1989 and the programme of reforms. For the SzDSz a democracy in the Western style was the key and the freedom of the individual was almost a top priority. Such a view was certain to lead to a conflict with Antall's camp, which was afraid that this individualistic approach concerning the human being and the economy would bring about dire results on the Danube. Additionally, in the eyes of the SzDSz activists the views of the Hungarian right wing on such issues as teaching religion in schools, the problem of the Hungarian minorities living outside the country or even (for some activists) the approach to the issue of abortion and the role of women in society conflicted with the standards of most countries of the then EEC.<sup>[206]</sup> The prime minister himself manifested several times that obeying the law when it contradicts his beliefs might be difficult. This situation resembled the one in Poland in the times of Lech Wałęsa's presidency. It was a serious threat to Hungarian integration with the West and made the Hungarian right wing an unacceptable partner for the liberal wing, which tried to pursue the ideas of a political system based on Western European solutions.

After all, the approach adopted by the SzDSz in 1990 could hardly be perceived as one favourable for economic transformations, regardless of how honest had been the assurances of the SzDSz leaders who had promised to accelerate the economic transformation process when they came to power.<sup>[207]</sup> Their radical anti-communist approach did not make things easier. This element of the programme eventually turned out to be the main lever for lifting social support which enabled the SzDSz to come second in the March election. But the postulates of cleansing Hungary from the remains of the party state, combined with the proposals of economic transformations, seemed a dangerous social experiment for the MDF's leadership (and also for most of Hungarian society), which could have disastrous effects in Hungarian conditions. This could be due to the reaction

of the remnants of the party state, which, feeling threatened, might want to 'retaliate' and harness the social dissatisfaction about the drastic scope of the reforms, and attempt a coup d'état.<sup>[208]</sup> In the Hungarian conditions of the time, that might have had dire consequences.

The problem was that the 33 years, which had passed since the Hungarian Uprising in 1956 had been too short a period for the memory of the generation, which came to power in 1989 to forget. The Uprising, despite the Soviet intervention, was a several-week long period in which Hungarians took up arms and fought both the Red Army and their fellow countrymen (although naturally a significant majority of the nation supported the insurgents). Both Antall and the post-communists who entered the period of transformation knew that 'goulash socialism' had not been only a pseudo-justification of the Kádár regime but had also, to a certain extent, ensured public order. One might venture to say that the situation of Hungary could be compared to that of Spain in 1975, when after Franco's death society on the one hand demanded reforms, but, on the other hand, the vast majority of Spaniards were afraid that a more radical turn in politics might lead to another civil war. As a consequence, both Hungarians and Spaniards rejected political forces which demanded more serious changes, regardless of whether they were aiming to settle scores from the past or for a dramatic economic transformation. Stability was necessary to lay the foundations for democracy and the state of law in Hungary, to avoid the country being stigmatised as a 'Balkan state' (which would inevitably had happened if there had been more serious unrests, bearing in mind that there had been a civil war in the former Yugoslavia since 1991), and, in a longer perspective, to join the European Union.

In the end, Hungary did not go through any shock therapy. When the possibility of talks with the MSZMP in 1987 was closed to the liberal camp, which was a natural consequence of the 'post-Trianon syndrome' on which the right-wing MDF was based, the liberals were left only with anti-communist slogans, while the main position in the 'playing field' was taken by the group based on national populist traditions, which for a long time consistently aimed to co-operate with the communists. Due to a weak response to the slogans promoting civil rights and constructing the state of law (which undoubtedly stemmed from the relatively low repressiveness

of the Kádarian system as compared with the situation in the People's Republic of Poland from the 1980s, not to mention other countries of the former Socialist Bloc) the liberals were marginalised to anti-communist rhetoric, which turned out to be a cul-de-sac. It was impossible to construct a democracy or develop a free market without reaching an agreement with some part of the former party elite.

The cautiousness of Antall and his successor Péter Boross was actually to turn out to be extremely costly in terms of economy, politics and society. The strategy of gradual changes, which left the sector of social services completely untouched, did not prevent a drastic increase in inflation (which rose to 35 per cent in 1992), a 20 per cent fall in GDP and a 40 per cent drop in industrial production (between 1990 and 1994);<sup>[209]</sup> and the absence of any restructuring of foreign debt (which did not fall but even grew, reaching the astronomical amount of USD 32 billion) played a major role.<sup>[210]</sup> What is worse, contrary to the assumptions presented in the policy speech of the prematurely deceased head of the government (Antall died in 1993), social spending also decreased,<sup>[211]</sup> and the process of the Hungarian nation 'dying out' accelerated. Therefore the priceless capital of social trust endowed in the first democratically elected government after the years of the communist dictatorship was squandered. János Kornai put it well after some years when he said that actually the first four years of Hungarian democratisation wasted the historical chance to reform the country.<sup>[212]</sup> Such political and social conditions as those in 1990 in Hungary never occurred again. That was because the experiences from 1990–1994 finally discouraged the camp of the former opposition from seeking any compromise. The moral conservatism and the reaching for anti-Semitic arguments by MDF officials and ministers in Antall's government in order to discredit the Free Democrats in the eyes of public opinion, the 'winking' at the supporters of the idea of tightening the political stance towards Bucharest: all that must have convinced the SzDSz that there was, in fact, no point in conducting any talks with the right wing. The divisions within the Hungarian opposition, which were revealed by the discussion on restoring the crown on the coat of arms of Hungary (the MDF was naturally for it, while the SzDSz was against), were so deep that the two camps were not even united by the issue of the symbols of the state.<sup>[213]</sup> And what was the most important for liberals,

a right wing shaped in this way was not capable of carrying out any effective reforms which would pave Hungary's way to the European Union. The nationalist tendencies, revealed not only in the repeated attempts to add the pre-war dictator Miklós Horthy to the pantheon of national heroes but also in the peculiar historical revisionism under the leadership of Csurka, raised an alert among the members of the Hungarian left and centre-left wing. On historical ground it was unacceptable to the circles of former supporters of Lukács (and also for post-communists) that ministers from Antall's government took part in the ceremony of receiving the urn containing Horthy's ashes in Hungary. Critics stressed that during his government Hungary had supported Hitler in his expansionist policy, and the Hungarian administration had taken an active part in the creating of ghettos and sending Hungarian citizens of Jewish origin to concentration camps, and even if Horthy himself did not enthusiastically support the hideous ideas of the Nazis and their Hungarian followers, he did not oppose them using all of his power as he could and should have done.<sup>[214]</sup> Regardless of strictly historical issues and the ongoing 'struggle for remembrance', the above ideas were unacceptable to liberals, also for fear that such a trend in internal policy might prevent Budapest from being perceived as the 'top of the class pupil', praised worldwide, and which would lead to Hungary being excluded from the group of countries which could be promised EU membership.

This deadlock within the opposition could not continue without any influence on the process of shaping the Hungarian political stage and it explains why in 1994 the SzDSz, having buried all hopes for transformation on the right wing, decided to contract an alliance with the post-communist MSZP. Here was at stake not only the result of the election, which in the eventuality of creating a centre-right coalition could not have ensured a sufficient number of seats in parliament. It seems that the liberals supported the leader of the MSZP, Gyula Horn, being anxious about the strategic and integration goals of the country.

The problem was that in comparison to 1990, the conditions to carry out reforms had already become much less favourable. In 1990 voters had expected the new government to introduce some changes in the economy which would lift the country out of the crisis. In 1994, after four years of the centre-right government, the voters must have concluded that their material situation

was nothing but worse, which gave the post-communists the argument that 'it was better when Kádár was in power'. The post-communists preying on nostalgia for Kádár's times were not eager to introduce any reforms; they knew perfectly well that the electorate voted for them because they missed the 'good old times' and did not expect any revolutionary reforms.<sup>[215]</sup> In the meantime, the SzDSz decided to join the government in order to make the changes necessary for Hungary's EU membership. Those changes, which prime minister Horn was actually not so eager to introduce, were implemented in the form of the 'Bokros package'. Some of them, such as the devaluation of the forint, the salary freezes in state-owned enterprises and the increasing of import duties, were so austere for society that the author of the plan was dismissed not even a year after joining the government. The plan was only partly implemented and shortly after Bokros' dismissal some experts concluded that it was insufficient.<sup>[216]</sup> It was quite clear to observers that although in such aspects as privatisation and reducing the inflation rate the Bokros plan was a breakthrough; in terms of the budget deficit it did not offer an ultimate solution. As far as that last issue was concerned, certainly the Constitutional Tribunal of Hungary contributed to its failure: in the famous ruling No. 43/1995 handed down on 30 June 1995 it declared that the part of the package, which attempted to reform social benefits was contrary to the Constitution.<sup>[217]</sup>

The SzDSz (which used to be ardently anti-communist) switching sides and joining the left wing had disastrous effects for Hungarian reforms. In practice it turned out that, unlike in the Federal Republic of Germany, Kis' party and his followers (Kis withdrew from political life quite quickly and returned to lecturing and academic work) were not capable of maintaining the role of a rotating party which could in some circumstances co-operate both with the right and the left wings of the political stage. The legacy of the Round Table has caused a deep division of the political stage, with coalition scenarios being rather predictable. The SzDSz was associated with the MSzP, while the remnants of the MDF would form a coalition only with FIDESZ, which in turn – prior to the 2010 election that FIDESZ won – did not have any other coalition partner than the MDF (or possibly the NDPR). Thus, the fact that Antall excluded liberals from

the right-wing cabinet remained a lasting determinant in the Hungarian politics for the following 20 years.

In this context it is no coincidence that the reform package was introduced by the government led by Horn, who happened to be the leader of the MSzP, which was a partial successor of the Hungarian communist party. Certainly a lot depended on the fact that it was impossible to continue the previous policy without exposing the country to the risk of economic collapse, with all investors, both national and foreign fleeing. In hindsight, it seems that a deeper reform could only have been introduced by a centre-left group which came from Kádár's traditions. It seems that Hungarian public opinion could forgive only them for such a 'sacrilege', which anyway did not protect the party from electoral failure in 1998, when Viktor Orbán came to power. The ideological evolution of the latter in this respect is quite significant. A former supporter of Hayek and Friedman, after eight years of futile attempts at electoral success, Orbán concluded that he could form a new government only by adopting the economic slogans put forward by Antall's government. Another programme change introduced during the FIDESZ congress in 1993 involved abolishing the age limits for party members established in 1988.<sup>[218]</sup> According to the then current regulations of the statute of the Alliance of Young Democrats, only a person who was below 35 could become a full member. By 1993 not only had Orbán moved closer to that limit, but the majority of society had been ageing, and the birth rate was falling year by year. Therefore, relying on the younger generation only and neglecting the needs of the increasingly apprehensive and disappointed 'elderly' doomed the organisation to failure by definition. A professional politician such as Orbán was able to draw conclusions based on these observations. Not only did he go through a media metamorphosis, changing his hairstyle for a less controversial one, but also the name of the FIDESZ party was supplemented with a new component: MPP (*Magyar Polgári Párt* – the Hungarian Civic Party), which was supposed to make the party more credible in the eyes of the older generation.<sup>[219]</sup> In addition to that, Orbán unscrupulously attacked the Bokros package<sup>[220]</sup> (as being liberal and not national, although he could have realised that without this solution Hungary was in for real trouble) and similarly to other parties he became involved in the election competition for the victory of 'the highest bidder'.

Economists (including those who were not far from the right wing) were alarmed that the budget deficit exceeded all acceptable norms, that internal debt was growing at a dramatic rate<sup>[221]</sup> and that the Hungarian situation was peculiar across the whole of Central Europe, but none of that made any impression on the leader of FIDESZ and the explanation of such an evolution of the party stance is quite simple.<sup>[222]</sup>

When the liberals moved to the left, it basically meant that the leader of FIDESZ would have to unite the entire right-wing. Otherwise, as the experience of 2002 and 2006 elections showed, a small advantage of several per cent might decide whether the right wing (despite the dissatisfaction of the majority of society) would gain power or not. That led to an even bigger polarisation of the political stage. In Hungarian conditions, it involved returning to the post-Trianon resentment, turning a blind eye to the anti-Romas sentiments of some of the right wing and withdrawing from any radical moves regarding economic and social issues, as the majority of the MDF's electorate would not accept those, and Orbán intended to win their votes. Appealing to a pre-war nationalism in a country, which had a bad reputation anyway, due to due to the legacies left by the between-two-wars period and WWII as well, automatically undermined the authority of the FIDESZ leader in other countries and in Brussels, jeopardising the plan of European integration.

Naturally, Orbán realised that associating with the radical right wing might lead to a complete loss of credibility in the West, so he tried to maintain it within some strictly defined borders. The problem was that these borders were too broad for the centrist electorate, and for Brussels, Romania, and Slovakia, so he could not count on their tolerance, let alone acceptance. In moving to the right, Orbán posed a threat to the left wing and therefore the two camps engaged in a populist auction and neglected the fact that their pre-election promises were completely unrealistic.

The SzDSz, by ruling out the possibility of an alliance with the right, was not only destined for marginalisation (in governments with post-communists usually free democrats played the role of a fig leaf), but in practice it had to turn a blind eye to the misguided economic policy of the leftist cabinet. These ponderings lead to the conclusion that the much admired stability of the political stage in Hungary was, to a certain extent, to blame

for the insufficient economic balance of the first 20 years of the economic transformation, and explains the direction taken by Orbán after his return to power in 2010. The sharp clash between the right and the left wings, which reduced co-operation on systemic issues to a bare minimum, killed off the possibility of reaching any agreement above the divisions on important economic issues such as health care reform, etc. Moreover, the absence of a strong centrist party which could serve as a bridge between the great opposing political camps made the economy a kind of hostage of the populist pre-election auction whose only purpose was to ‘promise as much as you can’<sup>[223]</sup>. As the aging Hungarian society would certainly cast their votes in favour of ‘the highest bidder’, undertaking any systemic reforms entailed being labelled as supporters of Bokros, which in the reality of 1996–2010 was a political death sentence.

Consequently, starting with the election campaign of 1998 all of the political parties present in the parliament were involved in bidding, with results that were easy to predict. The painful lesson received by socialists who had been forced by external circumstances to accept, at least partly, market reforms was remembered for a long time. After returning to power in 2002, the post-communist government headed by Peter Medgyessy started with a 50 per cent increase of salaries in the public sector and a substantial increase of the tax-exempt amount.<sup>[224]</sup> The prime minister stepped down in 2004, handing power over to Ferenc Gyurcsány along with a seven-per cent inflation rate and a debt in excess of USD 40 billion. In spite of this, the new government continued the policy of increasing wages, even if it was obvious that this policy was a more and more suicidal step for the economy, as salaries paid to employees increased significantly faster than productivity did.<sup>[225]</sup> But Gyurcsány focused mainly on his own political career, and did not want to make any crucial changes only two years before the election, postponing them until the re-election which he ensured for himself by resorting to lies. Hiding the real condition of the economy from the public opinion, he promised to increase pensions and retirement benefits. It was clear to everyone that keeping those promises might be impossible with a budget deficit of almost 8 per cent. Taking into consideration the fact that the prime minister’s election strategy was dramatically exposed by the media (the famous ‘tapes of the truth’ in which Gyurcsány, using

tough words, admitted that ‘we were lying in the morning, we were lying in the evening, we screwed up the economy’, said that ‘there is no single move of the government that we could be proud of’ and called Hungary a ‘freaking country’),<sup>[226]</sup> the government lost its moral authority to make any changes. What is worse, from then on, the word ‘reform’ must have been associated by the average citizen of Hungary only with a political fraud. The events in the autumn of 2006, when Hungary witnessed a wave of social protests, convinced the political class that abolishing the welfare state in Hungary was a task for a political sapper and involved the risk of being eliminated from the parliament. Obviously, Gyurcsány was not eager to take such steps, and tried to remain in office at all costs. Technically speaking, that was not particularly difficult. Having a solid majority in parliament, Gyurcsány was also relying on support from liberals in the coalition who were frightened by the range and violent character of the protests organised by FIDESZ and the increasingly more frequent appearances of right-wing extremists from the Jobbik party fighting with the police, so they backed up the prime minister. However, keeping the corrupt head of the government and the MSzP in his position drove Hungary into increasingly bigger debt. At the end of 2006, the budget deficit reached the astronomical amount of 9.2 per cent, although in the next two years of his government Gyurcsány had been forced to introduce some reforms.<sup>[227]</sup> In 2007–2008 the government repeatedly raised taxes (inducing VAT), and some subsidies and grants were limited. The problem was, as some analysts pointed out, that in 2007 Gyurcsány’s government did not try to cut expenses instead of increasing the budget revenue,<sup>[228]</sup> which in the Hungarian economic conditions of 2007 turned out to be unrealistic. That did not prevent a further accumulation of debt, which in October 2008 reached 67 per cent of GDP!<sup>[229]</sup>

In this context it is worth addressing the question of why the left and the right were unable to find common ground in order to set in motion reforms necessary to prevent the progressive deterioration of the national economy, which, to make matters worse, was ostensibly coupled with the visible crises in key public institutions. The answer to that is complicated. On the one hand, there is no doubt that the bottom line was the lack of political will to start real talks at which to work on the problem. On the other hand, one should keep in mind the observation made recently by András

Bozóki, who drew attention to the fact that one of the outcomes of the Round Table was the complete set of rules which sought to strengthen the new democratic order and its stability and its governability, including qualified majority rules which affected a wide spectrum of policy issues. Apparently, the 'Founding Fathers' believed that they could safeguard freedom by increasing the number of decisions that required a qualified majority vote. These measures created a democracy in which in the period between elections the ruling governments' power became almost 'cemented'. It became nearly impossible to remove an incumbent government from the outside. However, this simultaneously made effective governance more difficult. The government, although formally holding power, had to, due to the large number of qualified majority rules, rely on the opposition in order to take decisions on basic issues. Paradoxically, the Constitution thus granted both a lot of power and limited political responsibility to the government.<sup>[230]</sup>

The same author has also noted that those provisions created a political system which was very rigid and unable to adapt itself in a flexible manner to the changing world.<sup>[231]</sup> It appears then that the progress of the political crisis (and its final outcome, which finally took place in 2010) was determined not only by the natural thirst for power of both of the protagonists (Gyurcsány and Orbán respectively). After all, certain institutional arrangements anchored in the text of the modifications of the Constitution introduced by the key political actors present at the negotiations of the Round Table were at least in part responsible for the prolonged deadlock as well. Thus, Hungarians were to find out that the price they were going to pay for clinging to their old views would be high. In October 2008, the strength of the forint plummeted (during just the first three weeks of October the Hungarian currency lost about 15 per cent of its value).<sup>[232]</sup> As if the economic recession, which started in 2007, was not enough, the Hungarian government faced the threat of bankruptcy (nobody wanted to buy Hungarian bonds at that time). Panic-stricken investors started to withdraw from Budapest<sup>[233]</sup> and Hungarian citizens who had enormous debts in foreign currencies saw from day to day how dramatically their instalments were growing. Thus Hungary, which at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century had been a model of a successful transformation, found itself in such a critical situation that the nation had to queue for a loan from the IMF or the World Bank,

like a developing country. Undoubtedly that must have been a humiliating experience for the Hungarian elite, which for the period of the previous 20 years had repeated incessantly that Hungary was the leader in the region, and all of the other countries of the former Socialist Bloc were coping with much worse problems, or actually were 'worse'. Additionally, the collapse of the forint temporarily led to falls in the foreign currency markets of other central European countries. That caused the draining of a bitter cup even in Poland, which was traditionally quite favourably disposed towards Budapest. This is not the right place to analyse the journalists' motives: was it a simple fear that foreign investors who had drawn the wrong conclusions from the crisis over the Danube might also conclude that the Polish economy was on the brink of collapse? Or perhaps it was a desire to retaliate against Hungarians for the years of frustration which had built up in Poland due to their acceptance of the image of the Polish rebel which had been created by Kádarian propaganda, and later the attempt to establish a positive image of Hungary in contrast with the 'corrupt' and 'messy' Poland? It is a fact that Hungary had never had such a bad image in Poland as it did in 2008 and 2009. The derisive remarks of Krzysztof Varga who, in the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*, taunted the 'Pannonian economic puma' which 'starved to death' could not have been overlooked.<sup>[234]</sup>

To sum up: whatever could be said on the positive aspects of the economic transformation in Hungary, it remains beyond reasonable doubt that results achieved during 20 years since the collapse of communism in this country and Viktor Orbán's ascent to power in 2010 were, to many Hungarians, simply disappointing or – to say the least – below their previous expectations. The performance of the democratic regime in practice was also very often criticized – and on many grounds. Notably, when discussing the situation in Hungary one should not forget about the 'partocracy', which, at least to a certain extent, has been responsible for the underdevelopment of other forms of civil society.

"The political sphere assumed increasing power over various segments of society, from the media through the economy, from education through the social sectors to the theatre. Election results determine who may become the editor of a newspaper, a school principal, a theatre director, or a business leader", noted András Bozóki. The same author opines also that

“In Hungary, parties assumed civic duties. It was parties that organized “movements”; it was parties that established “public benefit” foundations, “professional” groups and the “citizens” circles. Parties were the ones that delegated representatives to various committees; they sought expert advice from their own experts. Moreover, they had their own journalists writing media reports. In such a system, instead of independent economic experts and market players, there were only think tanks that were sustained by parties and their strawmen. In this system, affairs could only be settled through parties and their clientele. The state was a state of parties, together with its tax authorities and security forces.”<sup>[235]</sup>

In addition, Anzelm Bárány had emphasised that one of the significant differences, which the transformation had brought about in Poland was the reconstruction of the media market, where the position of the leader was taken by Agora, which had been founded by former opposition members, and its main pillar, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. No similar phenomena were to be found in Hungary. One might venture to say that up to 2010 the media market had been taken over by the leftist-liberal camp, with a visible leftist bias and state radio and TV safeguarded their dominant role. There is no place here for a thorough analysis of whether that was due to the significant advantage possessed by the people whose ideological background had been shaped by the party state or simply a lack of vision of what a conservative oriented media should represent in the fast-globalising world that was the Hungarian reality. It is a fact that the right-wing camp could not get into the mainstream media for a long time, which affected the shape of the Hungarian democracy, and people working in the media did not undergo any background checks whatsoever. The ideological climate for the Hungarian transformation, which relied on continuity and gradual changes and was by no means revolutionary, was bound to influence the situation in the media.<sup>[236]</sup>

The 250,000 people who gathered on 16 June 1989 for the funeral of Imre Nagy neither entailed moral catharsis nor contributed to the acceleration of such processes as lustration or de-communisation. The process of the rehabilitation of victims of Stalinism and the re-evaluation of the 1956 Uprising, which had actually started before the collapse of communism, brought only partial results, to say the least.<sup>[237]</sup> It is true that the procedures for the formal rehabilitation of the 1956 Revolution, which were initiated under the last

communist government had opened the door to formal rehabilitation of those persecuted after 1956.<sup>[238]</sup> Yet it would be very difficult to say that those acts were followed by legislative measures granting full compensation for injuries suffered under the communist regime, even if at the beginning of the 1990s some laws were passed by the Parliament aiming at resolving this complicated issue.<sup>[239]</sup> As regards decomunisation, it was practically non-existent in Hungary. The lustration law adopted in 1994, which entered into force in an abridged form (initially it did not cover journalists and clergymen, among others), was first suspended by the Horn government and then applied extremely selectively.<sup>[240]</sup> It did not protect the archives from 'wild lustration', 'leaks' and cases of the revealing on the internet that a name of an official or a high-ranking politician had been found on a more or less credible 'list of agents'.<sup>[241]</sup> The issue was that such sensations remained interesting only to a narrow group of citizens and the majority of Hungarians (perhaps due to the peculiar character of Kádárism, which did not trace enemies and used reprisals less frequently than other countries of the Eastern Bloc) did not hurry to look through their files or demand de-communisation.<sup>[242]</sup> The Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution established in 1990 was only a research unit and, unlike the Institute of National Remembrance in Poland, it did not have an investigation section. In Hungary nobody sued any functionaries of the former security service or the party apparatus. After Kádár's death, the majority of the Politburo members who were his closest co-operators died relatively quickly. Although a large number of functionaries responsible for violations of fundamental human rights in the years 1956–1963 were still alive, nobody held them responsible for their actions, even if in the 1990s some steps were taken by the Antall government to trigger the judicial investigations of them.<sup>[243]</sup> The disclosure in the media that Gyula Horn, who after the MSzP's failure in the election in 1990 had replaced Nyers as party leader and was the prime minister from 1994 to 1998, had been a member of the Workers' Militia (*pufajkások*) in 1956 neither influenced the MSzP's approval ratings negatively nor encouraged the head of the party and the government to resign. The issue of the co-operation of Péter Medgyessy with the counterintelligence services in the 1980s ended in a similar way.<sup>[244]</sup>

As in other countries, the opposition in Hungary did not manage to prevent state property from being taken over by companies set up by former big-shots

in the regime. The process had started even before János Kádár's death and lasted until after the centre-right had come to power.<sup>[245]</sup> In Hungary this did not have such a scope as it had in other countries in the region, which was probably because Hungary had managed to attract foreign capital much faster. That entered the domestic market and set up 'greenfield' investments which hampered the activity of *nomenklatura* companies, so they could not keep up with the competition and were bound to collapse.<sup>[246]</sup> However, this phenomenon, as well as other abuses committed during privatisation, were undoubtedly noticeable,<sup>[247]</sup> and had at least two important implications. Firstly, the atmosphere of rumours, suspicions and proved or unproved allegations of abuses committed during the privatisation process had a significant impact on the perception of the scheme by the general public and one could even ask to what degree it contributed to a sort of de-legitimisation of the transformation process in the eyes of Hungarians<sup>[248]</sup>. Secondly, as the privatisation process was performed by successive governments (i.e. not just one government) it would be naïve to believe that the positions of communist managers were decisively broken, or that their influences were removed from the entire economy.<sup>[249]</sup> This was simply impossible, given that up until 2010 the MSZP was the key player on the political scene.<sup>[250]</sup>

It seems that the eruption of the 2008 financial crisis decisively undermined the credibility of foreign investors in the eyes of the Hungarian general public. As Soós observed, at the beginning of the 1990s foreign investors were generally welcomed as a vehicle of innovation and progress, as well as the economic bridge between the EU and Hungary. Still, the first doubts as to whether the omnipresence of the foreign capital in the country was positive were expressed as early as in the mid-1990s.<sup>[251]</sup> And even if one does not accept the sharp criticism of the neo-liberal pattern to which all transformation process in Hungary was subordinated,<sup>[252]</sup> one must accept, as a matter of fact, that the results of those reforms were, generally speaking, below the expectations of Hungarians, as those reforms failed to fulfil the dream of 1989, i.e. the full equalisation of living standards with those found in the countries of western Europe.

Good ideas were also scarce in other spheres of social life. Throughout the 1990s, the issue of the lack of integration of the Roma community became increasingly serious, and they became the target of political attacks by aggressive

racists. Although already at the beginning of the previous decade it had become clear that the problem had intensified,<sup>[253]</sup> nobody could create a proper framework which would facilitate the smooth incorporation of the Roma into Hungarian society. In the context of a growing economic crisis it was obvious that conflicts between the Hungarian majority and the Roma minority would intensify. It even led to tragic events, such as murders of Roma committed by nationalist extremists. Finally: although the demographic crisis was obvious for anyone, the politics before 2010 did not lead to any increase in the birth rate, which might negatively influence the economy in the future. Although in comparison with other countries in the region Hungary looked reasonably good, it is difficult to overlook the fact since the end of 1981 until 2010 the population of the country fell by as many as 700,000. In October 2010, the number of inhabitants fell below the psychological threshold of 10 million,<sup>[254]</sup> which was bound to affect the level of future retirement benefits and generally the stability of the social security system.

Under the circumstances, it is no wonder that nostalgia for Kádárism has been persistent in almost all strata of the Hungarian society in the first 20 years of transition and as early as the late 1990s sociologists had pointed out that dissatisfaction with the 'great politics' was rapidly increasing.<sup>[255]</sup> Naturally, the nostalgia for the period before 1989 had varying intensity in different social groups and, like in other countries of the region it depended on education and place of residence. Despite all of that, the assessment of the parties who wielded power after 1989 was definitely worse. Studies conducted by the MKI Institute in 2001 (at a time of a decent economic situation, which showed signs of relative improvement) indicate that as many as 53 per cent of the population considered the period of 1956–1989 to be a positive era in Hungarian history,<sup>[256]</sup> later this share increased up to 62 per cent.<sup>[257]</sup> Against this backdrop it is not surprising that over many years it was János Kádár, who was considered by the respondents of surveys as the greatest statesman in the Hungarian history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>[258]</sup> and according to more recent polls – most of Hungarians still keep the late dictator in high esteem<sup>[259]</sup> and a sort of Kádár-nostalgia was felt in Hungary well after the breakthrough 2010, when Viktor Orbán took power.<sup>[260]</sup> When sociologists conducted a survey about the balance of gains and losses during the ten years after the 1990s, a staggering number of respondents (64 per

cent) answered that they actually had lost more than they had gained, and only 6 per cent claimed the opposite.<sup>[261]</sup> Sharp political conflicts, Gyurcsány's incompetence and the scandal of the 'tapes of the truth' revealed in 2006, dramatically decreased the assessment of the events from 1989.

According to a report published in 2007 by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (prepared in collaboration with the World Bank), as many as 70 per cent of respondents considered the economic situation before 1989 to be better in comparison with the present conditions, and only 12 per cent had a different opinion. Over half of Hungarians were convinced that children born before 2007 had worse prospects than previous generations, and 25 per cent believed that central planning was the best way of solving economic problems.<sup>[262]</sup> A general change in social sentiments was also noticeable regarding the European Union: it was positively assessed by only 32 per cent of Hungarians; 21 per cent had negative feelings towards it and 43 per cent did not have any opinion on the matter. In comparison with Polish Euro-enthusiasm the difference is significant. In Hungary, just as in the former GDR, one can find shops and cafes selling or displaying 'souvenirs from the past epoch', such as busts of Lenin, or even Stalin.<sup>[263]</sup> As such, Hungarians had been struggling with a huge economic crisis since 2009, which is undoubtedly a consequence of the unfinished transformation. During the second half of the 2000s, the country had to cope with such issues as street riots, police using force against demonstrators (in 2006) and the burning of the television headquarters, as well as deterioration of relations with ethnic minorities and, in 2007, the utterly barbarian desecration of Kádár's tomb, which was an insult to the elementary standards of respect for the dignity of the deceased. One could naturally argue that most of those excesses were committed by extremists who do not have any wider social support, and those arguments are undoubtedly correct. But the accumulation of these occurrences finally raised the question of the quality of the Hungarian democracy 20 years after the onset of the transformation process, which puzzled not only foreign observers but also the Hungarian political elite.

The above-mentioned events from the period of 2006 to 2010 should be perceived as the direct reason for the subsequent 'drift in the opposite direction' when the executive branch and the administration apparatus got increasingly stronger in terms of controlling the individual.

## Epilogue: Viktor Orbán in power and concluding remarks

As previously expected, the parliamentary election held in Hungary in April 2010 transformed the political stage of the country. FIDESZ won 52.7 per cent of the vote in the first round. That, together with the overwhelming success in the second round, when MPs in single-deputy constituencies were elected, gave the party the two-thirds majority of the seats in the parliament needed to change the constitution. The discredited MSzP won only 19.3 per cent of the vote and the increasingly stronger nationalist Jobbik 16.7 per cent.<sup>[264]</sup> By taking power, Viktor Orbán has started a new period in the history of Hungary, which has been lasting until today.

To be sure: What is at the focus of the following remarks, is not the question what the Orbán's regime truly is, what are its shortcomings or discrepancies with the EU standards, and what the leader of FIDESZ should be blamed for. Those and similar questions were thoroughly examined elsewhere, so this is neither the time nor place to reopen once again the discussion on the topics, which have already been exploited by scholars in both Hungary and abroad.<sup>[265]</sup> The following considerations, while starting from the premise that Orbán's regime is truly a significant departure from the liberal standards upon which the EU is founded and – most notably – that which had been in place in Hungary (at least nominally) before the General Elections 2010, seek to establish how the legacy of the transformation era influences Hungarian reality today, what where the causes of the failure of the liberal project in this country, and why for so long Hungarian liberals have not been able to find an antidote, which could diminish the popularity of the FIDESZ and its leader among society, let alone – oust them from power.

First and foremost, the question of legacies left by the liberal era should be addressed. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, its achievements are numerous, even if Orbán's system sought to water them down or – on the occasion – to eradicate some of them. After all, the decennials 1990–2010 brought two decades of the technological progress usually coupled with the visible economic growth, even if there were some periods during which the economy contracted and – no doubts – the wealth generated by

it was shared unequally. Furthermore, in spite of later criticism, the role of the FDI in Hungary was not necessarily univocally negative, but – since the first years of the transformation – it played a crucial role in this process. Against this backdrop, it does not seem to be a pure coincidence that even after 2010 some foreign investors decided to establish their businesses in Hungary, even though the rhetoric of the Orbán government was frequently hostile towards them. Finally and perhaps the most importantly: despite all the visible tensions in their mutual relations, Hungary is a Member State of the EU and NATO, and this fact should never be underestimated. After all, it determines the room for political manoeuvre for any European politician (no matter, what country and political option they represent) and the same is true of an incumbent Hungarian prime minister. This is why in his efforts of curtailing the legacies of the liberal agenda left by the 1990s, Orbán had to concede on many points. At the end of the day, the pressure of the EU institutions has been strong enough to hold the reforms introduced after 2010 within certain limits, even if the political regime in Hungary may not be classified as a liberal democracy any more.

Nevertheless, it safe to state that, in the results of the general elections in 2010, the liberal project in Hungary collapsed. No doubt, there had been numerous factors, which led to its utter failure. As Bálint Magyar recently observed, during the liberal era (1990–2010) the Hungarian nation remained deeply divided, and different sensitivities making appeal to significantly different historical narratives made a dialogue between the left and the right – once again in the history of Hungary – nearly totally impossible.<sup>[266]</sup> It is also legitimate to place Viktor Orbán's ascendance to power within the broader context of the global financial crisis which erupted in 2008, or to link it with the more and more visible crisis of liberal democracies in Europe and the growing tensions between national states and the EU itself.<sup>[267]</sup> It is clear that in the contemporary world, the post-Keynesian arguments submitted by such scholars as Piketty, Krugman or Stiglitz are heard more and more attentively by decision-makers than was the case at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, when classic orthodoxy clearly dominated the theory and practice of the key global financial institutions such as the IMF or the WB. One could also argue that, after all, Orbán's case is not so atypical, having regard that the populist or neo-sovereignty wave

is a current political trend widespread in many other European countries, where some of them belong to the former Eastern Bloc (e.g. Poland), and some of them were the founders of the EEC (e.g. Italy).

The above notwithstanding, it also goes without saying that Orbán's radical reforms can and should be interpreted as a logical consequence of serious mistakes made by the Hungarian political class during the entire period of political transformation, and especially during the years 2002–2010.<sup>[268]</sup> In retrospect, the most important cause of the dramatic U-Turn, which took place in 2010 seems to be, first of all, the general frustration of the Hungarian society, stemming from a well anchored conviction that the big promise of the 1989, understood as an equalization of living standards with those in place in Western Europe had not materialized and – more importantly – that there were no chances it would materialize in the foreseeable future. The problem is that it was exactly this myth, encapsulated in the famous slogan of “the End of History”,<sup>[269]</sup> which had been at the core of the 1989 ideological and political change and – simultaneously – it was also the origin of the future failures of the Hungarian liberals. Just because those dreams had never been fulfilled, this fiasco made to entail within the society the commemoration of the “lost paradise” – under term of which we should understand the pre-1989 economic and – to a certain degree – also the social *status quo*. In this sense, a “good memory” of the Kádár era, sharply contrasting with the effects of the transformation whose final outcome was perceived as bad or at least problematic, should be treated as a precondition for the 2010 electoral victory of FIDESZ.<sup>[270]</sup> In some way then, it was exactly the Kádárostalgy, originating in the longing for small but certain stabilization, which prompted the stark increase of support for FIDESZ, and – at the end of the day – it brought its leader back to power. An even if this was only “one factor”, nevertheless it was a non-negligible one. In hindsight, it seems certain that the scandal over Gyurcsány's lies, or even the economic troubles caused by, on the one hand, the freeze of substantial reforms after the resignation of Lajos Bokros, and on the other hand the 2008 global financial crisis, could have been enough to persuade the majority of Hungarians to vote for the right in order to oust the incumbent government from power and to give a chance to the opposition. However, it seems totally out of the question that both those factors had

been strong enough to make the society support massively such a political U-turn as the one heralded by FIDESZ during the electoral campaign. Or – to put it in another way: Hungarian society assuredly knew that the reforms packet proposed by Orbán would be everything but a set of some modifications or amendments of the existing political *status quo*. They knew that it would be a revolution (even if they were not able to figure out its scope and pace) and – in spite of this-they voted for it.<sup>[271]</sup>

Noting the poor results scored by the Hungarian opposition during the subsequent general elections of 2014 and 2018, it seems more than debatable whether the liberal camp has been able to recover from the knockout it received in 2010. After reflection however, one must ask the question, whether – keeping in mind the Hungarian realities – the idea to implement liberalism in Hungary was a realistic one. Without venturing to answer this question with a simple “yes” or “no” it seems however, that that from the outset the task was formidable, and as early as in 1990 the potential final outcome had to be considered as uncertain at best. Setting aside the old arguments invoking the lack of democratic experiences before 1989 or exploring the state of Hungarian psyche under Kádár era, it is worth underlining that even under the reign of Franz-Joseph and Empress Elisabeth, where the position of liberals within Hungarian ruling elites was relatively strong and the liberal agenda – at least to a degree – determined the political course of the domestic policy, the room for manoeuvre of the liberals at power was significantly limited. For until the very end of the World War I, the liberal reforms were clearly subordinated to the main political goal, that is the maintenance of the territorial integrity. This room was even tighter because of the anxiety over the disappearance of the Hungarian nation diluted by the pressure of more demographically dynamic ethnicities living within or neighbouring the Lands of the Crown of Saint Stephen. Both factors effectively prevented the modern constitutionalism from attaining its full maturity and – simultaneously – they entailed the increase of state activism significantly limiting the rights of individuals, without even mentioning the large scope of interventionism in the country’s economics, which even before 1914 was placed under rigid control of state apparatus. The 1920 Treaty of Trianon and its consequences further exacerbated the situation of Hungarian liberals. It is not a pure coincidence that after the economic

crisis had broken out in 1929, they were definitely ousted from power and this failure was – to a degree – the consequence of the fiasco of their previous efforts to maintain the economic ties with those territories, which before 1920 had been part of the Hungarian sovereignty. In those circumstances, it is understandable why, beginning in 1930 and onwards, the control of the state had to increase even further at the expense of the drastic curtailing of civic rights as well as economic freedoms of individuals. In the realities of the late Horthy era, the place of liberalism had to be strictly limited to the opposition benches in Parliament, and with the ascent of Stalinism to power – there was no place for liberalism in Hungary at all. In theory, the progress of globalisation, which more and more determined the realities of the 1970s and 1980s could have created some better conditions for the Hungarian liberals again, but – as this analysis proved – those expectations materialized in part only. True, the open crisis of the communist regime propelled Kádár and his successors to introduce certain flexibilities, being plainly a sort of departure from the communist doctrine. Nevertheless, the legalization of “second economy”, or other measures aiming at the improvement of the economic efficiencies engrafted onto the centrally planned economy not only failed to pave the way towards persistent economic growth but – a bit paradoxically – did not make the life of liberals in Hungary any easier. The question to what extent the specific character of Kádárism contributed to maintenance of certain communist miasmas about the nature of the market economy is out of scope of the present analysis. However, undoubtedly having regard to the large debt and outdated industry, collectivized agriculture, ageing population and increasing frustration of society (all of which constituted a genuine legacy of the communism period), on the eve of the 1990s, Hungarian liberals once again faced a formidable task to promote their agenda in the circumstances which were only apparently favourable to them. Contrary to the Golden Era, Hungary was permanently lacking home grown capital, which was absolutely necessary to set in motion the process of modernization of the country (and of the society as well). In theory, this capital could have been generated by the Hungarians themselves, but – keeping in mind the stage of globalization coupled with the legacies of Kádárism mentioned above – this was possible only at the level of academics. Therefore, the last card in the hand

of the liberal camp (and the strongest one) was the hope for the quick accession to the EU coupled with the incentives for foreign investors to establish their businesses in the country, where this policy tool had been used in Hungarian practise even before 1989. In theory, the inflow of capital and the anchoring of the state in powerful organizations should have brought the stability and contribute to the continuous economic growth, while simultaneously diminishing (or even eradicating) the old traumas caused by the drama of Trianon. However, this card did not produce the effects expected. In hindsight, it seems that it could not have brought them. True, the quick privatization and the mass inflow of FDI, fostered innovation and effectively included Hungarian economy in the global chains of cooperation. Also true, the salaries of those “in” significantly increased, the quality of goods or services offered to the customers dramatically improved. On the other hand, however, just because globalization led to inequalities marked by the specific position of Budapest as the centre of richness, as opposed to the impoverished provinces, the signs of protests and traumatic reactions to the austerity “Bokros package” and demands to restore the active role of the state had been heard long before Viktor Orbán acceded to power in 2010.

To sum up: In retrospect, the question why the liberals lost their political battle for Hungary should be answered by indicating the external and internal causes, where the latter seem to be more important. Since in 1989 Hungary was a country deprived of its own financial resources and burdened with the heavy external debt, so the emergence of a middle class – a backbone of any stable liberal system – had to be long and painful. Only a set of extremely advantageous conditions could have granted the implementation of the liberal agenda in a more effective manner. However, such a positive set of conditions were not in place in Hungary neither in 1989 nor later. Thus, on account of all those circumstances, it is safe to say that even if the Hungarian liberal experiment was not since its inception doomed to failure, its collapse remains strictly connected with the ongoing progress of social stratification and the lack of social component that could provide resistance against the restoration of an illiberal regime. In a sense, one could paraphrase the old term coined by the late János Kornai who labelled the Kádárist system as a “premature welfare state”. It seems that

the next, this time, liberal, era, may be called a “premature liberal state”, where the political system based on models taken from Western European countries, was not able to resist social pressure generated by the society, which felt to be impoverished and cheated by the ruling liberal elite.

It is more than debatable whether the present political system will be able to cope effectively with those basic concerns, which for centuries have haunted almost every government in Budapest. Still it is worth noting that despite continuous efforts by the Orbán government, who did not spare on family programmes, parental allocations and other subventions aiming at the stimulation of population growth, the measures adopted so far by the new regime have not prevented the further aggravation of the demographic decline. If in 2010 (the date of Orbán’s ascent to power) the total number of inhabitants in Hungary was slightly above 10,014 million, at the beginning of 2019, all population living within the borders of the country numbered c. 9,674 million).<sup>[272]</sup> It follows that during Orbán’s rule, the population diminished by c. 350,000. What is more worrisome, this poor result has been the effect of two combined factors that is, the negative natural growth, which has been further exacerbated by the negative migration balance, where especially the latter should be considered as an alarm bell. According to the data compiled by the Eurostat for 2017, c. 339,000 Hungarians, that is around 5 per cent of all labour force, worked permanently abroad within the EU. This meant a dramatic acceleration since in 2012, this share was 2.4 per cent only.<sup>[273]</sup> Still worse data were released in 2018 by the OECD, according to which between 2007 and 2017, c. 1 million Hungarian citizens left the country. Even if the exact number of those who decided to return home remained unknown, the number of Hungarians living permanently abroad could attain c. 600,000.<sup>[274]</sup> This change in the behaviour of the younger generations of Hungarian is particularly important: Compared to the elder cohorts, who traditionally were – cases of political coercion excluded – rather reluctant to go abroad for longer periods, this change in mentality has a revolutionary character.<sup>[275]</sup> It explains partially the recent problems on the Hungarian labour market, which is more and more plagued by the shortage of qualified workers who could fill the gap created by the mass emigration. Those data, however, should be interpreted as a direct proof that Orbán’s regime has already had enormous problems to persuade

the young to stay home instead of fleeing abroad and – this goes without saying – this factor not only challenges the credibility of the existing political system (which since its inception was considered as a sort of dangerous experiment), but poses an imminent threat for the future of the state as such. Considering that the average salary paid in Hungary remains rather low (c. EUR 700 per month), it is difficult to see how the Hungarian politics could address those concerns, as the country is still unattractive for the potential migrants (no matter what country they could eventually come from), not to mention the official anti-immigrant rhetoric which does not make the situation of a potential employer searching for a worker any easier.

It could be that – keeping in mind the scope of the problem. – n Hungary, as much as some other countries of the region, truly needs a new political impetus, which would first of all restore the hope that the legacy of the 1990s is still implementable in spite of the above-mentioned difficulties. What should be done to achieve this goal and who could implement this uneasy task? These are questions, which definitely trespass the frame of this chapter. It seems, however, that to bring Hungary again on the path of the continuous growth and home grown technological progress, some – albeit not uncritical – reference to the ideas that determined the ideological climate of the 1990s is still necessary.

Who will be the one who recognize once again the potential of those ideas, and what other inspirations or sensitivities must be taken into account so that the future political programme could make Hungary once again in its history the true centre of Europe? These are questions, which – for the time being – are unanswerable. Still, Hungarian elites must once again pose them, so that to maintain their statehood for the next years to come.

[1] Ignác Romsics, *A trianoni békeszerződés (The Trianon Peace Treaty)*, Osiris K., Budapest 2001.

[2] On the question of the participation of Hungary in the WWII, see: Krisztián Ungváry, *Magyarország és a második világháború (Hungary and World War II)*, Osiris K., Budapest 2005. See also some general remarks by Romsics in Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. Században (History of Hungary in the 20th century)*, Osiris K., Budapest 2010, pp. 253–270. On the question of the participation of Hungary and responsibility for Holocaust, cf. Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, Columbia University Press, New York 1981. More

recently, Randolph Braham, András Kovács (eds), *The Holocaust in Hungary*, Central European University Press, Budapest 2016.

[3] The repressions in Hungary under Rakósi were so brutal and excessive that finally they were put into question by the Soviets (cf. Zoltan Virag, *Factors That Contributed to the Success of the Revolutionary Forces in the Early Phase of the Hungarian Revolution 1956*, Chapter 2, “Introduction to the Road Leading to the Hungarian Revolution”, who posits that even after Stalin’s death, “On top of all that, the government widely applied state sponsored terror to suppress malcontents and intimidate the population. Even the Soviets disputed the efficiency of the terror and the so-called „administrative regulations” implemented by the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and Ministry of Justice. The Soviets asked the question: „Is it acceptable that in Hungary of the population of 9,500,000 that 1,500,000 individuals were prosecuted during two and half years?”; the text available at: <https://www.allworldwars.com/Revolutionary-Forces-of-the-Hungarian-Revolution-1956-by-Zoltan-Virag.html> – (last accessed on 20.01.2020); this information is quoted after Gyorgy T. Varga, *Jegyzőkönyv a szovjet és a magyar párt – és állami vezetők tárgyalásairól. 1953. június 13–16* (Report of the Conference between the Hungarian and Soviet Party and State Leaders. June 13–16, 1953, *Multunk* 2–3.sz.1992), pp. 234–269). For more information on the Stalinist terror in Hungary, see: Janos M. Reiner, “The crimes of the Communist Regime in Hungary”, [in:] Session III. *Crimes committed by communist regimes – studies of individual states II, International conference Crimes of the Communist Regimes, an assessment by historians and legal experts (proceedings)* Prague 24–26 February 2010, Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Prague 2011, pp. 157–193. The text of the proceedings is available at: <https://www.ustrcr.cz/data/pdf/publikace/sborniky/crime/sbornik.pdf> (last accessed on 20.01.2020).

[4] György Gyarmati, *A Rákosi-korszak – Rendszerváltó fordulatok évtizede Magyarországon, 1945–1956* (*The Rákosi Era – A Decade of Transition in Hungary, 1945–1956*), Rubicon-Ház Bt., Budapest 2013. On the Rajk process, see: Tibor Hajdu, *A Rajk-per háttere és fázisait* (*Background and phases of the Rajk trial*); the text is available at <http://www.rev.hu/sulinet45/szerviz/szakirod/hajdutib.htm>

[5] Erwin A. Schmidl and László Ritter, *The Hungarian Revolution 1956*, Osprey Publishing, Oxford 2006. (passim)

[6] Cf. the conference materials *Crimes of the Communist Regimes*, op. cit.

[7] Johanna Grannville, “In the Line of Fire. The Soviet Crackdown on Hungary, 1956–1957”, [in:] Terry Cox (ed.), *Hungary 1956 – Forty Years On*, Frank Cass Publishers 1997, p. 69; Marjoleine Zieck, “The 1956 Hungarian Refugee Emergency, an Early and Instructive Case of Resettlement”, [in:] *Amsterdam Law Forum*, VU University Amsterdam, 2013, p. 46.

[8] For more details on this survey, see the last part of this chapter.

[9] János Kornai, “Paying the Bill for Goulash Communism. Hungarian Development and Macro Stabilisation from Political Economy Perspective”, *Social Research*, Vol. 63, No. 4, Winter 1996, New School for Social Research, New York, p. 949. [http://www.kornai-janos.hu/Kornai1996\\_Paying\\_the\\_bill\\_-\\_Social\\_Research.pdf](http://www.kornai-janos.hu/Kornai1996_Paying_the_bill_-_Social_Research.pdf)

[10] Istvan R. Gabor, “The Major Domains of the Second Economy”, [in:] Péter Galasi and György Sziraczký (eds), *Labour Market and Second Economy in Hungary*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt – New York 1985, pp. 133–178.

[11] János M. Rainer, *Magyarország története. A Kádár-korszak 1956–1989* (*History of Hungary. The Kádár era 1956–1989*), Kossuth Kiadó, Budapest 2013, pp. 37–40; Judy Batt, “Political Reform in Hungary”, [in:] *Parliamentary Affairs*, No. 4, 1990 p. 465; Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja pokomunistyczna 1990–2003* (*Hungary: Post-communist Transformation 1990–2003*), Familia, Warsaw 2003, pp. 76–77. See also the biographies of Jenő Fock and Rezső Nyers in: Wojciech Roszkowski, Jan

Kofman (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of Central and Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, 1st edition, M.E Shape, Armonk, NY 2008, pp. 261 and 724.

[12] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., pp. 37–38.

[13] It is generally acknowledged that – assuming that the word “Kádárism” understood as a term relating to a sort of political system is not the correct one (cf. Janos M. Reiner, *A Kádár korszak (The Kádár Era)*, Kossuth Kiadó 2013 (e-book), p. 33) – the essence of the regime set up in Hungary after 1956 can be brought to the “tacit contract” with the society, on the basis of which the ruling Communists “pledged” to grant certain concessions carefully carved out within areas of private, economic, public spheres and – in return – the society “promised” to give up any open resistance against the political regime in place. See e.g.: Andreas Schmidt-Schweizer, *Politische Geschichte Ungarns von 1985 bis 2002: Von der liberalisierten Einparteiherrschaft zur Demokratie in der Konsolidierungsphase (Hungarian Political History from 1985 to 2002: From Liberalized One-Party Rule to Democracy in the Consolidation Phase)*, De Gruyter Oldenbourg, Munich 2007, p. 36. In a similar vein, see: Rudolf Tőkés, *Hungary’s Negotiated Revolution: Economic Reform, Social Change and Political Succession*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, pp. 408, 413–415.

[14] Andreas Schmidt-Schweizer, *Politische Geschichte Ungarns...*, op. cit., p.31 (cf. footnote 72 on this page). See also: András Bozóki, *Politikai pluralizmus Magyarországon: 1987–2002 (Political Pluralism in Hungary: 1987–2002)*, Századvég Kiadó, Budapest 2003, p. 45.

[15] Csaba G. Kiss, *Dziennik Polski (1980–1982) (The Polish Diary (1980–1982))*, translated by A. Sieroszewski, the Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań 2000, p. 171.

[16] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgierski Pakiet (The Hungarian Package)*, Familia, Warsaw 2000, pp. 36–37; János Tischler, “Spokój nad Wisłą to łatwiejsze życie na Węgrzech” (“A Calm on the Vistula Means an Easier Life in Hungary”), *Rzeczpospolita, Plus – Minus*, 8.12.2007. The article is available on the website <http://www.rp.pl/arttykul/75231.html> (last accessed on 11.08.2017).

[17] Péter Bencsik, “Passport and Visa Policy of the Kádár regime”, [in:] *Chronica [Annual of the Institute of History, University of Szeged]*, Vol. 3 2003, p. 147.

[18] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship to Democracy. The Birth of the Third Hungarian Republic 1988–2001*, Columbia University Press, New York 2007, p. 22.

[19] Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe, Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings*, Central European University Press, Budapest – New York 2003, p. 121.

[20] More comprehensively on that subject see: Józef Puciłowski OP, “Krajobraz po katastrofie: Węgierski Kościół Katolicki” (“Landscape After the Disaster: Hungarian Catholic Church”), *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 5.06.2005; “The Raped Church” (interview made by J. Puciłowski OP with Bela Jacint Hankovszky OP). The text is available on the website [http://mateusz.pl/czytelnia/jp-zgwalcony\\_kosciol.htm](http://mateusz.pl/czytelnia/jp-zgwalcony_kosciol.htm) (accessed on 16.08.2017). See also: Krisztián Ungváry, “The Kádár Regime and the Roman Catholic Hierarchy”, *The Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol. 187/2007, pp. 80–91; The question who – in retrospect – should be considered as chiefly responsible for this political course, which brought about highly controversial effects for the Church and its believers falls out of the scope of the present chapter. Suffice it to state that numerous authors address the most serious allegations against the so called “Vatican Eastern Policy”, which – in their eyes – dramatically influenced the course adopted by the Hungarian Episcopate. Cf. Gábor Adriányi, *A Vatikán keleti politikája és Magyarország 1939–1978 – A Mindszenty-ügy (Eastern politics of the Vatican and Hungary 1939–1978 – The Mindszenty Case)*, Kairosz Kiadó, Budapest 2004; Krisztián Ungváry, “The Kádár Regime and the Subduing of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy”, [in:] Sabrina P. Ramet,

*Religion and Politics in Post-Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe. Challenges since 1989*, McMillan Palgrave, 2014, pp. 95–98.

[21] Leslie László, “Catholic Church in Hungary”, [in:] Pedro Ramet (ed.) *Catholicism and Politics in Communist Societies*, Duke University Press, Durham and London 1990, pp. 167–168.

[22] More on the process of secularization of the society under Kádár era, cf. Miklós Tomka, “Tendencies of Religious Change in Hungary”, [in:] *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 33e Année, No. 65.1 (Jan.-Mar., 1988), pp.73–74. However, one should take into account that those negative trends were partially reversed during the 1980s: cf. Miklós Tomka, op. cit., pp. 74–76. See also: Rodney Stark, “Secularization, R.I.P.”, [in:] *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Autumn 1999), p. 266.

[23] The story of the above-mentioned Bokor circles, (which grouped people opposed to the communist regime) is a good illustration of this attitude of the official hierarchy who played an active role to disrupt those groups, which were opposed to the regime and – in part also – to the official doctrine of the Church. Krisztián Ungváry, *The Kádár Regime...*, op. cit., pp.100–102.

[24] More on this issue: Krisztián Ungváry, who opines that no fewer than 64 per cent of the Hungarian Episcopate were secret collaborators of the political police: Krisztián Ungváry, *The Kádár Regime...*, op. cit., pp. 91, 94 (in this vein, see also his concluding remarks – id., pp. 108–109). See also: L. László, *Catholic Church in Hungary*, op. cit., pp. 161–165.

[25] Data after [http://countrymeters.info/en/Hungary#historical\\_population](http://countrymeters.info/en/Hungary#historical_population) (visited on 17.02.2018).

[26] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., p. 14.

[27] Janos M. Reiner, *A Kádár korszak...*, op. cit., pp. 37–40.

[28] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., p. 14.

[29] Aaron Schwabach, “Diverting the Danube: The Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Dispute and International Freshwater Law”, [in:] *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 14 (1996)2, pp.295–297.

[30] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-communist Europe*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1966, p. 299; Jone L. Pearce, “From Socialism to Capitalism: The Effects of Hungarian Human Resources Practices”, [in:] *The Executive*, 1991, Vol. 5, No. 4, p.82.

[31] János Kornai, “The Affinity Between Ownership Forms and Coordination Mechanisms: The Common Experience of Reform in Socialist Countries”, [in:] *Journal of Economic Perspectives*–Vol. 4, No. 3–Summer 1990, p. 139. See also: Barbara Lee and John Nellis, “Enterprise Reform and Privatization in Socialist Economies”, *World Bank Discussion Paper* no. 104, 1990, p. 10.

[32] János Kornai, *The Socialist System: the Political Economy of Communism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992, p. 464.

[33] Ibid. pp. 489–493.

[34] Ibid. p. 72.

[35] Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas...*, op. cit., pp. 117–118.

[36] János Kornai, *Paying the Bill for Goulash Communism...*, op. cit., p. 956. Text available at: [http://www.kornai-janos.hu/Kornai1996\\_Paying\\_the\\_bill\\_-\\_Social\\_Research.pdf](http://www.kornai-janos.hu/Kornai1996_Paying_the_bill_-_Social_Research.pdf) (last accessed on 22.04.2019) See also: Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgierski Pakiet*, op. cit., p. 33.

- [37] On the tensions in Hungarian-Soviet relations sparked by Kádár's policy aiming at the maintenance of the continuous credit flows from Western banks and institutions against clear advice of the USSR – cf. László Borhi, *Dealing with Dictators: The United States, Hungary, and East Central Europe, 1942–1989*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis 2016, p. 321.
- [38] János M. Rainer, *Kádár korszak...*, op. cit., pp. 51–52.
- [39] Jerzy Kochanowski, *Węgry: od ugody do ugody 1867–1990 (Hungary: from Settlement to Settlement 1867–1990)*, Trio, Warsaw 1997, pp. 178–179.
- [40] János Kornai, *The Socialist System...*, op. cit., p. 550.
- [41] Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas...*, op. cit., p. 113.
- [42] As a result, until 1989 Kádár practically for many years completely excluded the possibility of addressing in a formal discourse such issues as moving borders or the fate of the Hungarian minority in general. A more serious debate forced by the society (merely within strictly defined framework) became possible only in the 1980s. For a more comprehensive discussion see: József Juhász, "Hungary and the Balkans in the 20th Century – From the Hungarian Perspective", [in:] *Prague Papers on the History of International Relations* 2015/1, p. 125; Zsolt Czigányik, "Readers' responsibility: Literature and censorship in the Kádár era in Hungary", [in:] Bálint Gárdos, Ágnes Péter, Natália Pikli, Máté Vince (eds), *Confrontations and Interactions. Essays on Cultural Memory, L'Harmattan*, Budapest 2011, p. 228. Here, the author points out that Trianon Treaty belonged to the taboo strictly excluded from the public debate by the censorship. Available at: <http://seas3.elte.hu/angolpark/CultMem/EssaysonCulturalMemory.pdf> (last accessed on 9.01.2020). See also: Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., pp. 144–145, and the sources quoted therein.
- [43] András Körösné, Csaba Tóth, Gábor Török, *A Magyar politikai rendszer (The Hungarian Political System)*, Osiris Kiadó, Budapest 2003, p. 5 (quoted after the text of the book posted on the homepage of the publisher (pdf. version) [http://www.tankonyvtar.hu/hu/tartalom/tamop425/2011\\_0001\\_520\\_a\\_magyar\\_politikai\\_rendszer/adatok.html](http://www.tankonyvtar.hu/hu/tartalom/tamop425/2011_0001_520_a_magyar_politikai_rendszer/adatok.html)).
- [44] Agnieszka Gromek, "Tancházák (Domy Tańca), jako miejsce spontanicznej demonstracji tradycji narodowych i postaw społecznej niezgody w warunkach realnego socjalizmu" ("Tancházák (Dance Houses) as a place of spontaneous demonstration of national traditions and attitudes of social discord in the conditions of real socialism"), [in:] Maciej Koźmiński, *Odmiany i oblicza komunizmu, Węgrzy, Polacy i inni (Variations and Faces of Communism, Hungarians, Poles and Others)*, Trio, Warsaw 2007, p. 253.
- [45] János M. Rainer, *Bevezetés a kádárizmusba (An Introduction to Kádárism)*, 1956-os Intézet L'Harmattan Kiadó, Budapest 2011, pp. 200–214.
- [46] Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*, Corvina Osiris, Budapest 1999, p. 413.
- [47] Agnieszka Gromek, *Tancházák (Domy tańca)...*, op. cit., pp. 237, 240–241.
- [48] Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas...*, op. cit., pp. 144–145.
- [49] Bennett Kovrig, "Hungary in the Era of the Kádár Compromise", [in:] *International Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 4, Prague 1968: The Aftermath (Autumn, 1978), pp. 735–736.
- [50] See the biographic entry on Lukács in: Wojciech Roszkowski, Jan Kofman, *Biographical Dictionary of Central and Eastern Europe...*, op. cit., pp. 589–590; Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas...*, op. cit., pp. 122–123.
- [51] As Ignac Romsics points out, already in the first article of the *Beszélő*, illegally published since 1982, the editors assessed the government activity as heading in the right direction (see

the article: “Hogyan keressünk kiutat a válságból?” (“How to Find a Way out of the Crisis?”)), but they were willing to discuss details and complained that the public opinion in Hungary was poorly informed about the crisis and claimed that the lack of debate on that subject violated the standards of democracy. Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., pp. 27–28.

[52] The materials and documents of the process were published in 1989; see: *Filozófus-per 1973*, Hírlapkiadó Vállalat, Budapest 1989.

[53] See the biographic entry of György Konrád in Wojciech Roszkowski, Jan Kofman, *Biographical Dictionary of Central and Eastern Europe...*, op. cit., p. 486.

[54] Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas...*, op. cit., pp. 123–124.

[55] On the meanders of Hungarian policy in that period, see: Jerzy Kochanowski, *Węgrzy: od ugody do ugody...*, op. cit. (particularly pp. 93–107).

[56] More comprehensively: Zoltan Illés, Balázs Megyesi, “The role of the Green Movements in the Change of Regime”, in: Mária Schmidt, László Gy. Tóth (eds) *Transition with Contradictions...*, op. cit., pp. 137–155.

[57] Robert M. Jenkins, “Movements into Political Parties. The Historical Transformation of the Hungarian Opposition” (Department of Sociology, Yale University 1992), p. 16. Paper presented at the Eight Conference of Europeanists, Chicago March 22–29, 1992), Program on Central and Eastern Europe, Working Paper Series 25, Harvard University 1993.

[58] In this way, among others: Barbara J. Falk (cf. B. J. Falk, *The Dilemmas...*, op. cit., p. 125), although she uses the term “populists”, also in visible quotation marks.

[59] The poems were considered to be cries of protest against the Stalinisation of Hungary and Poland, respectively.

[60] Rudolf Tőkés, *Hungary’s Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 178–179.

[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 175–179.

[62] See the biographic entry on Illyés in Wojciech Roszkowski, Jan Kofman, *Biographical Dictionary of Central and Eastern Europe...*, op. cit., pp. 371–372.

[63] *Új látóhatár* (*New Horizons*) issued in Munich by Josef Molnar excelled in such publications. Nevertheless, as it seems he was not isolated in his views.

[64] According to some data, between 1960 and 2000 the suicide rate in Hungary was the highest in the world (after Zoltan Rihmer, Xenia Gonda, Balazs Kapitany, Peter Dome, “Suicide in Hungary-epidemiological and clinical perspectives”, [in:] *Annals of General Psychiatry* 2013, 12:21, <http://www.annals-general-psychiatry.com/content/12/1/21>).

[65] The phenomenon of suicides in that time affected even persons who are contemporarily perceived as so-called ‘celebrities’. Probably the most famous were the cases of Csilla Molnár (Miss Hungary 1985), singer Pál Szécsi and actor Zoltan Latinovits and many others. The information after Krzysztof Varga, *Gulasz z Turula*, Czarne Publishing, Wołowiec 2008.

[66] See the paper by Csurka delivered at the conference in Monor in 1985 and at the foundation meeting of WFD in Lakitelek (the conference will be discussed further below), in which Csurka actually prophesied the annihilation of the Hungarian nation; after: Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgierski Pakiet*, op. cit., p. 70.

[67] See the paper by Csurka delivered at the conference in Monor on 14–16 June 1985: István Csurka, “Új magyar önépítés” (“New Hungarian Self-construction”), published [in:] *A monori*

*találkozó jegyzőkv-e*. 1985. VI. 14–16. Bp., 1985. The meeting is discussed further in one of the next sections of this chapter.

[68] Patrick O’Neil, “Revolution from within: Institutional Analysis, Transitions from Authoritarianism, and the Case of Hungary”, [in:] *World Politics* Vol. 48, No. 4 (July 1996), p. 588.

[69] See the biographic entry on Bibó in: Wojciech Roszkowski, Jan Kofman, *Biographical Dictionary of Central and Eastern Europe...*, op. cit., pp. 84–85.

[70] Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas...*, op. cit., pp. 137–138.

[71] For more information on the influence of Poland and Polish experiences on Hungarian opposition members, see: Paweł Cebula and Grzegorz Górny, *Węgierski łącznik (Hungarian Liaison)*, Wydawnictwo Fronda, Warsaw 2008.

[72] On the Rajk and Demszky cases, see, for example, Leslie John Macfarlane, *Human Rights: Realities and Possibilities: Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Yugoslavia and Hungary*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1990, pp. 187–189.

[73] Robert M. Jenkins, *Movements...*, op. cit. p. 9.

[74] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 62.

[75] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., pp. 58–59.

[76] *Ibid.*

[77] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary’s Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 262–268.

[78] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgierski Pakiet*, op. cit., pp. 67–70.

[79] Rudolf Tőkés, *Hungary’s Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 190.

[80] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgierski Pakiet*, op. cit., pp. 63–68.

[81] More on the details of this programme inspired by the ideology of democratic liberalism cf. Andreas Schmidt-Schweizer, *Politische Geschichte Ungarns...*, op. cit., pp. 58–59.

[82] It should be emphasized that at that time the postulates put forward by the liberal camp were equally cautious as the ones of the Hungarian Democratic Forum. It also merits recalling that the “Social Contract” published in 1987 by János Kis actually accepted the preservation of the leading role of MSZMP as the crucial mechanism of power in Hungary (Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., pp. 370–371).

[83] For more information on possible contacts between the MDF and reform-minded communists, see, for example: Robert M. Jenkins, *Movements...*, op. cit., pp. 21–22.

[84] It is worth mentioning that Csurka hesitated quite a long time before making a decision whether WFD should become a political party after all: his statements indicated that he would rather see the Forum as the leader of the mass national Hungarian movement, which would go beyond the framework of one and only one party based on a specific electorate. The multiparty system seemed a contradiction of the national unity, which some leaders of this group perceived as a value in itself, and which would be difficult to reconcile with the concepts of contemporary democracy. See: Zoltan Ripp, “Unity and Division: The Opposition Roundtable and its Relationship to the Communist Party”, [in:] András Bozóki, *The Roundtable Talks of 1989. The Genesis of Hungarian Democracy: Analysis and Documents*, Central European University Press, Budapest 2002, p. 7.

[85] Zoltan Ripp, *Unity and Division...*, op. cit., p. 6.

[86] Anzelm Bárány, "There was once Freedom of the Press", [in:] Mária Schmidt, László Gy. Tóth (eds), *Transition with Contradictions...*, op. cit., p. 14.

[87] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgierski Pakiet*, op. cit., p. 69. Interestingly, also in later months the Hungarian national camp was apparently unable to create a coherent and future-oriented political programme containing the proposals of some concrete steps to be taken by the government to improve the situation in the country and the position of Hungarian minorities living abroad. In fact, the activities of Csurka's followers in that period were rather limited to simple criticism of some austerity measures introduced by Kádár's successors coupled with the development of grass roots organisations within the country, without entering into a concrete debate on what should be done, apparently leaving this unpleasant task to the communist party. At this stage of the transformation, the HSWP was still for nationalists, as well as for the emerging liberal democrats, the valuable partner to whom the last word in the politics was still reserved with all possible consequences of this status quo for the opposition movement. (see: Andreas Schmidt-Schweizer, *Politische Geschichte Ungarns...*, op. cit. pp. 59–60).

[88] As Zoltan Ripp explains, such a conservative stance of the liberals stemmed mostly from the conviction that the economic situation in the country was so hard that without uniting absolutely all political forces on the side of the opposition, and simultaneously seeking support from reformatory MSzMP wing, the radical programme of economic changes would be simply rejected by society, thereby leading to the country's collapse. It is a fact though that this reserved approach would have serious consequences for liberals. First of all, they lost a chance to maintain the first place on the opposition side which was occupied totally by MFD in the late 1980s. Zoltan Ripp, *Unity and Division...*, op. cit., pp. 7–8.

[89] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., pp. 97–98.

[90] Perhaps the evolution of the liberals with regard to the more vocal anti-Communist position seems to find a partial explanation in the party politics which were more tolerant towards the MDF, while during 1988 the activists from the liberal camp were frequently harassed by the state organs; cf. Robert M. Jenkins, *Movements...*, op. cit., pp. 36–37.

[91] Zoltan Ripp, *Unity and Division...*, op. cit., pp. 8–9.

[92] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., p. 98.

[93] János Kornai, *The Socialist System...*, op. cit., p. 35.

[94] See Grósz biographic entry in Wojciech Roszkowski, Jan Kofman, *Biographical Dictionary of Central and Eastern Europe...*, op. cit., pp. 317–318.

[95] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution: Economic Reform, Social Change, and Political Succession, 1957–1990*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, p. 273.

[96] *Ibid.*

[97] Robert M. Jenkins, *Movements...*, op. cit., p. 31.

[98] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, pp. 275–276.

[99] *Ibid.*, pp. 276–277.

[100] Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt – SzDP. More on Nyers' activities in that period, see e.g.: András Bozóki, *The Roundtable Talks...*, op. cit., p. 400.

[101] On the latter initiative, see: R. Jenkins, *Movements...*, op. cit., pp. 27–28.

[102] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

- [103] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...* op. cit., pp. 282–283.
- [104] *Ibid.*, pp. 278–279.
- [105] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., p. 89; Rudolf Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 284.
- [106] For more on this event see: George Schopflin, Rudolf Tőkés, and Ivan Volgyes, “Leadership Change and Crisis in Hungary”, [in:] *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 37, No. 5, September–October 1988, pp. 23–46.
- [107] Béla Révész, “Tensions Without Solutions: Romanian-Hungarian Relations, 1987–89”, [in:] *Serbian Political Thought* No. 2/2011, Year III, Vol. 4, pp. 12, 19–20.
- [108] *Ibid.* p. 20; László Tőkés, *Autobiography*, (ed. David Porter), pp. 41–45 (the document is available on László Tőkés's homepage [http://tokeslaszlo.eu/attachment/0002/1785\\_withgod.pdf](http://tokeslaszlo.eu/attachment/0002/1785_withgod.pdf) (last accessed on 27.04.2019)).
- [109] *Ibid.*
- [110] Béla Révész, *Tensions...*, op. cit., pp. 22–23.
- [111] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 289–290.
- [112] *Ibid.*
- [113] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., p. 113.
- [114] Zoltan Illés, Balázs Megyesi, “The Role of Green Movements in the Change of Regime”, [in:] Mária Schmidt, László Gy. Tóth (eds), *Transition with Contradictions...*, op. cit., pp. 149–150.
- [115] Thus, Grósz seemed to have violated previous agreements with Pozsgay, who had been promised the post of prime minister after he had gained power in the party (Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 282).
- [116] Ignác Romsics, *Volt egyszer egy Rendszerváltás (There Was a Regime Change)*, Rubicon Könyvek, Budapest 2003, pp. 100–101.
- [117] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., pp. 124–125.
- [118] The KISZ in 1988 alone shrank from 926,000 to 700,000 members, *Ibid.*, p. 124.
- [119] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 296.
- [120] See the article by Karoly Grósz entitled “Kiállni a politikáért, tenni az országért”, *Népszabadság*, 30.11.1988.
- [121] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., pp. 128–129.
- [122] Patrick H. O'Neil, “Revolution from Within, Institutional Analysis, Transition from the Authoritarianism and the Case of Hungary”, [in:] *World Politics* 48(1996)4, pp. 589–590.
- [123] *Ibid.*, pp. 591–592.
- [124] Ignác Romsics, *Volt egyszer...*, pp. 105–106.
- [125] *Ibid.* See also: Patrick H. O'Neil, *Revolution from Within...*, op. cit., pp. 591–592.
- [126] Data from <https://countryeconomy.com/gdp/hungary?year=1988> (last accessed on 27.04.2019). In fact, in 1988 practically all the basic economic and social indicators deteriorated drastically

causing a sharp increase of the general dissatisfaction among the Hungarian society. More on the issue cf. Ignác Romsics, *Volt egyszer...*, op. cit., pp. 107, 109–110.

[127] On the increasing concern among Hungarians related to the construction of this dam, and pressure exerted by the demonstrations organized by the Greens aiming at stopping the project – cf. Zoltán Illés and Balázs Medgyesi, “The Role of the Green Movements in the Change of Régime”, [in:] M. Schmidt, L.G. Tóth (eds), *Transition with Contradictions...*, op. cit., pp. 149–151.

[128] The transcript of the interview from 28 January 1989 is available at: [http://index.hu/belfold/1989/2009/01/28/az\\_egypartrendszer\\_a\\_szocializmus\\_zsakutcaja/](http://index.hu/belfold/1989/2009/01/28/az_egypartrendszer_a_szocializmus_zsakutcaja/) (last accessed on 16.08.2017). See also: [http://index.hu/belfold/1989/2009/01/28/pozsgay\\_56\\_nepfelkeles\\_volt\\_nem\\_ellenforradalom](http://index.hu/belfold/1989/2009/01/28/pozsgay_56_nepfelkeles_volt_nem_ellenforradalom) (last accessed on 16.08.2017).

[129] This stance was repeated by Gorbachev himself, during Grósz's visit in Moscow (23–24 March 1989). Even if the Kremlin housemaster was insisting on the traditional line, he explicitly excluded any sort of military intervention adding that it was the right of Hungarians to assess those events on their own. See: “Document No. 3: Memorandum of Conversation between M.S. Gorbachev and HSWP General Secretary Károly Grósz, Moscow, 23–24 March 1989”, [in:] Csaba Békés and Melinda Kalmár (eds) *The Political Transition in Hungary, 1989–90*, Cold War International History Project Bulletin, Issue 12/13, p. 78.

[130] The full content of that resolution of the MSZMP Central Committee is available in *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt határozatai és dokumentumai 1985–1989 (Decisions and Documents of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party 1985–1989)*, ed. Henrik Vass, Budapest 1994, pp. 553–555. See also: Melinda Kalmár, “From Model Change to Regime Change: the Metamorphosis of the MSZMP's Tactics in the Democratic Transition”, [in:] András Bozóki, *The Roundtable Talks...*, op. cit., pp. 44–45.

[131] For more on the Németh's government politics, cf. Andreas Schmidt-Schweitzer, *Politische Geschichte Ungarns...*, op. cit., pp. 146–156.

[132] *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137.

[133] Patrick H. O'Neil, *Revolution from Within...*, op. cit., pp. 594–595.

[134] Rudolf L. Tótkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 331.

[135] Béla K. Király, editor, András Bozóki, associate editor, *Lawful Revolution in Hungary, 1989–94*, Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs; Highland Lakes, N.J., Atlantic Research and Publications; New York: Distributed by Columbia University Press 1995, pp. 79–80.

[136] In addition, exactly this position was clearly adopted in February by the Central Committee, as a direct result of the re-evaluation of the 1956 events, which was made by Pozsgay on 28 January. For more on the issue, see: Melinda Kalmár, *From Model...*, op. cit., pp. 43–45.

[137] Rudolf L. Tótkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 322.

[138] *Ibid.*, p. 332

[139] *Ibid.*, p. 331.

[140] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship ...*, op. cit., pp. 153–154.

[141] Kenneth Benoit and John W. Schiemann, “Institutional Choice in New Democracies: Bargaining Over Hungary's 1989 Electoral Law”, [in:] *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 13(2) (2001), p. 163. The number of participants quoted after: Sabrina P. Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Consequences of the Great Transformation* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Duke University Press, Durham, London 1995, p. 135.

- [142] András Bózóki, *The Roundtable Talks...*, op. cit., pp. XVII – XVIII.
- [143] Zoltan Ripp, *Unity and Division...*, op. cit., p. 12.
- [144] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 341–342.
- [145] Zoltan Ripp, *Unity and Division...*, op. cit., pp. 13–14.
- [146] Terry Cox and Andy Furlong (eds), *Hungary: The Politics of Transition*, Routledge 1995, p. 52.
- [147] Zoltan Ripp, *Unity and Division...*, op. cit., pp. 17–18.
- [148] For more extensive information on the initial proposals of the negotiations, see: Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 332–337.
- [149] A ranking of the popularity of political parties in 1989–1990 after Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 371–375. Cf. however John W. Schiemann, “The Negotiated Origins of the Hungarian Electoral System”, [in:] András Bózóki, *The Roundtable Talks...*, op. cit., p. 170, who argues that the polls performed as early as in August 1989 were alarming for the ruling communists.
- [150] The English translation of this agreement is reproduced in András Bozóki, *The Roundtable Talks...*, op. cit., pp. 359–365.
- [151] Zoltán Ripp, *Unity and Division...*, op. cit., pp. 28–32.
- [152] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 371–375,
- [153] Zoltán Ripp, *Unity and Division...*, op. cit., pp. 28–32.
- [154] This was an organisation similar to the Polish ORMÓ, but until 1989 controlled by the party authorities and not by the government. It was discredited in 1956 due to its paramilitary and *Cheka*-like activity aimed against the real and alleged opponents of Kádár and his team.
- [155] Melinda Kalmar, *From Model Change...*, op. cit., pp. 62 and 68.
- [156] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 361.
- [157] András Körösenyi “The Decay of Communist Rule in Hungary”, [in:] András Bozóki, András Körösenyi, George Schöpflin (eds), *Post-Communist Transition: Emerging Pluralism in Hungary*, Bloomsbury Academic, London 2016, p. 9.
- [158] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 361.
- [159] *Ibid.*
- [160] *Ibid.*
- [161] *Ibid.*, p. 362.
- [162] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 77 (see the sources quoted therein).
- [163] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution....*, op. cit., p. 353.
- [164] *Ibid.*, p. 363.
- [165] András Bozóki, Bill Lomax, “The Revenge of History: The Portuguese, Spanish and Hungarian Transitions – Some Comparisons”, [in:] Paul G. Lewis and Geoffrey Pridham (eds), *Stabilising Fragile Democracies: Comparing New Party Systems in Southern and Eastern Europe*, Routledge, London-New York 1996, pp. 197–199.
- [166] Ignác Romsics, *Volt egyszer...*, op. cit., pp. 172–173.

- [167] Rudolf L. Tókéš, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...* op. cit., pp. 373–374.
- [168] On the difficult relations between the two politicians who in the late 1980s had been acting together rather than against each other, but whose mutual relations began to cool down from June 1989 onwards, see: *Ibid.*, pp. 349, 352.
- [169] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgierski Pakiet*, op. cit., p. 123.
- [170] “Tizenöt éve robbant ki a Dunagate” (“Fifteen Years Ago, Dunagate Exploded”), [in:] HVG 2005. január 05, available at: <http://hvg.hu/itthon/20050105dunagate.aspx> (accessed on 17.08.2017). Cf. also Rudolf L. Tókéš, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 378.
- [171] The election results after Election Resources on the Internet: Elections to the Hungarian National Assembly – Results Lookup <http://www.electionresources.org/hu/assembly.php?election=1990> (last accessed on 25.05.2019)
- [172] András Kovács, *The Stranger at Hand. Anti-Semitic Prejudices in Post-communist Hungary*, Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden and Boston 2011, pp. 14–16. Csurka was not isolated in his views. A similar position has been taken by some other nationalist writers, for example Sándor Csóori (Mária M. Kovács, *Jews and Hungarians: A View after the Transition*, the Wilson Center Global Europe Program, Occasional Paper No. 35, Washington, D.C. 2011, p. 3). This text is available at: [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/OP\\_35.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/OP_35.pdf) (last accessed on 17.08.2017). On the electoral campaign, cf. also Ignác Romsics, *Volt egyszer...*, op. cit., pp. 240–241.
- [173] Ignác Romsics, *Volt egyszer...*, op. cit., p. 241.
- [174] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., p. 273; Rudolf L. Tókéš, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 389.
- [175] Rudolf L. Tókéš, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 391.
- [176] See János Kornai, *Paying the Bill...*, op. cit., p. 999.
- [177] Wolfgang Zellner and Pál Dunay, *Ungarns Außenpolitik 1990–1997. Zwischen Westintegration, Nachbarschafts- und Minderheitenpolitik (Hungary's Foreign Policy 1990–1997. Between Western Integration, Neighborhood and Minority Politics)*, Nomos Verlag, Baden-Baden 1997, pp. 83–84, 148–149.
- [178] Ignác Romsics *Volt egyszer...*, op. cit., p. 161, See also: János Tischler, “Kádár – zbrodnia i kompromis” (“Kádár – Crime and Compromise”), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28.05.2009, p. 18.
- [179] Nigel Swain, *Hungary: The Rise and Fall of Feasible Socialism*, Verso, London-New York 1992, p. 28. Cf. those data with remarks by the same author on the loss of faith in the ability of the system to implement the socialist values effectively (pp. 14–15)
- [180] The so-called “Kádárist feeling” is the phenomenon discussed thoroughly i.a. by János M. Reiner (see: *Bevezetés a kádárizmusba*, op. cit., p. 146). The lack of a clear division line between those who were on the side of the opposition and those who could have been classified as regime's supporters was a fact astonishing the foreign observers as early as in the 1980s: cf. Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas...*, op. cit.
- [181] See: Laszlo Lengyel, “Az Antall rejtély” (“The Antall Mystery”), [in:] *Id.*, *A kisnyúl pártján (At the Rabbit's Party)*, Officina Nova, Budapest 1995, p. 44.
- [182] Bela Greskovits, “Brothers in Arms or Rivals in Politics? Top Politicians and Top Policy Makers in the Hungarian Transformation”, [in:] János Kornai, Stephan Haggard, Robert R. Kaufman, *Reforming the State: Fiscal and Welfare Reform in Post-Socialist Countries*, Cambridge University Press 2001, pp. 111–115.

- [183] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 235.
- [184] However, a different approach is presented by György Matolcsy, who notes that Poland, because of its strategic importance for the West, could effectively renegotiate its indebtedness towards Western creditors, while much smaller Hungary was unable to achieve similar results, even if the overall performance of the Hungarian economy was significantly better than the Polish one. György Matolcsy in Mária Schmidt, László Gy. Tóth (eds), *Transition with Contradictions...*, op. cit., p. 204.
- [185] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship ...*, op. cit., pp. 132 and 142.
- [186] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 239.
- [187] László Andor, *Hungary on the Road to the European Union: Transition in Blue*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut-London 2000, p. 45.
- [188] In this vein *ibid.*, p. 46; Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 425–426.
- [189] Nigel Swain, *Hungary: The Rise and Fall...*, op. cit., pp. 13–15.
- [190] László Andor, *Hungary on the Road...*, op. cit., p. 43; Andreas Schmidt-Schweitzer, *Politische Geschichte Ungarns...*, op. cit., pp. 179–181.
- [191] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship...*, op. cit., pp. 262–263.
- [192] *Ibid.*
- [193] Bálint Magyar, *Post-Communist Mafia State*, Central European University Press in association with Noran Libro Kiadó, Budapest, New York 2016, pp. 32–33.
- [194] *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.
- [195] Those decisions were assessed as bad at home and abroad; see, for example, the strong criticism of Antall's policies made by János Kornai (*Paying the Bill ...*, op. cit., pp. 950–951. See also: Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 85.
- [196] Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 339–341.
- [197] Laszlo Kürti, "The Wingless Eros of Socialism: Nationalism and Sexuality in Hungary", *Anthropological Quarterly* 64/2 (April, 1991), pp. 55–67.
- [198] The author's own calculations based on data from the Main Statistical Office of Hungary (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal) and available at [http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat\\_hosszu/h\\_wdsdoo1a.html?579](http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_hosszu/h_wdsdoo1a.html?579). (last accessed on 18.02.2018).
- [199] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgierski Pakiet*, op. cit., p. 38.
- [200] From the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS), *The Statistical Yearbook* for 2008. For Hungary, see: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal available at: [http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat\\_hosszu/h\\_wdsdoo1a.html?579](http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_hosszu/h_wdsdoo1a.html?579) (last accessed on 18.02.2018).
- [201] Anzelm Bányai, *There Was Once...*, op. cit., p.15. However, it is not totally clear whether the self-critical declaration of Janos Kis stated in 1988 dealt with Kadarist economic policy or concerned social aspects of the crisis as well. It seems that at least some of the activists belonging to Beszélő circle (e.g. Otilia Solt) because of their previous occupations were very well aware of the actual extent of the social crisis in Hungary.
- [202] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 80.

- [203] See: Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS), *The Statistical Yearbook for 2008*.
- [204] The author's own calculations based on data from "Központi Statisztikai Hivatal" available at [http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat\\_hosszu/h\\_wdsdo01a.html?579](http://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xstadat/xstadat_hosszu/h_wdsdo01a.html?579) (last accessed on 15.02.2018).
- [205] Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship ...*, op. cit., p. 286.
- [206] Needless to say, the position on abortion adopted by the MDF's leadership was particularly strongly criticised by feminist circles, see, for example, Yudit Kiss, "The Second 'No': Women in Hungary", *Feminist Review* 39 (Fall 1991), pp. 49–57. This criticism seems to be exaggerated at least in part; after all, the MDF was ready for a compromise, and the problem was rather in an inflexible stance of a part of the Hungarian left.
- [207] Many sources in the literature pertaining to the subject matter claim that actually the leaders of the SzDSz had almost the same approach to the economic programme as the MDF. Both groups accepted wide-ranging interventionism, only the SzDSz also proposed speeding up the privatisation and was definitively against any re-privatisation process (Rudolf L. Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 377–379). Similarly, Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgierski Pakiet*, op. cit., p. 228.
- [208] It is no secret that in July 1989, at a meeting with activists from the Workers' Militia, Karoly Grósz argued that if the feelings of society became increasingly radical in Hungary, a settlement by force was not out of the question. In theory, the WM was finally dissolved in November 1989 but the remnants of the party state were anyway still very strong (the army, the interior ministry, administration personnel, etc.). Therefore, if we assume that in 1990 the SzDSz or FIDESZ had been allowed to gain power, then triggering dramatic changes in the economy, connected with the process of de-communisation, could actually have paved the way for post-communist forces to organise a *coup d'Etat*. It is not hard to predict that, feeling the burden of budget cuts, Hungarian society could have responded with an even stronger longing for Kádárism and support communists (who would then be perceived as 'persecuted') and those who came from a more conservative place than for the reform wing of the MSzP.
- [209] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 86.
- [210] György Matolcsy, *Hungary's Debt*, op. cit., p. 202.
- [211] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., p. 86.
- [212] János Kornai, *Stabilizacja i wzrost w procesie transformacji: przypadek gospodarki węgierskiej (Stabilisation and Growth During the Process of Transformation: the Case of the Hungarian Economy)*, Poznan University of Economics, Poznań 1998, p. 166 and further.
- [213] More on the topic of Hungarian coat-of-arms debate see: "National Symbols and Their Importance: the Case of the Coat-of Arms and Hungary's Official Holiday", the article available at: <http://hungarianspectrum.org/2015/08/20/national-symbols-and-their-importance-the-case-of-the-coat-of-arms-and-hungarys-official-holiday/>
- [214] These fears are very well reflected in a book written by István Rév, one of the representatives of the Hungarian centre-left. István Rév, *Retroactive Justice Prehistory of Post-Communism*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 2005 (*passim*, see particularly: pp. 43–45, 235–239).
- [215] Bela Greskovits, *Brothers in Arms...*, op. cit., p. 115.
- [216] János Kornai, "Adjustment without Recession. A Case Study of the Hungarian Stabilisation", *Collegium Budapest Discussion Paper* No 33, Collegium Budapest 1996.

[217] Analysis of the ruling issued by the Constitutional Tribunal of the Hungarian Republic clearly shows that the failure of the reform could have been avoided had the Horn government not started the reform of social benefit system too late and as a result the attempt to reform benefits collided with the principle of legal certainty and protection of acquired rights, which was bound to draw a negative opinion from the CT. As László Sólyom and Georg Brunner point out, the CT of the Hungarian Republic did not reject the reform as such but the form in which it was introduced, which would be definitely irreconcilable with the provisions of the Constitution. László Sólyom, Georg Brunner, *Constitutional Judiciary in a New Democracy: the Hungarian Constitutional Court*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan 2000, pp. 322–333.

[218] <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fidesz>

[219] More on the evolution of FIDESZ in the 1990s see: Máté Szabó, “From a Suppressed Anti-communist Dissident Movement to a Governing Party: the Transformation of FIDESZ in Hungary”, [in:] *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* Vol. 2 (2011), 2, pp. 53–59; Peter Wilkin, *Hungary’s Crisis of Democracy: The Road to Serfdom*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, London 2016, pp. 49–83.

[220] Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., pp. 95–96. More on the FIDESZ’s electoral strategy in the 1990s cf. Maria Spirova, *Political Parties in Post-Communist Societies: Formation, Persistence, and Change*, Palgrave Macmillan 2007, pp. 90–97

[221] Tamás Mellár, “Economic Policy Conceptions and Political Force Fields”, in: Mária Schmidt, László Gy. Tóth (eds), *Transition with Contradictions...*, op. cit., pp. 224–226.

[222] Stephan Haggard, Robert R. Kaufman, Matthew S. Shugart, “Politics, Institutions and Macroeconomic Adjustment: Hungarian Fiscal Policy Making in Comparative Perspective”, in: János Kornai, Stephan Haggard, Robert R. Kaufman, *Reforming the State...*, op. cit., pp. 77–79.

[223] See: Bálint Magyar, *Post-Communist...*, op. cit., p. 21.

[224] “Węgry: rząd podwyższa pensje i emerytury” (“Hungary: the Government Increases Wages and Pensions”), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 31.05.2002. See also: Andreas Schmidt-Schweitzer, *Politische Geschichte Ungarns...*, op. cit. p. 414. The same author underlines that Medgyessy took this decision, even if he was perfectly aware of the excessive deficit left to his successor (id., p. 413).

[225] Verena Schmidt and Daniel Vaughan-Whitehead, *The Impact of the Crisis on Wages in South-East Europe*, International Labour Office, ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Central and Eastern Europe, ILO, Budapest 2011, pp. 195–196.

[226] Large excerpts from Gyurcsány’s speech in English translation are available in: “Excerpts: Hungarian ‘lies’ speech” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5359546.stm> (last accessed on 4.05.2019). See also: Jacek Pawlicki, “Premier Węgier: Kłamaliśmy przez ostatnie półtora roku” (“Prime Minister of Hungary: We Have Been Lying for the Past Year and a Half”), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19.09.2006; by the same author: “Ferenc Gyurcsány przeprasza za styl i język” (“Ferenc Gyurcsány Apologizes for His Style and Language”), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28.09.2006. Krzysztof Kęciek, “Węgry – kryzys bez końca” (“Hungary – a Never-ending Crisis”), *Przegląd*, 44/2006.

[227] Ignác Romsics, *A Harmadik Magyar Köszársaság 1989–2009 (The Third Hungarian Commonwealth 1989–2009)*, Kossuth Kiadó, Budapest 2012, p. 52 (noting that these data were as bad as those from 1993–1994).

[228] Leszek Baj, “Węgrzy reformują swoją gospodarkę” (“Hungarians Are Reforming Their Economy”), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 31.07.2007. The article is available at <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,4355231.html> (last accessed on 17.08.2017).

[229] Leszek Baj, “Ostre cięcia w Budapeszcie” (“Sharp Cuts in Budapest”), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23.10.2008. The article is available at: [http://wyborcza.biz/biznes/1,147582,5840183,Ostre\\_ciecie\\_w\\_Budapeszcie.html?disableRedirects=true](http://wyborcza.biz/biznes/1,147582,5840183,Ostre_ciecie_w_Budapeszcie.html?disableRedirects=true) (last accessed on 17.08.2017).

[230] See: András Bozóki, “Broken Democracy, Predatory State, and Nationalist Populism”, [in:] *Athenaeum, Polish Political Science Studies* 48/2015, pp. 249–250.

[231] *Ibid.*, p. 250.

[232] Leszek Baj, *Ostre...*, op. cit.

[233] MAB, LEZ, “Węgrzy w samym środku sztormu” (“Hungarians in the Very Middle of the Storm”), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19.10.2008. The article is available at: [http://wyborcza.pl/1,155287,5827983,Wegrzy\\_w\\_samym\\_srodku\\_sztormu.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,155287,5827983,Wegrzy_w_samym_srodku_sztormu.html) (last accessed on 17.08.2017).

[234] Krzysztof Varga, “Węgry wchodzą w okres wielkiej smuty” (“Hungarians Are Entering a Time of Troubles”), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23.10.2008. The commentary is available at: [http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114873,5842937,Varga\\_\\_Wegry\\_wchodza\\_w\\_okres\\_wielkiej\\_smuty.html](http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114873,5842937,Varga__Wegry_wchodza_w_okres_wielkiej_smuty.html) (last accessed on 17.08.2017). See also, for example: Tomasz Prusek, “Węgierski syndrom” (“A Hungarian Syndrome”), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 18.10.2008. The article is available at: [http://wyborcza.biz/Waluty/1,111023,5825158,Wegierski\\_syndrom.html](http://wyborcza.biz/Waluty/1,111023,5825158,Wegierski_syndrom.html) (last accessed on 17.08.2017); Leszek Baj, “Forint traci – Polak płaci” (“Forint Weakens – A Pole Pays”), *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 16.10.2008. Available at: [http://wyborcza.pl/1,155287,5820668,Forint\\_traci\\_\\_Polak\\_placi.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,155287,5820668,Forint_traci__Polak_placi.html) (last accessed on 17.08.2017).

[235] András Bozóki, *Broken Democracy...*, op. cit., pp. 251 and 253.

[236] Anzelm Bárányi, *There Was Once...*, op. cit., pp. 37–39.

[237] János M. Rainer, *The Crimes...*, pp. 184–188

[238] At the turn of 1989 and 1990 the Parliament adopted the ‘annulment acts’, which made null and void all judgements passed by Hungarian courts in all cases lodged by communist prosecutors against the participants of the 1956 Revolution (János M. Rainer, *The Crimes...*, op. cit., p. 184).

[239] *Ibid.*, p. 185. However, see also: Tamás Sepsey, “A short history of compensation”, [in:] Mária Schmidt, László Gy. Tóth (eds), *Transition with Contradictions...*, op. cit., pp. 313–348, arguing that compensatory mechanisms established after 1989 in Hungary worked fairly efficiently, especially when the efficiency thereof was compared to the legal and factual situations in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

[240] More extensively on the subject of lustration and decommunization in Hungary, see: Krisztián Ungváry, *A szembenézés hiánya – Felelősségrevonás, iratnyilvánosság és átvilágítás Magyarországon 1990–2017 (Lack of Facilitation Disclaimer – Access to Documents and Due Diligence in Hungary 1990–2017)*, Szerzoi magánkiadás, Budapest 2017 (passim).

[241] This is particularly true for the clergy; See for example: <http://www.ekumenizmus.pl/article.php?story=20050304141611451>. Cf. also: Krisztián Ungváry’s remarks on the effects of the lack of lustration of the Catholic Hierarchy (who over many years sought to block the public naming of those bishops who under the Kádár era collaborated with political police): according to this author, by 2005, the involvement of some notable high rank functionaries of the Church was a sort of “public secret”, with disastrous effects for the public image and authority of this institution among Hungarian society. Krisztián Ungváry, “The Kadar Regime and the Subduing of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy”, [in:] Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Politics in Post-*

*Socialist Central and Southeastern Europe: Challenges since 1989*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke and New York 2014, p. 105.

[242] Janos M. Rainer, "Opening the Archives of the Communist Secret Police – the Experience in Hungary". The document is available at: [http://www.rev.hu/portal/page/portal/rev/tanulmanyok/rendszervaltas/rmj\\_oslo\\_oo\\_eng\\_long](http://www.rev.hu/portal/page/portal/rev/tanulmanyok/rendszervaltas/rmj_oslo_oo_eng_long)

[243] Janos M. Rainer, *The Crimes...*, op. cit., pp. 186–187. It was only in 2015 when one of the most notorious communist criminals, Béla Biszku, was finally sentenced to five years, but the proceedings against him were still pending when he died in 2016.

[244] Krisztián Ungváry, *A szembenézés hiánya...*, op. cit., pp. 41–52.

[245] Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies in Post-Communist Transition: Primary and Secondary Privatisation in Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, Central European University Press, Budapest-New York, 2011, p. 32.

[246] According to Károly Attila Soós, this privatisation strategy was deliberately chosen by Antall's government. In this way, the prime minister wanted to achieve numerous goals. Firstly, by attracting foreign capital the new administration wanted to strengthen economic ties of Hungary with the West. Secondly, the new ruling elite wanted to diminish the importance of the management boards appointed by László Nemeth, the last PM of the communist era. Finally, as foreign investors were ready to pay the highest prices for privatised companies, the Hungarian Finance Ministry supported this strategy in hope of obtaining funds with which to reduce the public debt. Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies...*, op. cit., pp. 32–34.

[247] Bertalan Diczházi, "Property Changes in Hungary", [in:] Mária Schmidt, László Gy. Tóth (eds) *Transition in Contradictions...*, op. cit., p. 102. See also: Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies...*, op. cit., pp. 88–90.

[248] Bálint Magyar, *Post-Communist...*, op. cit., pp. 23–25.

[249] Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies...*, op. cit., p. 38.

[250] See also: József Böröcz and Akos Róna-Tas, "Small Leap Forward: Emergence of New Economic Elites", [in:] *Theory and Society*, 24 (1995), 5, p. 772.

[251] Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies...*, op. cit., p. 34; Andrew Felkay, *Out of Russian Orbit, Hungary Gravitates to the West*. Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport CT 1997, p. 60.

[252] In this vein, see: Peter Wilkin, *Hungary's Crisis...*, op. cit., p. XV and the literature referred to in that book. For more on this topic, see: *Concluding remarks*.

[253] See Bogdan Góralczyk, *Węgry: Transformacja...*, op. cit., pp. 217–219.

[254] Calculations made by the author on the basis of data available at: <http://portal.ksh.hu> (last accessed on 10.12.2010).

[255] Tamás Fricz, "Democratization, the Party System and the Electorate in Hungary", [in:] Mária Schmidt and László Gy. Tóth (eds), *Transition with Contradictions...*, pp. 110–114; Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies...*, op. cit., p. 34.

[256] Zsuzsanna Wirth, "Kádár János olyan jól csinálta, hogy nem tudunk leszokni ró!" ("János Kádár did it so well that we cannot quit"), 28.05.2013, available at: <https://www.origo.hu/itthon/20130527-en-szeretem-kadart-o-a-magyarok-nagy-jotevoje.html>.

[257] Ibid.

[258] Cf. the surveys performed by the Median Institute: *A 20. század értékelése 1999. április 29 (1 táblázat)* available at: <http://median.hu/object.75f7c814-dc6e-4309-b2d5-43c0a8ab2dao.ivy> (last accessed on 7.05.2019); *Az ország huszadik századi történelmében a legpozitívabb szerepet játszó magyar politikusok (az összes megkérdezett százalékában 2006. augusztus 29. 1. táblázat)* available at: <http://median.hu/object.88a45938-3486-4768-856d-1b5d6a67a3c6.ivy> (visited on 7.05.2019).

[259] Cf. Relatively recently, “Nagy Imre a legkevésbé megosztó, Horthy népszerűsége növekszik” (“Imre Nagy the least divisive, Horthy’s popularity is growing”), 23.10.2018. available at: <https://444.hu/2018/10/23/nagy-imre-a-legkevesbe-megosztot>. (last accessed on 7.05.2019).

[260] János M. Rainer, “János Kádár and Kádárism: new perspectives”, paper presented at the ASEES 2013 Convention in Boston. This paper is available at: [https://www.academia.edu/17950368/1%C3%A1nos\\_K%C3%A1d%C3%A1r\\_and\\_K%C3%A1d%C3%A1rism\\_new\\_perspectives](https://www.academia.edu/17950368/1%C3%A1nos_K%C3%A1d%C3%A1r_and_K%C3%A1d%C3%A1rism_new_perspectives) (last accessed on 7.05.2019).

[261] Anzelm Bárány, *There Was Once...*, op. cit., p. 9. See also the interview with psychologist Mihály Berkics (ELTE) performed by Ferenc Dávid Kovács: “Kádár nosztalgia megjelenése mindig az aktuális rendszer kritikája is” (“The appearance of Kádár nostalgia is always a critique of the current system”), [in:] *HVG*, 19 October 2015.

[262] *Life in Transition: a Survey of People’s Experiences and Attitudes*, available at: [www.ebrd.com/documents/comms-and-bis/pdf-life-in-transition-survey-i.pdf](http://www.ebrd.com/documents/comms-and-bis/pdf-life-in-transition-survey-i.pdf)

[263] Krzysztof Varga, *Gulasz z Turula*, op. cit., pp. 10, 15–16.

[264] Data from the website of the European Election Database. Available at: [http://eed.nsd.uib.no/webview/index.jsp?study=http%3A%2F%2F129.177.90.166%3A80%2Fobj%2FfStudy%2FHUPA2010\\_Display&mode=cube&v=2&cube=http%3A%2F%2F129.177.90.166%3A80%2Fobj%2FfCube%2FHUPA2010\\_Display\\_C1&top=yes](http://eed.nsd.uib.no/webview/index.jsp?study=http%3A%2F%2F129.177.90.166%3A80%2Fobj%2FfStudy%2FHUPA2010_Display&mode=cube&v=2&cube=http%3A%2F%2F129.177.90.166%3A80%2Fobj%2FfCube%2FHUPA2010_Display_C1&top=yes) (last accessed on 7.05.2019)

[265] Generally, on the most characteristic features of the Orbán’s regime see: Peter Wilkin, *Hungary’s Crisis*, op. cit., (passim). On the political changes and the new Constitution, see: András Bozóki, “Broken Democracy...”, op. cit., (especially) pp. 258–261. See also András Bozóki, Dániel Hegedűs, “Hybridregime unter externer Kontrolle Zum Charakter der ungarischen Politik” (“Hybrid Regime under External Control. The Characteristic of Hungarian Politics”), [in:] *Osteuropa* 68. Jg., 3–5/2018, pp. 149 – 169. On the economic aspects of the so called “Orbanomics” cf. Marcin A. Piasecki, “Was Viktor Orbán’s Unorthodox Economic Policy the Right Answer to Hungary’s Economic Misfortunes?”, [in:] *International Journal of Management and Economics* No. 46, April–June 2015, pp. 41–71; available at: <http://www.sgh.waw.pl/ijme/> (last accessed on 11.05.2019); Simeon Djankov, “Hungary under Orbán: Can Central Planning Revive Its Economy?”, available at: <https://piie.com/sites/default/files/publications/pb/pb15-11.pdf> (last accessed on 11.05.2019). On the highly controversial reform of the judiciary, see: Attila Badó, “Fair’ Selection of Judges in a Modern Democracy”, [in:] Attila Badó (ed.), *Fair Trial and Judicial Independence. Hungarian Perspectives*, pp. 27–58; Tamás Gyulavári and Nikolett Hós, “Retirement of Hungarian Judges, Age Discrimination and Judicial Independence: A Tale of Two Courts”, [in:] *Industrial Law Journal* (2013) 42 (3): 289–297; Nora Chronowski, “The New Hungarian Fundamental Law in the Light of the European Union’s Normative Values”, *Revue Est Europa* [2012] (numéro spéciale 1), pp. 111–142. On the actual situation of Hungarian media, see e.g.: “The state of Hungarian media: Endgame”, available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mediapolicyproject/2017/08/29/the-state-of-hungarian-media-endgame/> (last accessed on 13.05.2019). See also: “Freedom of the Press”, a note posted on the Freedom House website <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/hungary> (last accessed on 13.05.2019). On the dispute over the Holocaust memory, cf. e.g. Randolph L. Braham, “Hungary, The Assault on the Historical Memory of Holocaust”, [in:] Randolph

L. Braham, András Kovács, *The Holocaust in Hungary: Seventy Years Later*, Central European University Press, Budapest-New York 2016, pp. 286–309; “Why is the Hungarian Government Promoting a New, Ahistorical Holocaust Museum Designed by a Holocaust Distorter?”, available at: [https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/House-of-Fates-Fact-Sheet\\_.pdf](https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/sites/default/files/House-of-Fates-Fact-Sheet_.pdf) (last accessed on 27.05.2019). On the similarities and dissimilarities between Horthy’s regime and Orbán’s political system, cf. Krisztián Ungváry, “Rückkehr der Geschichte? Orbán & Horthy: ein Regimevergleich” (“Return of History? Orbán & Horthy: a Regime Comparison”), [in:] *Osteuropa* 68. Jg., 3–5/2018, pp. 351–368. On one of the most controversial aspects of Orbán’s foreign policy, cf. Zsuzsanna Vegh, “Hungary’s “Eastern Opening” policy toward Russia. Ties that bind?”, [in:] *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* 24 (2015), pp. 47–65.

[266] Bálint Magyar, *Post-Communist...*, op. cit., pp. 20–21.

[267] See: Jürgen Habermas, “The Crisis of the European Union in the Light of a Constitutionalization of International Law”, [in:] *The European Journal of International Law* (2012), Vol. 23, No. 2, 335–348.

[268] Bálint Magyar, *Post-Communist.....*, op. cit. pp. 26–27. Setting aside the mistakes discussed above, like e.g. the famous Gyurcsány’s speech, in which he admitted to have lied to the people, Magyar enumerates the following: the lack of symbols in their politics; a loss of perspective as sources for distribution ran dry and reforms were either put off or failed; the lack of efficient public policies that gave effective answers to the social problems generated by the regime change; and the managerial-administrative incompetence of the governing elite. According to the same author, “All of these are merely important symptoms of the fact that the democratic forces that could have stood up to emerging autocratic tendencies had no shared ethos or a modern social vision, nor an institutional background, and finally were left without capable political players too.” (p. 27). More on those drawbacks of the democratic system in Hungary under social-liberal coalition: *ibid.*, pp. 28–40.

[269] Cf. Peter Wilkin who still in 2018 noted that the “...Hungarian liberal-left, like its counterparts across the EU, remain largely wedded to a neoliberal “end of history” narrative that promises the prospect of more social polarisation.”, Peter Wilkin, “The Rise of ‘Illiberal’ Democracy: The Orbánization of Hungarian Political Culture”, [in:] *Journal of World-Systems Research*, Vol. 24 Issue 1, p. 22.

[270] Bálint Magyar, *Post-Communist...*, op. cit., pp. 21–22.

[271] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[272] Data after the Hungarian Office of Statistics, available at: [https://www.ksh.hu/docs/eng/xstadat/xstadat\\_annual/i\\_wnto01c.html](https://www.ksh.hu/docs/eng/xstadat/xstadat_annual/i_wnto01c.html) (last accessed on 22.05.2019).

[273] Information after: “Hungarians working abroad above the EU average”, *Budapest Business Journal*, 29 May 2018, available at: [https://bbj.hu/analysis/hungarians-working-abroad-above-eu-average-\\_149883](https://bbj.hu/analysis/hungarians-working-abroad-above-eu-average-_149883). See also: Dorina Haász, “Unbelievable: More than 300 000 Hungarians working abroad”, *Daily News Hungary*, 31 May 2018, available at: <https://dailynewshungary.com/more-than-300000-hungarians-working-abroad/> (both sites accessed on 22.05.2019).

[274] Dóra Szél, “Shocking statistics: 1 million Hungarians already left the country”, *Daily News Hungary*, 24 June 2018, available at: <https://dailynewshungary.com/shocking-statistics-1-million-hungarians-already-left-the-country/> (last accessed on 22.05.2019).

[275] “The Population Was “Frozen”: Why Hungarians Started Migrating. Interview with Prof. Antal Örkény”, 7 August 2018, available at: <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/the-population-was-frozen-why-hungarians-started-migrating/> (last accessed on 22.05.2019).



## The GDR – A Lost Revolution?

Compared to the other countries of the Eastern Bloc, the processes taking place in the GDR and the transition, which started in 1989 were characterised by a few dominant factors not encountered elsewhere in the region. The unique circumstances of the operations of the opposition, the orthodox communism of the Erich Honecker regime implemented by the Socialist Party of Unity (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* – SED), and, finally, the significance for the process of European integration of the fall of the Berlin Wall and its consequences, such as the dissolution of the GDR, make the events in the eastern part of today's Germany in the autumn of 1989 stand out from the processes in the other satellite countries of the Soviet Union. Today, however, 30 years after the events described in the present chapter, their legacy still painfully influences the political life in the east of Germany and has a visible impact on the functioning of the whole country as well.

### Introductory Remarks

Unlike the other countries of Central Europe, the GDR had not existed as a sovereign state prior to 1945. The defeat of the Third Reich and the division of Germany into two states representing two enemy political camps made the eastern part of the former Germany, which was under Soviet occupation, a bona fide separate entity for international relations as from 1949. The creation of this new state was a kind of experiment, which called for a new rationale previously unknown in the German state doctrine. Since the Potsdam agreement had erased a name so easily bringing to mind Prussian militarism and, obviously, adhering to the legacy of the Third Reich was out of the question, the leaders of the GDR (Walter Ulbricht, Otto Grotewohl,

Wilhelm Pieck, etc.) were faced with the challenge of building a state founded on entirely new ideological and legal foundations. In charge of the area entrusted to them by Stalin and his successors, the German communists made use of an orthodox version of Marxist ideology, which was to be the principal binder that morally legitimised the communist rule. At the same time, the need to impart credibility to the new state in the eyes of international public opinion, which was unfavourable towards Germans after the Second World War, made the communists promise to raise a new type of German citizen: Marxism and Leninism were to provide a guarantee that the Nazi nightmare would never come back. To simplify things, it can be assumed that the principal objective was to raise a new nation, which would have nothing to do with the past, save, perhaps, for its language.<sup>[1]</sup>

The effects of that choice had a substantial impact on the potential for the activities of the future opposition. Within a short time, the communist slogans had managed to win for the new authorities the support of many artists and scientists (Bertolt Brecht, Anna Seghers, Hans Euler, Robert Havemann, etc), who, either out of honest convictions or for opportunistic reasons, gave the SED their full support. The party, in turn, on the one hand effectively fuelled the hopes of constructing a better world on German soil (proudly highlighting ideological kinship with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels), and, on the other hand, helped people forget about the not so glorious past (after all, the GDR had been the part of Germany, which had given the NSDAP exceptionally strong support).<sup>[2]</sup> Those unable to reconcile with the new reality were able, until 1961 (i.e. until the construction of the Berlin Wall) to move to the western part of Germany. A total of close to 2.7 million took that opportunity<sup>[3]</sup> and that process greatly reduced the social base for a movement wishing to have some say with regard to the activities of the communist regime. The mass departures in the 1950s explain the weak response to the slogans of the first opposition activists, their programmes, and political choices. Voluntary or forced emigration wiped the GDR of virtually all ideological enemies of communism, leaving in the country only those captured by the ideas of Marx and Engels, or else politically indifferent.<sup>[4]</sup> As a result, the East German opposition movement was largely rooted in leftist ideology until the very end, demanding reforms within the framework of the existing system and did not envisage

the dissolution of the state by incorporating it into the Bonn Republic, which, as we all know, finally took place in 1990.

Theoretically, in the late 1960s the hostile approach of West Germany towards the GDR (and vice versa) began to slowly but steadily decrease after Willy Brandt came to power and in 1973 both states became members of the United Nations. The Bonn government ceased to make attempts to support the anti-system opposition in the GDR. In this respect, the shift in political lines was very pronounced. Under the Adenauer government, the West German political elite had supported the engagement of the state and non-governmental organisations, political parties, and churches in anti-systemic activities in the GDR.<sup>[5]</sup> That was discontinued from 1969 (when the social democrats came to power). Ever since then, the communist government had remained Bonn's only partner for talks and the attitude of Brandt and his successor, Helmut Schmidt, to the emerging opposition was extremely cautious, if not unfavourable. With the exception of the Green Party (*Grüne Partei*), which emerged only in the 1980s, this position was popular among virtually all West German politicians, irrespective of their political preferences, although without doubt the stance of the Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* – SPD) was the most reconciliatory in this respect. As a result of Egon Bahr's proposals,<sup>[6]</sup> in August 1987 the German social democrats (then in opposition to the cabinet of Helmut Kohl, who had come to power in 1983) signed a working document with the SED titled *Der Streit der Ideologien und die gemeinsame Sicherheit*,<sup>[7]</sup> thus elevating the relations between the two parties to an official level. In practice, this meant the complete withdrawal of the German Social Democrats from any attempts to reunite the country, expressly indicated in the West German constitution of 1949. At the same time, the rising star of German politics, the SPD prime minister of Saarland (and later Kohl's opponent for the post of chancellor), Oskar Lafontaine, was precisely for that reason able to count in East Berlin on special favours, even if at the price of undermining the alliance with the United States or amendments to West German law bringing the status of GDR citizens to that of ordinary foreigners. Within this peculiar 'foreign policy', led by the SPD independently of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headed by the liberal Hans-Dietrich Genscher,<sup>[8]</sup> Lafontaine sought contacts with the Soviet embassy in East Berlin and sounded

out the possibility of the GDR authorities acting as intermediaries in that delicate matter.<sup>[9]</sup> There were also SPD members who in the late 1980s unequivocally associated the notion of *Wiedervereinigung* (reunification) with a 'reactionary approach' and a threat to peace (Gerhard Schröder, Hans Eichel, etc). Still in February 1989, a former press spokesperson of the Helmut Schmidt government and at the same time a former Permanent Representative of West Germany to the GDR, Klaus Bölling, demanded that any mention of German reunification be removed from the West German constitution. In May 1989, the authorities of West Berlin, led by social democrat Walter Momper, took an outrageous decision to exclude from the special meeting of writers from East and West Germany, scheduled for 28–31 May, those authors who had been forcibly expelled from the GDR because of their critical views on the political, social, or environmental realities of Honecker's state.<sup>[10]</sup> While other opinions were also heard in the SPD every now and then (for example expressed by a later presidential candidate, Gesine Schwan), until 1989, they were a negligible minority.<sup>[11]</sup> The attitude of Helmut Kohl's government and the German Christian democratic camp towards the GDR opposition and the regime was ambiguous. Unlike the German social democrats, Kohl never questioned the idea of territorial integrity of Germany, and even clearly referred to it in his speech during Honecker's visit to West Germany in 1987. This reference greatly and evidently displeased the SED's secretary general, who then reacted rather vehemently.<sup>[12]</sup> Still, in the 1980s the Christian democrats were not interested in supporting grassroots movements or initiatives in the GDR. On the contrary, when in 1984 the East German regime was on the verge of losing financial liquidity, it was Kohl's government (in this case represented by the prime minister of Bavaria and the leader of the CSU,<sup>[13]</sup> Franz Josef Strauss) that offered it bank guarantees for an amount in excess of one billion Deutsche marks.<sup>[14]</sup> Therefore, Kohl's policy in many respects followed the line of 'change through rapprochement' espoused by Brandt and Bahr (a line, which Kohl himself had severely criticised when in opposition).<sup>[15]</sup> Another problem for the German Christian democrats was that of the potential partner for talks outside of the Honecker government. Since the entire pre-war intellectual elite had emigrated to West Germany and practically all of the people who would be the CDU's electorate in the Bonn

republic had left as well, one of Kohl's major problems in 1989 was finding other partners for talks than the left-wing oppositionists. As a result, only the Green Party, which was on the margins of German mainstream politics, was at all inclined to support the fledgling East German opposition, and even then not without reservations.<sup>[16]</sup>

Compared to the situation of the opposition movements in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, German dissidents were left to fend for themselves and without support. In the case of the GDR, there was no 'government in exile', which would continue the pre-war state traditions, and act as a beacon of hope for possible change. Nor was there any 'East German 'émigré community', which, patterned on Poland's Jerzy Giedroyc or Czechoslovakia's Pavel Tigrid, might take action to effect the change of the system.<sup>[17]</sup> An emigrant from the GDR, once on the other side of the iron curtain, was assimilated in West Germany and, as a rule, did not continue any attempts to improve the political situation 'behind the wall'.<sup>[18]</sup> Added to this approach were also the unique characteristics of East German society, a legacy of Hitler's time: an absence of ingrained democratic traditions, a rather unfavourable memory of the Weimar Republic, and a high level of approval for the far-reaching organisational role of the state, even to the detriment of civil liberties. Consequently, compared to the other satellite states of the USSR, communism as an ideology could for a long time count on a high degree of acceptance in the GDR. Even if that was only inert mass, in September 1989 the SED counted 2.3 million members. Every fifth adult in the GDR was a party member,<sup>[19]</sup> not to mention the 'democratic bloc' parties: the East German CDU, the liberal LDPD party (*Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands* – the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany), the post-Nazi NDPD (*National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands* – the National Democratic Party of Germany) and other smaller parties to which a total of approximately 0.5 million people belonged.<sup>[20]</sup> We should add here the trade unions, the 'vehicles of the party to the masses', with a membership of no fewer than four million. Therefore, according to some sources, practically every adult citizen of the GDR belonged to some organisation which was to a lesser or greater extent a dependent of the SED. The approval of the totalitarian education model also applied to young people, whose organisation, patterned on Soviet pioneers, efficiently eliminated the significance of religion from

the everyday life of the GDR. Even seven-year-olds were members and a lack of membership of the Free Democratic Youth (*Freie Demokratische Jugend* – FDJ) resulted in serious problems when enrolling at a university or even graduating from secondary school.<sup>[21]</sup>

The relatively high degree of internalisation of communist ideology slogans by the population, higher than in the other countries of the Eastern Bloc, additionally hampered the activity of the democratic opposition. While in neighbouring Poland the division into ‘us’ and ‘them’ was conducive to a certain stable level of approval for the opposition, where the policies of the regime personally targeting the activists from the Workers’ Defense Committee (KOR) did not win social support, the situation looked totally different on the other side of the Oder and Niesse rivers. Exclusion from the party, let alone a legal sentence, could have meant social ostracism. Being considered an ‘enemy’ by the authorities often triggered a negative assessment at work and could have earned the contempt of neighbours and even family members.<sup>[22]</sup> Nevertheless, despite the stability of the regime, for whom the support of inhabitants was at least in some periods relatively high, it was precisely the GDR and its political system which go down in history as a symbol of totalitarianism, terror and enormous oppression of individuals (especially those who dared to publicly criticize this or that deficiency of the existing status quo). Moreover, it was precisely this regime, which finally was brought to an end by a peaceful but very spectacular revolution that, through the media coverage, highly impacted the imagination of at least two generations of people all over the world. Therefore, whatever the presumed popularity of the regime among people living in East Germany could have been, and whoever wants to seek for some positive side of the “life beyond the Wall”, the criticism alleging the lack of freedoms and liberties in the GDR is very well grounded.

Whether someone likes it or not, it is not possible to imagine the GDR without terror measures applied by state organs on a mass scale, and this oppressive nature of the regime was not a pure coincidence. In fact, this regime was never able to persuade its citizens to take the effort to embark totally on the socialist project. Therefore, even before Erich Honecker took power in 1971, his predecessor Walter Ulbricht developed the system of border controls to the monstrously absurd levels. It was also Ulbricht

who ordered to build the infamous Berlin Wall dividing the former German capital into two strictly separated parts, one which, over many years was the most symbolic incorporation of the Iron Curtain separating the Western democracies from the Eastern Block. It was also Ulbricht who ordered to shoot anybody who wanted to trespass the GDR state border, no matter whether it was an adult, a teenager or a woman with a baby in her arms. Simply put, even in those periods, when the regime was relatively popular among inhabitants, and – as it was the case of the Ulbricht era – the economic policies of the government were ready to tolerate small private businesses, the SED did not feel totally sure about the loyalty of its own citizens. And because the risk of a significant share of the population moving out to the FRG (especially those highly qualified) could entail enormous problems for the normal functioning of the country or – especially in the 1980s – could expose it to risk of an immediate collapse – the communists did not hesitate to use measures so drastic that equating the GDR with a more or less comfortable prison has never been exaggerated. True, in some periods, the authorities managed to persuade the population, that the life “within their cells” was not necessarily so bad. At least it was comfortable enough to give up plans to move away, let alone to escape, which constituted a criminal offense in the sense of the GDR’s criminal code.

Still, one should never forget that within the period 1961–1989, more than 40 000 people tried to escape.<sup>[23]</sup> At least c. 71 000 persons were sentenced for the attempt “to escape from the Republic”.<sup>[24]</sup> Some of them lost their lives,<sup>[25]</sup> while trying to escape from the GDR to freedom. Therefore, while it is true that over many years the SED was successful in securing the stability of the regime, still in political, economic and, last but not least, also in moral terms, the price for it was very high. So high that in the less favourable circumstances and disadvantageous impact of external factors, the mere existence of this specific state could have been quite easily put under severe stress test. It was precisely this challenge that the SED had faced from the mid-1970s onwards.

## Economic Crisis

Despite the greatly unfavourable conditions for the opposition's activities, and even attempts to carry out reforms within the SED, as early as from 1970 onwards the GDR's economy was sending some worrying signals. Theoretically, the decision makers could still be happy. Their country was no doubt the most developed Comecon member, and work in the GDR was financially attractive to the citizens of much less affluent Soviet Bloc countries, like Poland for example. Many products barely available in Warsaw or Cracow could be obtained without queues or waiting lists in Dresden or Leipzig. Compared to countries such as Greece, Portugal or Spain, the standard of living in East Germany was satisfactory. The social welfare system, with its extensive network of nurseries and schools (leaving aside the costs of maintaining those) no doubt exceeded many other models applied worldwide. In 1988, more than 55 per cent of households had at least one car (as a comparison, it was 61 per cent in West Germany), and in the early 1970s the GDR was still one of the world's top ten economies.<sup>[26]</sup> The GDR team brought home as many as 126 medals, including 47 gold medals, from the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games.<sup>[27]</sup> The names of East German athletes such as Olaf Ludwig, Katarina Witt, Karin Enke, Waldemar Cierpinski, Marlies Göhr and others were recognised worldwide and contributed to the construction of a favourable image of the GDR, which the authorities in Berlin were particularly keen on. However as early as in the 1970s, this – at first glance – very positive picture was shadowed by some unpleasant realities, which the authorities wanted to hid away from the public and which in the longer term were to be felt painfully by the GDR inhabitants, finally bringing the whole state to its final collapse. Assuming power in 1971, Erich Honecker had been convinced that Ulbricht's economic policy<sup>[28]</sup> might end up in social protests. This assessment was in large measure influenced by the Prague Spring and the events of 1970 in Poland, crushed violently by the army and the police. In the period 1968–1970, work stoppages occurred in the GDR quite often and strikes were a cause for grave concern.<sup>[29]</sup> As an avowed Marxist, Honecker was certain that 'agents of imperialism' must have instigated the upheavals. Nevertheless, the very thought that the 'working masses' could after 25 years of communist dictatorship succumb

to 'enemy propaganda' and turn against 'the authority of the people' must have evidently made an impression on him<sup>[30]</sup>. That concern was exacerbated by the fact that the GDR party and government leaders had, since the outset, been convinced that the country's geographical location itself determined the scale of threats, immeasurably greater than in the case of any other Warsaw Pact and Comecon member state. This unique threat was caused by two factors. On the one hand, it was the growing strength of West Germany, which never ceased to attract GDR citizens, who tried to cross the border illegally, irrespective of the extreme penal measures. On the other hand, the long border with Poland and the justified opinion that communism was not supported by Polish society made the SED's leaders feel under constant threat. In their opinion, the East German experiment was under continuous pressure and if Ulbricht's policy was to be continued, the course of events similar to the 'Polish scenario' was more than probable.<sup>[31]</sup>

Trying to forestall riots in the GDR (which would eventually threaten the existence of the state), Honecker promoted the idea of 'unity of social and economic policy' (*Einheit von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik*). In essence, the ultimate goal of this programme was to "buy out" social calm and at least a passive acceptance of the existing social and political status quo by the GDR inhabitants.<sup>[32]</sup> To attain this objective, like other leaders of the Soviet satellite states, he began an extensive programme of development of previously neglected sectors, which were key from the point of view of satisfying citizens' needs, with an important role played by housing.<sup>[33]</sup> This programme was coupled with the significant subsidising of the production of many staple goods, including milk, bread, or butter.<sup>[34]</sup> The problem was that such an extensive welfare state policy was extremely costly. Because of it, the GDR's government was until the very end of its existence under constant pressure to find new income sources so that it could cover those ever-increasing expenditures.

It was by no means an easy task. Even if, compared to African or some Asian countries, East German economy could, at first glance, be classified as a very modern one; nonetheless, because of the Marxist-Leninist dogmas, which laid at the fundament of the entire system, most of the goods and services produced in the GDR were unable to compete on global markets.<sup>[35]</sup>

Even though the authorities launched a top-secret programme that sought to combine espionage with the home-made production of modern micro-electronics, the final results of those efforts were clearly below the expectations, as the final products were not only of lower quality than the similar goods offered by Japan and the USA but were also significantly more expensive.<sup>[36]</sup> No surprise then that in the structure of the GDR's foreign trade Comecon countries played a significant role, notably the USSR.<sup>[37]</sup> Even in late 1980s, the share of the Soviet Union in the GDR's foreign trade oscillated at around 36 to 39 per cent.<sup>[38]</sup> The oil crisis of 1973, which ushered in a turbulent period for the global economy, was to complicate greatly the position of the GDR. Meanwhile the USSR, suffering from economic hardships itself, was less and less able to help the other Comecon countries. Payments for purchases of Soviet oil at increased prices, coupled with the simultaneous reduction of its supplies in 1981 proved especially painful for the GDR economy, further undermining the capacities of the GDR's regime to cope effectively with the upcoming crisis.<sup>[39]</sup>

In theory, one could expect that facing the economic crisis, the GDR authorities should have launched a plan of reform to maintain the stability of the regime, or at least to add some flexibilities to the existing communist centrally planned economy. Against this backdrop, it is worth noting that as early as at the beginning of the 1970s, the head of the State Plan Commission (*Die Staatliche Plankommission – SPK*), Paul Gerhard Schürer, supported by some members of the Politburo, expressed more or less clearly some reservations concerning the applicability and implementability of Honecker's economic ideas. Notably, he warned that the hopes for the increase of domestic income from foreign trade were unrealistic; he also cautioned against increasing external debt and sought to draw the attention of the Politburo and Honecker himself to possible negative impacts of the increasing spending on the macroeconomic stability of the GDR's economy.<sup>[40]</sup> Thus it seems that long before the collapse of the GDR it was clear at least to all the SED functionaries working within the economy apparatus that the narrow-minded and consumption-oriented economic policy, carried out even at the expense of investment necessary to maintain the existing competitive advantage of goods produced for the markets abroad, had to lead to disastrous consequences.<sup>[41]</sup> However, all their warnings

went in vain for reasons, which are easily understandable. The problem was that all reform suggested (or reforms which eventually were at hands), aiming at the improvement of the competitive advantage of the GDR economy had to entail more or less drastic decrease in the level of domestic consumption. And this was exactly the solution Honecker wanted to avoid at any price<sup>[42]</sup>, for fear that if those reforms were implemented, then – having regard to the increasing power (as well as a rising attractiveness) of the West German neighbour – a “Polish scenario” could become inevitable. It follows that if Honecker (a roofer by profession) was attached blindly to his original programme, he did it not only because he was until the end of his life an avowed Marxist or because the lack of appropriate education made him unable to understand some complex or technical problems. Nor the fact that he acceded to power by attacking his predecessor Ulbricht for his pro-reform course can explain this stubborn anti-reform stance.<sup>[43]</sup> In fact – as Andreas Malycha observed – this hard-line political position is understandable only if one takes into account that for the SED leader, until the very end of his political career, the stability of the system (that is, the very existence of the GDR) was always the matter of unquestionable priority. And this goal, he believed, could have been achieved only if – and so long as – the communist authorities could demonstrate their capacity (or – better to say – to maintain an illusion of this capacity) to guarantee the standard of living which, at least in its outline, resembled the one that was enjoyed by the inhabitants of the FRG. This is exactly why Honecker was so adamantly opposed to any reform idea, even if he knew perfectly well that his slogan of “Unity of Economic and Social Policy” was completely detached from the realities. But this last fact remained out of Erich Honecker’s radar.<sup>[44]</sup> He was not ready to acknowledge such unpleasant information neither when he was in power, nor – even less so – after the collapse of the state he had headed for over 18 years.

Thus, by excluding substantial reforms of the system from the agenda of the Politburo, Honecker made the GDR *de facto* dependent on external credits. As Moscow and its satellite states were unable or unwilling to buy more goods placed on the market by the GDR (or even worse, they were unable to pay for them), the sole solution guaranteeing the survival of the regime had to be the increase of the external debt.

However, in the case of the GDR this solution posed a very sensitive political question. Although in the 1970s, the FRG's social-democratic government was ready to open credit lines for its eastern neighbour, and East Berlin began to use that money to maintain the social calm, nevertheless some Politburo members considered this policy with growing scepticism or even irritation: they were increasingly concerned about the real effects of the debts contracted in West German banks, which – on the one hand – played the role of the guarantor of the social calm in the country. On the other hand, in the opinion of the GDR prime minister Willy Stoph, as well as high rank Politburo member Werner Krolikowski, the increasing debt was (at least in the longer term) to make the GDR dependent politically from Bonn. In secret cables, which they were sending to the USSR authorities behind the Secretary General's back, both of them claimed that this dependence was the factor Honecker clearly underestimated and they demanded the Soviets to exert pressure upon him to change his economic policy.<sup>[45]</sup> In what concerns Soviets, they also shared the view that the economic ties had not only a domestic or economic dimension but – at least potentially – could also bring some effects for foreign policy as well. Besides, it was not a secret that in the case of East Germany, Moscow looked very suspiciously at any attempts to contract significant debts in Western countries (especially in the FRG) for fear of the trap of economic dependency of the GDR from the more and more influential neighbour and – thus – the loss of control by the USSR over this region of Europe.

Still, realities of life appeared stronger than ideological lines. When in 1981 the USSR reduced its supplies of oil (which the GDR, after processing, was able to export to the West), it had an impact by causing a shortage of foreign currency, invariably a serious problem for the centrally planned East German economy.<sup>[46]</sup> As early as on 1 January 1982, the total external debt attained the record level of DM 25.1 billion and for the first time in its history, the GDR was at the verge of the financial bankruptcy.<sup>[47]</sup>

Despite the difficulties, it might have seemed that the SED would manage to solve the problems thanks to the loans granted by West Germany, negotiated in 1983 by Franz Josef Strauss (FRG) and Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski (GDR), and to a marked transformation of the energy sector: a reduction in oil consumption and a shift to a brown coal economy.<sup>[48]</sup>

However, paradoxically, the drop in the oil prices as of late 1985 was to prove the final straw that broke the GDR's economic system. A source of income, i.e. the processing of Soviet crude oil and production of oil products, was irretrievably lost. Due to the low competitiveness of most East German products on the global market, the USSR remained their main recipient. Given the dramatic state of the Soviet economy, that further exacerbated the situation of the German communists.<sup>[49]</sup> Since Moscow, ever deeper in recession, did not change the prices of the supplied raw material, and the GDR was forced to pay for oil according to the old higher tariff, German products became even more expensive. This coincided with an almost complete halting of East German exports of electronic devices to the USSR, and they had practically no buyers outside of the Comecon. A lack of foreign currency led to a drastically reduced investment and a lower efficiency of the entire economy.<sup>[50]</sup> At the end of the Honecker era, labour productivity did not exceed 30 per cent of that in West Germany.<sup>[51]</sup> As a result, Honecker's idea of 'unity of social and economic policy' was ever harder to implement on the ground: GDR citizens had to queue to get a flat, a car, or even meat. That was coupled with increased costs of living.<sup>[52]</sup> In the latter half of the 1980s, East Germans had to look for goods on the black market.<sup>[53]</sup> The *Stasi* secret police recorded ever more incidents of theft from factories, and the real value of the East German currency was under constant pressure from the West German D-Mark, which in the late 1980s was very often used on day-to-day basis as a means of payment.<sup>[54]</sup> Had this situation continued, the stability of the regime would have been put at risk: as noted above, the SED's leaders were perfectly aware of the very strong correlation between social calm and the capacity of the state to secure high standards of living for all East German citizens.<sup>[55]</sup> They knew that the material aspirations of the society were constantly increasing as most of the inhabitants of the GDR, despite the bureaucratic obstacles, maintained family ties with those who were living in West Germany. They also watched, without any technical problems, the TV channels broadcast from the FRG's territory: therefore, the widespread information on the prosperity in the neighbouring German state could have been contrasted with the worsening standards in the GDR. This almost automatically generated external, as well

as internal, pressure, which, if not discharged by some political means, had to have lethal effects for the GDR as a state.

## Tensions in the GDR-USSR Relations

The relations between the GDR and the USSR had entered a 'crisis mode' even before Mikhail Gorbachev came to power.<sup>[56]</sup> The mounting frustration of the SED leaders was determined by the fact that – as it was stated above – Moscow regarded with grave concern any attempts by Honecker at emancipation, in particular intensifying ties with West Germany.<sup>[57]</sup> The denunciations made by Krolikowski and Stoph did not go unnoticed by Leonid Brezhnev himself, who during the Honecker's visits in Crimea in August 1980 and 1981 respectively, took the occasion to castigate him for his policy towards West Germany. In the opinion of the Secretary General of the CPSU, the ties between the two countries became too close for Moscow to keep a blind eye towards them, so Brezhnev demanded his German counterpart to drastically limit the contacts with Bonn.<sup>[58]</sup> A question arises about the significance of the Polish crisis of 1980–1981 for Honecker's relationship with Moscow. It is common knowledge that the German communists put the greatest pressure on Brezhnev to crush the Polish crisis by force. Concerned for their own domestic stability, they went so far as to attempt the ousting of Wojciech Jaruzelski and Stanisław Kania and a transfer of power in the People's Republic of Poland to party leaders representing the 'Marxist and Leninist forces', led by such party hardliners as Tadeusz Grabski, or at least Stefan Olszowski.<sup>[59]</sup> Honecker knew perfectly well that the crisis of communist ideology was a huge challenge for the GDR. He regarded the equivocal position of Moscow to the question of a possible armed intervention in Poland as a threat to communism in general and to the existence of the state, which he ruled over.<sup>[60]</sup> Whether the actions taken for the benefit of the hardliners of the Polish United Workers' Party went too far for Moscow remains an open question. The unique geo-political situation of the GDR naturally made the Soviet party much more suspicious of that country than any of its other satellites. Therefore, the single-handed moves of East Berlin must have drawn a particular attention of the Soviet

party and state apparatus. Irrespective of the above concerns, one thing remains certain: not only was Honecker not rewarded for his position during the Polish crisis, but in 1981 Moscow once again sharply raised oil prices and reduced supplies, which affected the economy of the 'staunchest' of allies.<sup>[61]</sup> Moreover, they did it having full knowledge that a year before, GDR had been on the verge of joining Poland in the "club" of countries, which had declared bankruptcy and – to the enormous frustration of the SED head – they still reiterated their "order" to freeze the development of economic ties with the FRG.<sup>[62]</sup>

The loans negotiated by Strauss and taken out in June 1983 met with an unequivocally negative reaction by Moscow, which was to threaten to oust Honecker if the relations between the two German states were to tighten even more in the future without the knowledge and approval of the Kremlin.<sup>[63]</sup> The planned official visit of the SED's leader to Bonn had to be postponed a number of times, since Moscow let it be understood, in no ambiguous terms, that it did not approve of such meetings.<sup>[64]</sup> That in turn stirred the displeasure of the GDR party and state leaders. On the one hand, the USSR was no longer able to help, and on the other hand, it paralysed any attempts made by East Berlin to find that help elsewhere. It should be pointed out that since 1980 onwards the attractiveness of Honecker's propaganda promising the better future to anybody had effectively lost its appeal.<sup>[65]</sup> Simultaneously, contrary to the conviction of some members of the Politburo, East Germans were everything but ready to accept any austerity measures whatsoever<sup>[66]</sup> (which at that point of time were absolutely necessary to reach the economic equilibrium unless some additional credits were contracted abroad). In the effect, the development of ties with the Western neighbour was probably the sole solution to secure the very existence of the GDR as an independent country. But even if Honecker submitted those arguments to the leaders of the Soviet Union, the ageing gerontocracy ruling in the USSR were unimpressed and rejected them all.<sup>[67]</sup> When the relatively young Gorbachev came to power, the bilateral relations grew even tenser. In hindsight, it seems clear that the personal animosities between the two statesmen were underpinned not only by ideology ('liberal' Gorbachev opting for glasnost and perestroika clashed with Honecker, a dogmatic follower of communist ideology).

In fact, the increasing animosities between the leaders of both countries were determined no less by some pragmatic problems as well. Firstly, as over time, the economy of the Soviet Union was deteriorating, and the internal reforms introduced by the new CPSU leadership appeared very often counterproductive, there was no surprise that the Soviets curtailed their economic assistance even further.<sup>[68]</sup> In addition, the East German leaders were convinced that the economic reforms launched by the new head of the Soviet Communist Party would prove inefficient from the point of view of the GDR's interests – and for the USSR as well – and, as a consequence, the earlier volumes of trade exchanged between the two countries could be reached only in some indefinite future.<sup>[69]</sup> This irritation was further augmented by the deeply-rooted conviction, harking back to the Ulbricht era, that the economic problems in the Soviet Union were first of all characteristic of less developed countries, while the communist model in the GDR was allegedly superior to other solutions applied in the countries of 'people's democracy'.<sup>[70]</sup> At the same time, intensified settlements with the past and the negation of Stalin's role that followed the glasnost policy in the Soviet Union, to a certain extent stripped the German Democratic Republic of its *raison d'être*. Even though it had all of the attributes of a state in the meaning of international law, its existence was closely tied with the cold war logic; after all, Stalin had been the one who had made the decision to transform the Soviet occupation zone into a separate state. Any attempts at return on the part of Moscow to the tendencies present in its politics of constructing a unified and neutral Germany, which would anyway remain within the Kremlin's zone of influence (such ideas kept recurring in Soviet policy throughout the 1950s and 1960s),<sup>[71]</sup> begged a question about the political and moral sense of the East German experiment.

As a result, the international position of the GDR in the late 1980s proved to be very complex. A reorientation of foreign policy (irrespective of the capacity for such a change of the aging avowed Marxists from the SED) was in large measure contingent on approval from Moscow, whose armies were stationed on East German soil. In the meantime, in 1986 the idea of an official visit to Bonn by Honecker was still disapproved of by the Soviets, who – to make matters worse – curtailed the economic assistance even further.<sup>[72]</sup>

What the SED was concerned about most was not even perestroika and glasnost as such, but in a way their consequence, namely a marked shift of Moscow's political course vis-a-vis West Germany. It was in Bonn that the USSR increasingly saw a necessary partner rather than an ideological opponent.<sup>[73]</sup> It was with Bonn that the Soviets wished to co-operate extensively in terms of politics and economy (patterning themselves on the time of the empire and the period following the Rapallo Treaty). What, in practical terms, was the suspension of the Brezhnev doctrine, referred to by the new resident of the Kremlin (if somewhat vaguely) as early as 1987, supposed to mean?<sup>[74]</sup> The question of whether the USSR was going to 'sacrifice' the GDR in return for good relations with Bonn was uppermost on the minds of SED leaders led by Erich Honecker and the state security services headed by Erich Mielke.<sup>[75]</sup> It slowly became clear that the GDR was in a cul-de-sac and its status resembled, in a way, that of hostage. On the one hand, the liberalisation of the communist regime foreshadowed the reorientation of Soviet policy towards the West, which made the sense of the GDR's existence morally suspect. On the other hand, Moscow, demanding strict allegiance from Honecker without offering anything in return, forestalled his openness in foreign policy and augmented his conviction that he was merely a trump card in Moscow's relations with the West (mainly with West Germany). Honecker suspected that the Soviets would not hesitate to play the card in return for appropriate compensation. The above circumstances help to better understand why the GDR's leaders avoided reforms and actually 'developed an allergy' to perestroika. The attitude towards the Soviet policy is perfectly well captured in a famous statement by Kurt Hager, Central Committee secretary for ideology. Jaundiced by a question posed by a *Stern* journalist about a possible change of course in the GDR in the face of changes in the USSR, Hager blurted out "If your next-door neighbour were changing the wallpaper in his flat, would you feel obliged to do the same?"<sup>[76]</sup> The crisis in the GDR-USSR relations swept away figures previously seen as unmovable because of their close ties with Moscow. In 1987, rumours were stirred by the retirement of the long-term head of the GDR's Central Board of Intelligence in the Ministry of State Security (the MfS, *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*), General Markus 'Mischa' Wolf. The ostensible reason for the stepping down of the ace of the intelligence

service was his age, health status, and his intention of pursuing a literary career. Unofficially, it was said that Wolf favoured glasnost and perestroika, which he would gladly have grafted on German soil, given the deplorable state of the East German economy.<sup>[77]</sup> The tense relations with Moscow explained the tightening of relations between the GDR and China and the open support for the Beijing regime after their massacre of innocent students in the Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989. Any state wishing to retain the international status quo was at the end of the 1980s Honecker's natural partner with which the SED's leader tried to tighten contacts, even sacrificing the relations with Moscow in an attempt to take an independent course.<sup>[78]</sup> As a result, the *Stasi's* reports saw the changing international situation as a graver danger than one posed by the fledgling opposition movement. A special dossier prepared by the *Stasi* in May 1989 indicated that while there were as many as 160 different groups active across the GDR, more or less critical of the regime, the number of involved individuals was estimated at merely 2,500, only 600 of whom were defined as activists and 60 as members of the 'hard core'.<sup>[79]</sup> These few did not pose a threat to the system as long as the external reality remained rooted in the cold war era. However, to the dissatisfaction of the SED's leadership, that reality was increasingly a thing of the past.

## The Crisis of Marxist Ideology and the Attempt of Compromise with the Lutheran Church. The Role of the *Stasi*

According to the secret police files, the crisis of official ideology had begun some two decades before the end of the GDR statehood. As early as in the mid 1970s, the *Stasi* observed that the growing disappointment and disillusion were wide-spreading not only within the society itself but also within the party basis (especially within circles of functionaries responsible for domestic economy).<sup>[80]</sup> Undoubtedly, the principal factor causing

the unrest was the visible stagnation of economy and the increasing gap in the standards of living between the GDR and the FRG. Both these factors were offering some social ground for eventual opposition activities, even if in comparison with some other countries in the region, this ground was relatively smaller in East Germany.<sup>[81]</sup> Still some isolated acts of resistance or civic disobedience that had taken place in the 1970s went almost unnoticed by the society.

From the point of view of the public, these protests were in fact immaterial. As long as the GDR's economy was able to cover the basic needs of the majority of the population, the authorities could count on support, or at least passive tolerance. A far more marking experience (this time for all of the citizens of the GDR) was the 'winter of the century', when in 1979 the German energy sector was paralysed for two weeks. As the scale of the breakdown was astonishing for the neutral observers, the lack of efficiency of state apparatus to handle the energy crisis caused by it had to deepen even further the doubts about the credibility of the Honecker propaganda, which sought all the time to persuade the public that that "everything was all right".<sup>[82]</sup> The diminishing zeal of the communist ideology was a serious ideological problem for SED leaders. The cohesion of the doctrine, which Ulbricht intended to make the backbone of a new national identity, left much to be desired despite the desperate efforts of the propaganda apparatus supported by numerous departments of Marxist philosophy. The very figure of Rosa Luxemburg, the founder of the founder of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) murdered in 1919, was a major theoretical and practical issue. Presented by the media as a person almost religiously worshipped, she was the author of a slogan *Freiheit ist immer die Freiheit der Andersdenkenden* (Freedom is always the freedom of dissenters), which complicated the work of political police. Older citizens (and party comrades) recalled naturally that in the 1950s, Ulbricht had had many schools, squares, nurseries, and factories choose Luxemburg as their patron. At the same time, because of the divergence of opinions sometimes expressed by Rosa Luxemburg in arguments with Lenin, her literary legacy was, from the point of view of the party, abundant with views incompatible with the party line. As a result, in the Stalinist era a charge of '*Luxemburgism*' could have landed the defendant in front of a firing squad

or at the very least in prison.<sup>[83]</sup> In theory, the lack of a clear national identity could have been substituted by the ideology of the Antifascism. After all, the GDR appeared on the map of Europe as one of the outcomes of WWII, which brought the Third Reich to its ultimate end. Indeed, it was exactly this element, which over many years was exploited by GDR propaganda.<sup>[84]</sup> However, in the 1980s, the credibility of this argument was in visible decline, for reasons that could not have been mistaken. On the one hand, everybody knew that the mere fact that X or Z was a member of NSDAP did not prevent him/her from having a career in the GDR. Even if the case of Ernst Grossman (a former SS non-commissioned officer who during the war had served at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, after 1945 had joined the communist party, and in 1954 was made a member of its Central Committee) was an exceptional one, there is still no doubt that, despite the tone of propaganda, it would be very difficult to describe denazification in the GDR as a “success story”. On the other hand, the “Anti-fascist card” was very often used by the SED as a weapon against anybody who was courageous enough to express a different opinion than the one put forward by state or party bodies. Or, to put it differently, in the perspective of GDR propaganda, as well as in the practice of security bodies and the judiciary, usually every dissident or (as it was the case of the workers protesting in 1953) any person whatsoever who dared to oppose was immediately qualified as ‘fascist’; therefore, as per Marxist-Leninist dialectics, every opponent to the communist rulers *had to be* a follower of Hitler.<sup>[85]</sup> There was also a bit of commotion with the symbols of the new state. The anthem composed by Johannes R. Becher and Hanns Eisler, *Auferstanden aus Ruinen* (leaving aside the charges of plagiarism emerging even then), turned out to be ‘politically incorrect’ after 1972, since it spoke about the unity of Germany (*Deutschland einig Vaterland*), while at that time the regime entered into an agreement with West Germany about the mutual recognition of their autonomous status. As a result, from then until the end of the GDR, the anthem was performed solely in its instrumental version.

Despite the boastful assurances of the purity of the Marx and Engels’ doctrine, the communist message was so warped that in the early 1970s SED leaders had serious doubts as to the actual views of their citizens.<sup>[86]</sup> At the end of the decade, it also became clear that the ‘East German prosperity’ had

started to burst at the seams.<sup>[87]</sup> This loss of faith in communism questioned the sense of existence of the GDR as a state independent of the ever-richer West Germany. No one in the party had any doubts about that.<sup>[88]</sup>

West German television also played a major role. The young generation did not enthuse over the construction of socialism and Walter Friedrich from the Central Institute of Studies of the Youth (*Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung*) observed, “Generally the socialist values have lost their significance”.<sup>[89]</sup> One other problem was that although relative to the other socialist countries the standard of living was quite high, comparisons with the Western neighbour were increasingly unfavourable<sup>[90]</sup> and the number of those who filed applications to receive a passport, clearly planning one-way trips, was 120,000 in 1984.<sup>[91]</sup> An obvious sign of the growing disappointment was the data on emigration. State administration was clearly aware that despite the exorbitant requirements to be satisfied by anyone applying for a passport to take a trip to West Germany (unless a pensioner) and despite the drastic punishments for attempts to escape to the other side of the ‘iron curtain’,<sup>[92]</sup> an average of 21,000 people annually would leave East Germany in the years 1980–1988. They were usually well educated, and under 40 years of age.<sup>[93]</sup> According to Pollack, in 1982, only 46,000 people were allowed to visit West Germany. The figure for 1987 was 1.3 million.<sup>[94]</sup> Gieseke calculates that in the period from 1961 to 1989 the GDR lost close to 650,000 citizens.<sup>[95]</sup> That process, by its nature hostile to the very foundations of the state, was to prove especially difficult to halt. It was very dangerous, not only because even in the medium term it could deprive the state of the well qualified labour force. It was also dangerous just because the process of these departures to the West automatically put under question the SED’s moral legitimacy for the wielding of power in the country.<sup>[96]</sup>

Compared to other countries of the Eastern Bloc it was a formidable task for the SED, to invent a cure for this challenge. The nationalist sentiments, of which some communist regimes took advantage as a substitute for moral legitimacy, were out of the question in the case of East Germany. However, given that in the late 1970s ideology had ceased to serve its purpose and some urgent social questions (care for people with disabilities and the elderly in seniors’ homes, for instance) were virtually unsolvable without an additional commitment of the general public, the SED took

action which, according to Honecker, would secure the dictatorship for many years to come.

Firstly, the regime continued the gargantuan extension of the state security system, unparalleled in the other countries of the Eastern Bloc. This assured permanent surveillance of the lives of citizens of the GDR. However, the *Stasi* phenomenon cannot be boiled down only to the highest number of political police officers per citizen in the entire communist Bloc.<sup>[97]</sup> Without doubt, the fact that the GDR regime did not redirect money away from extending their secret police even during the peak of the crisis, and the fact that the *Stasi* had the largest headcount (91,000 full-time officers) in 1989 make a huge impression. As a rule, the uniqueness of the GDR's secret services lay, first and foremost, in their unprecedented scope of competences, which according to Gieseke surpassed even that of the Soviet KGB, duplicating the work of many civil offices of local administration or even ministries. Therefore, the opinion of Honecker and his successor, Egon Krenz, that the *Stasi* was a state within a state was accurate.<sup>[98]</sup> Secondly, in search of additional moral legitimacy, the party decided to smooth its relations with the Evangelical Church. It was a rather unexpected and innovative step: until the late 1970s, relations between the orthodox Marxists ruling in the GDR and the Lutherans had been everything but harmonious as the SED functionaries had been doing everything possible to diminish the significance of religion in public as well as private life. It was also not a secret either that to achieve this purpose the MfS and the GDR public administration would not hesitate to use harsh measures targeting not only the Church as such (as well as institutions affiliated with it) but also simple churchgoers or those who were courageous enough to manifest their ties to Christianity publicly. Thus the meeting, which took place on 6 March 1978 between Erich Honecker and Bishop Albrecht Schönherr, the chairman of the GDR Federation of Protestant Churches, was almost sensational. During that meeting, the SED's Secretary General observed that, for example, the church was a major social actor and at the same time stated that it was the Church of the Reformation and that "in no way is its role limited to the organisation of religious worship, but that it is equally responsible for social issues, and such responsibility cannot be questioned by the the party or the state".<sup>[99]</sup> The meeting should be seen as a bona fide

turning point: the GDR regime turned increasingly towards the Protestant Church. Instead of combatting it as had been the usual practice before the meeting, Honecker declared his readiness to establish future cooperation between the Church, the State and the SED on the basis of so-called *Kirche in Sozialismus* formula, adopted in 1971 by the Synod of the Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the GDR. The concept as such was very far from being clear. Undoubtedly, however, it was as a sort of theoretical basis of “modus operandi” between the two sides, which represented completely different worldviews and – in addition – distrusted each other. Still, setting aside the theological and doctrinal questions, in practical terms the adoption of the *Kirche in Sozialismus* concept entailed some small concessions on the part of the communist party, for until then it had strongly persecuted the Lutherans. These were notably the inclusion of the Church (and some of institutions managed or operated by the Lutherans) on the lists of the organizations that were – at least in practice – tolerated or even officially recognized by the GDR. Moreover, the head of the SED promised to grant financial resources necessary for renovations and conservation works of religious monuments and listed buildings; in some places, the Lutherans were to obtain permits for the construction of new church buildings. Besides, the representatives of the clergy were offered very limited access to the government-controlled mass media, including television, as well as to prisons, where they were allowed to fulfill their pastoral duties.<sup>[100]</sup> Those concessions were followed by some other ideological innovations. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the SED almost officially accepted Martin Luther as its patron, who might supplement the dwindling faith in the ideals of Marx and Engels. In 1983, the authorities held the celebrations of the five hundredth birthday of the founder of the Reformation, at which Honecker called him a ‘great son of the German people’. The anti-church campaign, meant to wipe out any religious life in the GDR, visibly slowed down.

Before long, it turned out that the actions of the regime were far too insufficient to assure the survival of the state, which was less and less appealing to its citizens themselves. Although the extension of the *Stasi* structures (and – *via facti* – its competences as well) facilitated efficient monitoring of the opposition, it also brought about many negative consequences. Endowing the *Stasi* with many prerogatives in matters such

as the economy automatically potentially made that institution answerable for the economic standing of the country. Those tasks the ministry of state security was unwilling and unable to fulfil, treating matters of state security as the top priority. Consequently, in the late 1980s the central structures of the party and the state were slowly disintegrating. The other ministries, aware of the fact that the law offered ever-new competences to the ministry of state security and its subordinate entities, more and more often discontinued action in their designated area of expertise, and responded to the interested individuals that their matter was within the competences of the *Stasi*. Therefore, a few years before the collapse of the GDR, the *Stasi* received not only denouncements concerning inconvenient co-workers. Construction companies applied for a consignment of bricks; desperate scientists asked for the transferring of the results of their research to higher party authorities, believing that if they got the attention of the *Stasi*, their requests would be processed faster.<sup>[101]</sup> The transformation of the Ministry of State Security into a kind of super-ministry only exacerbated the chaos and the enormous scope of duties made the institution ever less manoeuvrable. Moreover, in the 1980s infighting in the *Stasi* became an almost every-day routine.<sup>[102]</sup> Therefore, entrusting the Ministry of State Security with nearly unlimited powers had an opposite effect. In addition, the disintegration of the state was also evident in the other segments of national and local administration and the *Stasi* knew perfectly well about the governance crisis. Mielke was fully aware that the absurd requirements of economic planning, strictly demanded by Honecker's trusted aide, Günter Mittag, responsible for the economy, at least since the early 1980s, were increasingly frustrating for mid-level party members, the addressees of those orders. Some documents submitted to the head of the *Stasi* referred directly to the 'broken morale', shown first of all in the forging of documents to prove that the plan had been fulfilled. The Ministry of State Security knew about the infighting between party entities and the Politburo with the staff of the State Planning Commission of the GDR (*Staatliche Plankommission* – SPK) headed by Paul Gerhard Schürer, who as early as the 1970s tried to halt excessive consumption outlays he knew were unfeasible.<sup>[103]</sup> But GDR's Ministry of State Security never acted on the information about the impending crisis. Unlike Yuri Andropov, who at the end of his life was at least aware

of the necessity for reforms in the USSR, Mielke actually blocked reports critical of the economic reality of the GDR as 'hostile to the party'.<sup>[104]</sup> Not only the head of the secret service was cognisant of the fact that Honecker treated any criticism of that type as both 'imperialist propaganda' and a personal assault on himself and his policies.<sup>[105]</sup> Therefore, unlike Czesław Kiszczak, who, aware of the social and economic crisis in communist Poland, played a major role in the Round Table negotiations, until 1989 Mielke remained in a position assigned by the Politburo even though he knew that the political situation in the GDR was inevitably heading towards a political breakthrough. Besides, the hopes of the SED that by the extension of the *Stasi's* competences, the communists would effectively secure the total docility and active obedience of the East German society – were never fulfilled. The conviction, widespread at least in Poland, that the *Stasi* 'controlled everything' was only partly true. Undoubtedly, by the mass scale use of such classic police methods as bugging, taping, recruitment of secret informants, censorship, police provocations etc., the MfS and its structures quite successfully anchored within the society the general feeling of its omnipresence. This operational tactics used by the security organs resulted in the fear that once an activity, which eventually could be classified as a breach of rules would be detected, it would assuredly entail some severe sanctions targeting not only direct "perpetrators" but also their relatives, friends or neighbours. It is undeniable that it was easier to infiltrate a mere handful of dissidents who decided to challenge the system. Cases of spouses denouncing each other, later exposed by the media (e.g. Knud Wollenberger's written denunciations of his wife Vera Lengsfeld) and the many years of collaboration with the *Stasi* by key figures of the opposition participating in the East German Round Table (*inter alia* Wolfgang Schnur, Ibrahim Böhme) are no doubt genuine. However, as Gieseke believes, the mistrust towards communism had an impact on the *Stasi's* efficiency. In the 1980s, *Stasi* officers were increasingly concerned that proposals for collaboration with the regime were more and more often rejected,<sup>[106]</sup> and cases like that of Vera Lengsfeld were fortunately few and far between. Ultimately, the family proved to be, as a rule, an insurmountable barrier for *Stasi* officers and in the 1980s, the citizens of the GDR would not give up that minimum of privacy.<sup>[107]</sup>

The attempts to enlist the Church's support for the regime's objectives also ended in a fiasco. At first sight, the goals that the Hierarchy of the Lutheran Church and the State representatives wanted to achieve, when they concluded the understanding in 1978, had been – at least to a degree – convergent, as both sides wanted to secure a stabilization of the Church structures within the State. Still, they were never the same. Therefore, at the heart of the controversies, which until 1989 continued to plague the State-Church mutual relations, was the open disagreement on the interpretation of the concept of *Kirche im Sozialismus*. As stated above, this formula served as an ideological basis of the Honecker-Schönherr compromise, and in theory, the essential elements of its content were quite easily understandable. On the one hand, the Church was offered a promise of stabilization within the GDR political system. This goal was to be achieved through the package of concessions bestowed on the Church itself, its clergymen, and some categories of workers employed by the institutions operated by Lutheran communities. In return, the Church was to recognize the GDR as the sovereign legal entity, where the monopoly on political power was strictly reserved to the SED and where the atheism was an officially professed ideological doctrine. Further, the GDR authorities expected the Church to cooperate dutifully and loyally with the government and the party in domestic and in foreign affairs, whenever, and to the extent, the SED or the government would consider such cooperation useful or necessary.

Nevertheless, “the devil was in the details.” In practical terms, for Honecker and the SED, the concept mentioned above – just because it meant that the Lutherans were functioning “within the Socialism” – was tantamount to the unconditional and irrevocable acceptance of the total submission of the Church to the State. According to this line of reasoning, in exchange for the official recognition and some other modest concessions, the Church and its functionaries were deemed to have accepted the task to fulfil blindly all orders, recommendations or simple commands directed to them by the communist party instances or organs of public administration empowered in religious affairs. Thus, in the eyes of the SED leadership, the *Kirche im Sozialismus* formula was tantamount to the ultimate consent of the Lutheran hierarchy to transform their Church into an additional tool in the hands of GDR's decision-makers, by the application of which they wanted to achieve

two intertwined goals. Firstly, the cooperation of the clergy was to secure the maintenance of the support for the existing political *status quo*, especially among those segments of the society that felt more and more disillusioned or frustrated with the increasing difficulties in their day-to-day life. Secondly, the authorities wanted the clergy to get involved in calming down any social discontent or uproar as well as to take part in all actions, which the party deemed necessary to improve the GDR's image abroad. There is no surprise then, that by such an understanding of the actual meaning of the 1978 compromise any sincere cooperation between the State and the Church, let alone a partnership, was from the outset, out of question: in the perspective contemplated by the SED and its leader the future relations between State and the main religious denomination unequivocally were to be of vertical, not of a horizontal character.<sup>[108]</sup>

Such an "understanding" of "cooperation" was not the one Lutherans could accept, at least not without some reservations. It is generally acknowledged among scholars that Bishop Schönherr consented to the conditions submitted to him by Honecker in the hope that once an official recognition of the Church was granted, then – over time – the gains would prevail over disadvantages. Notably, according to Schönherr's logic, even if because of the compromise, the Church adherence would not substantially increase, it would not diminish either. This potential advantage was non-negligible, keeping in mind that during the 1960s and 1970s, the process of secularization (whose origins draw back to as early as the 1920s), dramatically accelerated in the GDR.<sup>[109]</sup> The visible decline in numbers of believers almost automatically undermined the position traditionally held by Lutheranism as the religious denomination with which the majority of the population living on the territory of Eastern Germany had identified since the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>[110]</sup> Since the dwindling support of co-citizens challenged the Church's moral legitimacy to speak "on behalf" of all inhabitants of the country, it was not a surprise that in the eyes of at least some of the clergy, Honecker's bid was – to a degree – attractive.<sup>[111]</sup> Nevertheless, if Schönherr was ready to compromise on the acceptance of the existing political status quo, his expediency did not go so far as to sign up to Honecker's vision reducing the mutual relations to the blind obedience of the Church to the communist party's directives. What he wanted to achieve was, assuredly, a sort

of official recognition coupled with a stabilization of the Lutheran structures within the communist regime. He possibly also dreamt of an extension of the existing margin of tolerance within which some new activities could have been carried out by the institutions operated by the Lutherans. Thus, in this sense the concept of *Kirche im Socialismus* was “the key to the door” for increasing the social engagement of Christians living in the GDR. However, in any case, neither in 1978 and still less later on, he was never inclined to accept the role of the blind executioner of the party’s orders. For him, and for the like-minded members of the Lutheran hierarchy, the concept *Kirche im Socialismus* served as a reference point for the future development of a critical reflection on the condition of the society treated as a whole.<sup>[112]</sup> Needless to add – such reading of the formula – just because of the motives stated above – was unacceptable for the SED and its leader.

As we can see, both understandings of the compromise reached in 1978 differentiated substantially one from another. The reconciliation of these contradictory attitudes turned out to be much more complicated than one might have presumed: in fact, until 1989, the communist party and the Church failed to bridge their positions on this trouble-making issue.<sup>[113]</sup> The reasons for his failure were numerous, but – in hindsight – the most important of them seem to be the following.

As early as in 1978, it became clear that the implementation of the compromise would be everything but an easy task. On the one hand, the Lutheran Church felt that, due to its weakening authority measured in diminishing of the number of believers and churchgoers, it could not risk the direct clash with the SED and the government. Therefore its leadership were doing everything it could to avoid an open confrontation with the SED and – to a possible degree – they loyally and dutifully supported the GDR’s authorities, whenever the latter were seeking to improve their image abroad so that they could contract credits or to obtain some other concessions for the East German economy.<sup>[114]</sup> Still, this position did not match the political course of the SED. In the day-to-day practice, the execution of the 1978 compromise depended on the good faith of the administrative organs and/or party bureaucrats (or both). It turned up very quickly that even if the text of the understanding was signed by none other but Erich Honecker, many party hacks as well as numerous officials or civil servants

(especially those engaged in the institutions in charge of religious affairs) took note of the compromise only reluctantly.<sup>[115]</sup>

Moreover – according to Heino Falcke – the information on the results of the meeting of Honecker’s with Schönherr almost immediately triggered some “countermeasures” orchestrated by the Ministry of Public Security (MfS) aiming at strengthening the *Stasi*’s control over the Church activities.<sup>[116]</sup> This apparent mistrust produced almost immediately the adverse effects as it entailed further deterioration of moods among Lutherans. To some of them, the signature of the compromise (as well as Schönherr’s policy in general) was a matter of enormous controversy. In fact, even some of the high-rank clergymen went so far as to accuse Schönherr of betrayal,<sup>[117]</sup> thus sparking endless discussions on theoretical, theological, and practical consequences of the document he had signed with Honecker. Some members of the hierarchy like the Bishop of Pomeranian Evangelical-Lutheran Church Horst Gienke or the President of the Church in Anhalt – Eberhard Natho, were not only ready to accept the text as such but even adopt more opportunistic attitude towards the SED. Other Bishops like Werner Krusche (who served in 1981–1983 as the President of the League of Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic (*Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR*) – did not share this point of view. As he and the Secretary of the League, Manfred Stolpe, took part in the meeting with Honecker on 6 March 1978, his line was somewhat closer to this represented by Schönherr.<sup>[118]</sup> Finally, some others like the Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg Gerhard Forck or the Bishop of Görlitz Hans Joachim Frenkel were courageous enough to caution publicly against expecting too much.<sup>[119]</sup> In effect, until the very end of the GDR, the Lutheran hierarchy was unable to elaborate a common position on the *Kirche im Sozialismus* formula and – still worse – they were unable to develop a common political line towards the SED and the state authorities.

Moreover, it was clear for the lower clergy that the compromise with the regime did not concern the matter of the utmost importance for ordinary believers: the SED continued its monopoly on the upbringing and education of young people. Those questions were not even symbolically touched by the text of the compromise. Thus, although it was clear that practically all Christians living in the GDR were openly discriminated as they were admitted to higher education establishments only exceptionally,<sup>[120]</sup> the SED

refused to discuss this issue at all.<sup>[121]</sup> Although the repression relented slightly by 1989, practicing members of the Lutheran Church were subject to all types of persecution. Until the collapse of the GDR, they were in fact second-class citizens.<sup>[122]</sup>

Against this backdrop, the position of the Lutheran hierarchy as well as simple clergymen was particularly precarious as they found themselves between a rock and a hard place. The communist party exerted enormous pressure on them to follow its orders and recommendations, although they knew that for many Lutherans, they were unacceptable.<sup>[123]</sup> In effect, had those pastors and Bishops indeed attempted to implement the will of the party, they would have exposed at risk their moral authority in the eyes of their believers. The rejection of those pastors and Bishops who attempted overzealously to follow the SED instructions had to entail the total loss of their utility as the political instrument in the hand of the SED as the stigma of a regime's collaborator automatically diminished the capacity of a stigmatized clergyman to influence the behaviour of his coreligionists.<sup>[124]</sup> Nevertheless, the communist apparatus did not stop, but for a while insisted on timely and accurate implementation of its demands, however rigid or absurd they might have been.<sup>[125]</sup>

This policy, as it placed the Church in the position bordering on simple impossibility, was challenging to understand, let alone to be accepted. And to make matters even worse, over time the mutual State-Church relations not only failed to improve but – on the contrary – they further exacerbated. In 1978, half months after the signing of the compromise, at the initiative of Margot Honecker, the government introduced into the curricula of higher schools the new subject – the military instruction. From September 1978 onwards, it was obligatory to students enrolled in an institution of higher education. The problem was that the radical pacifism was the fundamental element of the religious convictions of many Lutherans living in the GDR and their communities were very active in this field. As for those people, any military training and religious beliefs as such were mutually exclusive, the obligatory character of the former additionally burdened the State – Church agenda, for the GDR authorities refused any discussion on an alternative military service.<sup>[126]</sup> The next conflict arose in 1982 when the authorities introduced the compulsory military service for women.<sup>[127]</sup> Still, even

more frustrating for the younger generation of Lutheran activists, supported at this point by some high-rank representatives of the Lutheran community, was the strong position of the SED rejecting any tolerance of the emerging independent peace movement (unless the one assented and controlled by the regime), and even worse. At this point, in the eyes of the SED apparatus not only were the Lutherans not supportive enough for the party and government policies in general but – to add insult to injury – they were “secret CIA agents”, “counterrevolutionaries” or other “enemies” of the GDR.<sup>[128]</sup> Since this stubborn and inflexible stance was coupled with hysteric reactions to any criticism if it was held publicly by a Lutheran activist – it is not surprising that as early as at the beginning of the 1980s more and more Lutherans had to come to a conclusion that the formula *Kirche im Sozialismus* was a sort of empty slogan whose sole purpose was to mask the actual intentions of the regime targeting the religion as such, but in a bit different form and with a different set of tools.<sup>[129]</sup> Therefore, as early as at the beginning of the 1980s, the State-Church relations entered once again a stage of crisis.

This situation helps to understand why – at the end of the day – some of the Protestant communities supported by the handful of more courageous Bishops ultimately opened the doors to the emerging groups of the GDR’s democratic opposition, whose members were very often non-believers. They did it, partly because they felt that instead of expected dialogue with the authorities, the SED continued the monologue composed of “orders” or “recommendations”, the execution of which was very often beyond the scope of possibilities of the Church, and partly because they were under increasing pressure of the more and more revolted believers, who felt that despite the 1978 agreement, nothing had changed at all.<sup>[130]</sup> Therefore, it was “under the roof” of the Church (or institutions affiliated with it) that the activist of the emerging opposition groups could meet and discuss freely the political or social questions which the government wanted to eradicate from the public discourse. It was also “under this roof”, where they could find – albeit very limited – support and partial understanding for their concerns as the younger generations of Lutherans were not ready to tolerate calmly the open discrimination.<sup>[131]</sup> To be sure: not all of the emerging organizations belonging to the category of dissident

movement, received direct assistance from the Church. It is also true that the mere fact that an organization X or Y decided to ask for the “religious asylum” did not make them automatically an organization of “converted Lutherans” even if – in individual cases – some activists could have been attracted by the spiritual or intellectual force of the Lutheranism.

Nevertheless, in the eyes of the SED, these complex relations were completely immaterial. The mere fact that some members of the Protestant community created a niche filled by a movement demanding change in the GDR outraged the authorities. The communist functionaries, as well as bureaucrats engaged in Church Affairs administration vigorously protested against any kind of tolerance for dissident movement. They believed that their concessions in ecclesiastical policy did never go so far as to give the Lutheran Church the right to offer asylum to critics of the system. Therefore, in their contacts with high rank clergymen and other representatives of Lutheran communities, they repeatedly demanded – in no uncertain terms – not only cessation of any form of cooperation between the believers and persons classified as the political dissidents but also an active support of actions targeting this movement.<sup>[132]</sup>

Still, in the second half of the 1980s, the simple threats or acts of public condemnation of the Church and some of its leaders as of groups having the “counterrevolutionary character” or even intimidation by *Stasi* failed to produce the effect expected by the authorities. On the contrary, these measures appeared counterproductive. During the 1980s, the frustration and disillusionment among Lutherans were on the constant rise, and the botched repressions orchestrated by the MfS only accelerated this process<sup>[133]</sup> making criminal or administrative sanction less and less effective. Moreover, if at the beginning of the 1980s the Lutheran hierarchy as a whole was rather not inclined to defend openly those who were arrested, fined or persecuted in another manner<sup>[134]</sup> (on the contrary: on numerous occasions they attempted to damp the moods in the communities and within the society, if they found them “too radical”),<sup>[135]</sup> over time – even if they never espoused the cause of the democratic opposition – they visibly inched towards a more distanced attitude towards the SED and the regime as such.

By 1985, it was rather clear that the original plans of the communist party to transform the declining Lutheran communities into an additional

tool of control and oppression were not implementable, as most of high rank hierarchy were not ready to fulfill those tasks.<sup>[136]</sup> Moreover, over time, the feelings among Lutherans deteriorated even further, as it became clear that in fact the communists did not want to discuss any problems disturbing the society, no matter whether those concerning the catastrophic state of environment or discrimination of believers in establishments of public education, let alone disarmament or peace which the authorities considered as an issue reserved to their discretion. In such a sort of situation, the eruption of a much more acute crisis between the Church and the State could have been solely the question of time.<sup>[137]</sup>

During the 1987 Görlitz Synod, some of the activists led by Heino Falcke already demanded a more decisive reaction from the ecclesiastical hierarchy to the abhorrent unlawful activity of the *Stasi*. Many party executives saw the very fact that the voice of the opposition was allowed during Synod meetings as an insult, although most Synod members opposed Falcke's ideas.<sup>[138]</sup> This visible "lack of enthusiasm" of the hierarchy to subordinate itself to the SED policies, coupled with the open criticism formulated by Falcke, almost immediately triggered the wave of repressions targeting not only dissidents but also some clergymen and the institution of the Church as such. On 25 November 1987, MfS functionaries raided the caves of the Lutheran community house at the Sion Church in Berlin (*Zion Kirche*), apparently seeking in the Environmental Library located therein copies of "Grenzfall", a magazine which was illegally published by the underground group IFM, which from the outset declared its distance to the State and to the Church as well.<sup>[139]</sup> Although technically speaking this raid ended with an obvious fiasco (the *Stasi* failed to find any *samizdat* in the rooms they searched), still the collections of the Library were sequestered (the authorities threatened to close it down) and many persons were arrested, including Wolfram Hülsemann, who served at this community as a young pastor.<sup>[140]</sup> The scandal which broke out after this missed "law and order" operation was enormous and went well beyond the borders of the GDR, and was politically extremely costly for the regime. On the one hand, from one day to another all arrested persons became recognizable members of the anticommunist movements as their names were quoted in Western media. On the other hand, the circumstances of the police raid (the sequestration took place

during the night, the functionaries entered the caves without any prior advice and in flagrant breach of many other rules of criminal procedure) infuriated not only Lutherans but also many people who were rather politically neutral. In the wake of this event, spontaneous protests took place around the Church. Moreover, Manfred Stolpe, the very influential personality of the Lutheran world (he served as the President of the Consistory of the Eastern Region of the Evangelical Church Berlin-Brandenburg, but who until then was rather skeptical about the maintenance any contacts with the opposition<sup>[141]</sup>), declared his readiness to represent as a professional lawyer all detained persons had the authorities decided to launch criminal proceedings against them.<sup>[142]</sup>

From early 1988 onwards, the State-Church relations deteriorated even further. Even after the Synod in Görlitz, Honecker felt offended and canceled the previously scheduled meeting with Bishop Werner Leich.<sup>[143]</sup> After the “*Zionkirche* case” both sides needed some months to reestablish working contacts on the highest level. When finally on 6 March 1988, both personalities met with one another, it was clear that Leich was not inclined any more to pledge to Honecker the continuation of the previous line. Notably, he made him aware that without substantial change of domestic policy, the Church might not play the role of an intermediary (let alone, a transmission belt) between the regime and the society. According to the Bishop, keeping in mind the present circumstances – such a task was nothing else than a sort of “mission impossible”. The Honecker’s answer did not include any novelties, as he reiterated his previous position and the meeting ended without constructive conclusions.<sup>[144]</sup> During the rest of the year, the State-Church relations stalemated. The authorities tightened the censorship of the media published under the auspices of the Lutherans and continued its previous tactics being the mixture of intimidation, public condemnations and selective repressions.<sup>[145]</sup> As the economic situation got worse from one month to another, and the social moods in the GDR continued to deteriorate, such a policy could not bring any other effects but the eruption of frustration of all those who – like Lutherans – had strong moral legitimacy to accuse the existing status quo for failing to treat them on an equal footing. During the Synod in Oranienburg, which took place in 1988, its members demanded not only religious freedoms but also freedom of the press, some economic

reforms, finally the right to leave the GDR for everybody who was ready to lodge an appropriate application.<sup>[146]</sup> The Synod in Dessau convoked in September 1988, conversely to the previous Synod in Görlitz, strongly condemned the realities of the GDR, and practically refused to continue the cooperation on the basis of the previous conditions.<sup>[147]</sup> Even though this signal was very strong it did not manage to change the political line of the SED. A public argument between Politburo member Werner Jarowinsky, who called the church “the Trojan horse” of the West and Bishop Werner Leich,<sup>[148]</sup> who in his moderate yet unambiguous response, without questioning the leading role of the party censured the authorities, indicating that the ‘Church in socialism’ formula was clearly coming to an end.

## Communist Reformers and Democratic Opposition in the GDR in the 1980s

According to the present-day state of knowledge, it is safe to say that the origins of erosion of the SED had begun still in the 1970s when at least a part of the SED core observed that the accumulating economic problems posed an actual risk for the communist power in the GDR.<sup>[149]</sup> Later on, when it appeared clear that the leadership was unable to cope with the aggravating economic and social problems, the moods within the Communist party deteriorated even further. They too, were aware of the attractiveness of the FRG; they also felt that unless someone was a member of the nomenklatura, the standard of living was not too high. They believed that the continuation of the current policy led to nowhere and could terminate with the eruption of social unrest with the consequences they considered as risky for their careers or even personal safety. The additional factors, exacerbating the moods among members of the SED, were the perspectives (or rather lack thereof) for a quick career within the apparatus. The problem was that the generation of Honecker, who started his political carrier as a functionary of the Communist Youth, could attain high posts within the administration, party apparatus, media, industry, and other branches of state machinery relatively quickly. They could do it, because they could

use “the window of opportunities” created by the post-WWII political vacuum. The same was not true of the generation born in the late 1950s and the 1960s. No doubt, the slowdown of professional careers of those who entered the labour market at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s was caused by some objective factors (e. g. a longer education period, political situation of the country, etc.). On the other hand, it was rather evident that neither the aging Honecker nor his comrades in the Politburo, wanted to promote younger activists. The necessity to wait for years to attain the next step within the state and the SED hierarchy was an additional factor generating frustration within the lower ranks of the party.<sup>[150]</sup>

It is beyond doubt that in the 1980s, more and more disillusioned rank and file SED members, and some high-rank nomenklatura functionaries were not afraid to comment on the GDR realities critically, but they did so only in private. In theory, those circles, which encompassed such different personalities as Paul Gerhard Schürer or the first secretary of the SED in Dresden Hans Modrow, or even the head of the Intelligence Service Marcus ‘Mischa’ Wolf, welcomed enthusiastically Gorbachev’s ascent to power. It is more than certain that the deterioration of the economic situation propelled this group of high-rank SED functionaries (who could count on the support of some officers of public administration, but also – to a degree – some members of the Politburo) to adopt a bit sturdier, and negative, stance towards the Stoph government’s economic policies.<sup>[151]</sup> They did it because at that stage there were some visible signs of the erosion of power (including the symptoms of an apparent lack of obedience of some local party committees or even signs of deteriorating cooperation between the Politburo and the government headed by Willy Stoph).<sup>[152]</sup> Moreover, it seems almost sure that at least some of those activists (especially Wolf and Modrow) were convinced that the ousting of Honecker was the first step to launching a vast programme of domestic reforms, and they were ready to model the future of the GDR on the ideological platform based more or less on the doctrinal support of perestroika. Against this backdrop, it seems like little surprise that in the second half of the 1980s, Modrow’s name as a potential candidate to the post of the Secretary-General of the SED was circulating in cabinets and corridors. Still, for numerous reasons discussed below, this dissatisfaction (or even resentment) of the existing realities had

never attained the threshold beyond which a coup within the communist party could have had any visible chances of success.

The reformers were never able to submit any realistic alternative economic programme, which could serve as an ideological vehicle for significant changes of the existing status quo, and which could have been accepted by the Soviets as well as by Honecker and the rest of the party. In the GDR's realities, the room for any political manoeuvre was minimal. The Hungarian style privatization coupled with the inflow of foreign capital could expect acceptance neither by the USSR nor the party itself, as such a solution presumably had to lead to the increasing economic dependency on the FRG, which Gorbachev wanted to avoid at any price until the autumn of 1989.<sup>[153]</sup> Another strategy focusing on cut spending, coupled with some budget constraints, had necessarily to result in a diminishing of financial resources at the disposal of the Defence Ministry or in limiting the financing for some most expensive investment R&D projects in the area of micro-electronics. Neither the former nor the latter could find the Politburo's approval.<sup>[154]</sup> It is true that in the case of the GDR neither dogmatists nor reformists were able to answer the question on the policies which could have cured more and more deteriorating economic situation,<sup>[155]</sup> still, as all steps pondered in the camps of technocrats were seen as "too risky" for the stability of the GDR, there is little surprise that not only dogmatists were opposed to any substantial economic reforms. In fact, the Soviets also were not hurrying to intervene in favour of GDR's reformers. The central tenet of all counter-arguments the dogmatists submitted to Moscow can be brought to one point: "Perhaps the situation in the GDR is unsatisfactory, but in any case of failure of programmes the reformers were pondering – the political cost for Moscow itself would be very high".<sup>[156]</sup>

It seems that it was precisely this argument that cooled the enthusiasm of the CPSU to accept the plans aiming at profound reforms of East Germany. Moscow knew that, had the plans considered by such persons as Schürer or Modrow finished in failure, their fiasco would have entailed the destabilization of or even the loss of control over the country. Keeping in mind that in the 1980s, the political role of the FRG in Europe was still increasing, it was evident that by such a scenario, the reunification of Germany was more than probable. What is more: by this reunification scenario, which was to take

place eventually without the control of the SED, Gorbachev had to go empty-handed, for the West would not have had to ask Moscow for its political assent. By those circumstances, there is little surprise then, that the USSR did not want to embark on the political support of the Perestroika sympathizers in the GDR, and the Secretary General of the CPSU had no courage to offer any assistance to the SED reformers. Rather the opposite is true: despite his profound animosity towards Honecker, he tacitly approved the grievances and denunciations, which the hardliners were transmitting via secret cables to the Soviets against their emerging competitors who – paradoxically – were declaring their fidelity to perestroika and glasnost. Nevertheless, by his refusal to intervene directly in the ongoing dispute within the SED Politburo, Gorbachev actually contributed to the maintaining of the status quo up until the autumn of 1989. Therefore, for the Soviets, until the end of the Honecker's era the arguments of the SED hardliners as well as their line of reasoning were much more persuasive than any other advantages or gains they could have eventually received in return for support of such politicians like Modrow or Wolf. Thus, despite the increasing frustration within the communist party, before 1989, the SED politicians belonging to the category of communist reformers had been in the visible minority. Unable to develop any coherent political programme, conflicted among themselves and afraid of a possible counteraction launched by Honecker and his omnipresent *Stasi* – they were quite easily marginalized within the SED, and they remained isolated from the society. Without the support of the Soviets, before 1989, they had no chance to play a more significant role in the GDR politics.

The history of the democratic opposition in the GDR is even more complicated. Theoretically, dissident activity in the GDR began in the mid-1970s, when in the wake of the signature of the Final Act of the CSCE in Helsinki some nonconformist intellectuals dared to protests against the GDR's reality. When in 1976, the singer and poet Wolf Biermann, who was quite critical of the Honecker regime was stripped off of the GDR citizenship while on tour in the FRG, a wave of disappointment surged among artists (the written protest prepared by writers Stefan Heym and Stephan Hermlin was subscribed to by close to 100 prominent representatives of culture). The SED's leader reacted to the 'rebellion' with further sanctions (the most active individuals, along with Heym, were expelled from the Writers' Union in 1979 and

the opportunities for their artistic work were curbed).<sup>[157]</sup> In the following years, most of those who were sanctioned in 1979, for example Kurt Bartsch, Karl-Heinz Jakobs, Klaus Poche, Klaus Schlesinger, and Joachim Seyppel, decided to leave for the FRG,<sup>[158]</sup> which for most of them meant an end to their active membership in the emerging dissident movement. A separate position among the critics of the SED was occupied by Robert Havemann, a world-renowned chemist who had fought Hitler's regime (as, for example, a member of the famous Red Orchestra and a political prisoner sentenced to death in a Nazi show trial who miraculously avoided execution). In 1964, he was excluded from the communist party (and in 1966 from the GDR Academy of Sciences as well). In the 1970s, Havemann grew more and more critical of the system, sometimes expressing that in public. Such a "disobedient" behaviour of a former "true believer" of the communist ideology infuriated the *Stasi*, which in 1976 put him under the two-years-long house arrest and later tried to implicate him in foreign currency crimes.<sup>[159]</sup> The sign of increasing criticism, coupled with the readiness to demonstrate it publicly, could also be registered among some members of the Protestant clergy; the most dramatic act was the 1976 public self-immolation of the Rev. Oskar Brüsewitz. In the 1970s, 'controversial' comments about state matters and the attitude of consistorial hierarchy were made by Heino Falcke, theologian and clergyman.<sup>[160]</sup> It is crucial to underline, however, that until the end of 1970s all those individual acts of courage remained rather isolated:<sup>[161]</sup> the communist regime dealt very efficiently with any form of criticism expressed publicly. The authorities severely punished all those who were suspected or guilty of civil disobedience or sympathy to the persons targeted by the repressive measures or even coerced them to leave the GDR.<sup>[162]</sup>

With the advent of the following decade and the ongoing deterioration of the moods of the society, the task of combating the opposition became somewhat more complicated. On the one hand, the events in 1980/1981 in Poland not only terrified the *Stasi* but also furnished an ideological and practical inspiration for some German critics of Honecker's regime.<sup>[163]</sup> The ecological crisis, coupled with the first indications of economic stagnation, entailed a significant increase in the number of public protests addressed to the party or the government. For example, in March 1982, after the adoption of a new law on compulsory military service, which extended

the duty of military service to women, close to 150 women, led by Ulrike Poppe and Bärbel Bohley, wrote an open letter of protest to Honecker. In essence, the signatories found the project incompatible with the idea of the struggle for peace and, making use of the ties with the Scandinavian and West German movement, Women for Peace (*Frauen für Frieden – FfF*), tried to set up women's groups fighting for peace, which while acting independently of the government, were to exert pressure on the authorities to make a more active contribution to the disarmament policy. However, soon the FfF network was immediately registered by the *Stasi*. In 1983, both initiators of the protest were detained.<sup>[164]</sup> Still, in the 1980s, the GDR had to take into account some possible adverse effects that such drastic measures could have entailed for the ongoing negotiations with the FRG government on the potential financial assistance or additional credits. Keeping in mind that the public outcry, which this step triggered in the country and abroad, was loud, the authorities decided to adopt a bit softer position. That is, after some weeks of incarceration, the SED functionaries told to release Ulrike Poppe and Bärbel Bohley from detention.<sup>[165]</sup> The events took the same course in the case of *Friedensgemeinschaft Jena*, which occurred in the same year. This small community associating believers as well as atheists understood itself as a non-political organization fighting for Peace and Justice. At the turn of 1982/1983, they organized small demonstrations that were almost immediately disbanded by the authorities. As a result, all participants were placed under arrest.<sup>[166]</sup> However, under the pressure of international public opinion, they were soon released from prison.<sup>[167]</sup>

This new political course of the regime, which sought to paralyze the efforts of the emerging dissident movement without using the ultimate sanctions against its most notable members (that is, without carrying out their physical elimination),<sup>[168]</sup> quickly entailed the development of new groups contesting the GDR realities. These groups had very multifaceted social profile as well as very differentiated ideological origins and purposes. Therefore, their expectations or demands addressed to the authorities were also everything but uniform. Some of them focused on the questions of human rights. The others were associating young ecologists. A non-negligible part of this emerging movement considered peace as their main point of concern.<sup>[169]</sup>

Moreover, circles closer to the Lutheran Church (including Heino Falcke, who at the Görlitz Synod founded a periodical, submitted an appeal titled *Absage an Praxis und Prinzip der Abgrenzung*) were closer to the left-ist branch of the Protestantism. However, the most notable opposition group, which went down to the history of the GDR's dissident movement, was the Peace and Human Rights Initiative (*Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte* – IFM). This organization was set up on 24 January 1986<sup>[170]</sup> and was patterned on the best practices of the Czech Charter 77. Among its founders were physicist Gerd Poppe, his wife Ulrike, the painter Bärbel Bohley, as well as Wolfgang Templin, and Ralf Hirsch.

The history of the IFM is worth mentioning as – to an extent – it mirrors all perplexities, which the dissident movement faced during the 1980s in East Germany. Contrary to the initiatives discussed above, this group was relatively well organized and equipped. It existed for about two years (until January 1988).<sup>[171]</sup> This makes it the longest-ever-existing dissident group in the GDR under Honecker era. Ideologically, IMF understood itself as a group, acting in total independence from the Lutheran Church and organizations affiliated with them. This independence – although in theory unlocked the group from any ideological, organizational, or religious constraints – entailed specific additional price as it deprived its members of any defence or public support of the clergy and – at least in theory – the access to the Lutheran infrastructure. These circumstances automatically determined the tactics of the IMF, which did not want to go underground. Similarly to the tactics used by the Polish KOR, the group did everything possible to act publicly: their members – to the extent possible – resigned from the advantages which could bring them the conspiracy and secrecy so that they could be recognizable to the general public as a group of quasi-legal opposition. Therefore, even if the group issued the *Grenzfall* periodical outside of proper circulation, still – IFM members published their articles without any cover of anonymity or under a pen name, signing them with their names and giving to the public knowledge their respective addresses. Still, despite all those attempts – the overall performance of the IFM (and the GDR's democratic opposition as a whole) remained within limits determined by the political, social, economic, and cultural conditions of the state in which they were living and acting. Actually, until

the end of the GDR existence, neither the IFM nor any other group were able to exploit the increasing disappointment among society (especially within the circles of East German youths) caused primarily by the worsening of the economic situation. They did not submit for discussion any viable political alternative for the existing status quo, let alone to establish any stronger relations with East German society as a whole. The reasons for this incapacity to influence the course of events in East Germany effectively – in the political sense of this word – were numerous. Undoubtedly, however, keeping in mind the realities of the GDR, it is safe to state that the task to take over the political initiative constituted a formidable challenge for the dissident movement because of the three different but intertwined factors.

Firstly, as it was stated above,<sup>[172]</sup> until the end of 1989, the FRG governments were not inclined to support any organization existing on the territory of the GDR, which the SED considered as an illegal one. As the governments of West Germany were not interested in maintaining contacts with the emerging movement (not even to mention offering any substantial assistance), it is not surprising that the main instrument of combating the political opposition applied by the SED remained practically the same as those used in the 1970s: once established that a particular group of persons wants to organize an action qualified arbitrarily as a subversive activity, the authorities placed all those people in detention. If the outcry abroad (especially in the FRG) was loud, then the detained activists were released and – soon after that, very often against their will – deported beyond the state border, most commonly to West Berlin. An additional measure, practiced by the GDR regime since the early 1960s, were the ‘ransoms’ paid by West German authorities for people imprisoned for their political views; Bonn agreed to pay to the communist regime between c. 40,000 and 100,000 Deutsche marks for every person released.<sup>[173]</sup> The consequences of this morally dubious practice (even though motivated by humanitarian considerations) proved to be disastrous for the emerging democratic opposition as it weakened even further those circles, who potentially could participate in initiatives independent of the East German authorities. It should be pointed out that, on the one hand, by applying this tactic, Honecker could soften a bit the moral stigma usually attributed to any grave human

rights violations by Western public opinion. On the other hand, by the same tactic, he could also bring the mere existence of a particular group abruptly to its ultimate end. Therefore, the central dilemma the dissidents faced in the GDR was the question of how to maintain the continuity of their activities, and those circumstances also partly explain why the intellectuals' rebellion of the 1970s which erupted in the wake of the Wolf Biermann expulsion, never bore fruit with any initiative resembling Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia or the KOR in Poland. In the GDR – this was simply impossible because forced 'expulsions' of subversive individuals from the country, used as a unique 'political technology', persisted until 1989, and efficiently prevented a smooth and continuous extension of opposition structures. In the realities of the GDR, the recruitment of some new people who would be ready to continue the work begun by the first generation of the dissidents was everything but an easy task. In the case of sudden arrest followed by immediate deportation of all (or almost all) members of the group beyond the state border, that was a true challenge. Consequently, when the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, a large part of the East German opposition was able to watch these events exclusively on West German television. Direct involvement, because of bans on entering the GDR or outstanding court sentences in force, was out of the question. In fact, until the collapse of the Honecker regime – the German democratic opposition was unable to invent any remedy for these drastic but efficient repressive measures.

Secondly, until the end of the existence of East Germany, the opposition failed to create a common independent political platform or at least a sort of umbrella network coordinating activities of all movements contesting the existing status quo. The reasons for this failure were also numerous. True, the sizable control and surveillance apparatus prevented any regular exchange of views, and, in such conditions, the rules of a strict conspiracy were required. It is beyond any doubts that many groups were working in isolation, and – just because of that – they were very often unaware of the existence of other conspirators (and even if they had known, they would have faced the problem of how to distinguish a real conspirator from a secret agent or *Stasi* provocateur).<sup>[174]</sup> Still, the lack of coordination in activities of dissident movement may not be brought to the issue of the *Stasi*'s effectiveness only. The ideological division lines were the critical factor,

which contributed mainly to the decomposition of the GDR's opposition. As stated above, the opposition activists, from a host of different circles, had diverse visions of the changes to be introduced in the GDR. Moreover, they were also quarrelling on the question of tactics towards the SED and the existing regime as such. For example, some human rights groups placing their focus on the issue of human rights protection could have found themselves in the open conflict with those activists, prioritizing the fight for peace for whom the human rights agenda was of secondary importance.<sup>[175]</sup> The leftist Protestant Christian-democrats could agree on some points with the environmentalists (even if they were distanced from the church). Still, the task to find common ground with lovers of punk rock, derided because of their non-conformist hairstyles – could have been more complicated.<sup>[176]</sup> If some groups contemplated the future political regime as anchored in the ideology of the democratic-liberalism, others were of the opinion that the socialism in the GDR would and should have been improved – not replaced with the “rule of law” doctrine.<sup>[177]</sup> To sum up: the plethora of different groups pursuing different political, social, environmental, or cultural goals made the task of unification of the opposition in the GDR practically impossible.<sup>[178]</sup> Until 1989, the groups – if they managed to “survive” the expulsions of their members to the FRG – cooperated one with another rather sporadically, and the differences discussed above persisted until the final days of the German communist state.

Thirdly, this fragmentation of the East German dissident movement was further exacerbated by the relations between the opposition movement and the Lutheran Church. As stated in the previous sub-chapter – since the 1980s onward some courageous pastors (e.g. Reiner Eppelmann, Heino Falcke) supported by such personalities like Bishop Forck were more and more inclined to accept “under the roof” of the Church members of the dissident movement. Those gestures of comity or solidarity went hand in hand with the increasing frustration among Lutherans caused by the stubborn politics of the SED. Nevertheless, despite this general feeling, that the matters were going wrong in relations of State with the Church, the question of cooperation with dissidents was for most of Lutherans a rather tricky one and on many occasions sparked serious controversies among them. What is more: they never did work out a common stance

on this issue. Some members of the protestant hierarchy (such as Horst Gienke) remained adamantly opposed to the very idea of closer co-operation with the people who, very often, were considered by them to be proponents of atheism. Others, such as Georg Forck, went in a radically opposite direction (occasionally, he even dared to submit official protests against the persecution of democratic opposition).<sup>[179]</sup> Others, like Georg Krusche or Johannes Hampel, were seeking a compromise between those two extreme positions. The problem was that this lack of clarity in the attitude of leadership of East German Lutherans towards the regime had very often some practical consequences, which in the eyes of many (if not the majority) of dissidents were not acceptable.

In essence, in the contacts with the authorities, the line adopted by most of the high-rank clergymen could be brought to two principles. On the one hand (unless they were the *Stasis's* secret agents), they were somewhat opposed to taking part openly in persecutions of dissidents. Moreover, in contacts with authorities they sought to persuade the officers pressuring them to joint anti-dissident actions that such a stance could bring only the counterproductive effects. On the other hand, they were very cautious in joining any initiatives or actions if they were organized beyond the control of the Church. Therefore, if the organizers of a happening or a demonstration, which the authorities classified as directed against the SED or the government, belonged to the dissident movement, then usually the leadership of the Church took a distance or even publicly condemned them. In many instances this cautious approach could go even so far as the adoption of public statements dissenting from the demands submitted publicly by the members of the opposition groups or even imposition of sanctions on those pastors, whose contacts with persons criticizing the regime were – in the eyes of the SED – too close or too familiar.<sup>[180]</sup> To sum up: in the realities of the GDR, the Lutheran institutions could offer a roof for those who were persecuted. It is also true that by the late 1980s some Bishops could publicly protest against unlawful arrests or detentions, or even tolerate some meetings during which a free discussion on matters treated as a taboo in the GDR propaganda was admissible.<sup>[181]</sup> Still, the enjoyment of the Church infrastructure for the activities directed openly against the authorities was – as a matter of principle – out of the question.<sup>[182]</sup>

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that many members of the dissident movement found the political line of the Lutheran Church towards the regime too soft or too anxious. In their view, the oppressive character of Honecker's system warranted a much more radical stance – and this view was very often not shared by the clergymen or by the majority of Lutherans' laity. This radicalization was marked by the significant shift in the ongoing ideological debate, which took place around 1985. Since its main moral onus was previously placed on peace or ecology, since the mid-1980s onwards, the question of human rights protection slowly but steadily was gaining the attractiveness among dissident circles. Therefore, the process of emergence and crystallization of the dissident organizations, which appeared in the second half of the 1980s, was very often connected with the relaxation of their relations with the Church<sup>[183]</sup> and its hierarchy whose activities they assessed not going sufficiently far enough to find acceptance on moral or practical grounds.<sup>[184]</sup> True, in the late 1980s, the frustration among Lutherans and their clergymen who were persistently and groundlessly castigated because of their alleged disloyalty towards the regime were on the constant rise. Besides, since 1987 onwards, the first signs of the radicalization among Lutheran laity and some pastors could not go unnoticed. During the Synod in Oranienburg, which took place in 1988, some of its members demanded not only religious freedoms but also freedom of the press, some economic reforms, finally the right to leave the GDR for everybody ready to lodge an appropriate application.<sup>[185]</sup> It is also true that – as it was stated above – when in 1988 the authorities arrested members of the IFM, their release from prison was negotiated by none other but Manfred Stolpe,<sup>[186]</sup> even if this organization did never hide its reservations towards the Church, and he knew it perfectly well. Still, neither the frustration nor the processes of radicalization mentioned above entailed the strengthening of the co-operation between the Lutherans and the opposition as such. For even if with time, more and more pastors were ready to grant shelter to democratic opposition activists, and although in 1989 the tensions between the SED and the government on the one side and the Church on the other brought their mutual relations on the verge of the total collapse, both groups, although in conflict with authorities, still acted preferably in parallel and not in a concerted manner.<sup>[187]</sup>

Lastly, to make matters even worse, in the late 1980s, the GDR's opposition groups, debating endlessly on the future of the country apparently overlooked that they were dramatically at variance with social expectations. In short, the Marxist origins of most of the members of the dissident movement determined their views on West Germany, which in those circles was considered as a "capitalist state". With such an entity, the emerging East German opposition did not want to have anything in common. Their programme was based on a reform of the existing GDR, the ultimate goals of which would be the implementation of a "Third Way" vision, which, while eliminating all deficiencies of the existing political regime in East Germany, at the same time would offer a better model than the one implemented in the neighbouring West German state. That is why many members of the democratic opposition were adamantly opposed to all those who applied for the emigration permit. In the eyes of the democratic circles (and this was one of the few common points which they shared with the communist government as well as with many clergymen, including a high-rank official of the Church as well as those, who, like Heino Falcke, strongly condemned the realities of the GDR),<sup>[188]</sup> such an act was tantamount to a sort of treason of ideas.<sup>[189]</sup> The problem was that such a strong stance on the "right to flee" was in open contradiction with the feelings of the increasing number of desperate citizens, who, having observed that the communist party rejected any idea of reforms, desperately wanted to leave for "the West".<sup>[190]</sup> As mentioned above, thanks to West German television and personal visits (under pressure from Bonn, East Berlin had had to consent to further liberalization of passport regulations), the inhabitants of the GDR were increasingly prone to escaping from their country as they became acutely aware that the differences in the living standards of both Germanys were becoming insurmountable. However, this awareness did not mean that they were more willing to get involved in the process of changes; first and foremost, it said a will to emigrate to the more affluent West Germany.

Consequently, the ideas of opposition groups to reform the state, with which fewer and fewer citizens of the GDR could identify, were found to be incomprehensible. In the late 1980s, to reiterate what has been said before, young people in the GDR had only one dream: to leave for West Germany as soon as possible. No surprise then that as early as in 1988,

some of the prominent GDR intellectuals, notably Jürgen Kuczynski, felt the upcoming disaster and did not exclude the collapse of the state in the foreseeable future.<sup>[191]</sup>

Summing up those experiences, one can easily understand why the GDR dissident groups had no chance to influence the course of events in the country. They could not create even an umbrella organization, which could coordinate efforts or initiatives of the particular organizations aiming at softening the repressive character of the regime. Keeping in mind all factors discussed above that was simply not possible. And still, as impossible the task of creation of a common political platform could have been, the price East Germany had to pay for the lack of robust anti-regime movement in 1989 and in the next decades was rather high. Still, one should not forget that, despite those highly unfavourable circumstances, which made any dissident activities extremely difficult, an opposition movement truly existed in the GDR, and by the end of the 1980s, its voice was even more audible from one month to another.<sup>[192]</sup> Although the *Stasi* made every effort possible to destroy those small and isolated groups, by the end of the 1980s, the officers of the secret police were more and more convinced that their struggle was simply fruitless.<sup>[193]</sup> One should also take into account that in 1989, the ideas of the dissident movement, notably: peace, tolerance, environmentalism, so-called basic democracy or equity, belonged to the cannon, which strongly influenced at least in part the ideological climate of September-October 1989.<sup>[194]</sup> And – last but not least – it found its reliable place in the history of Germany, even if the values the dissidents were fighting for could have been implemented but in part only.

## 1989

Despite increasing social, economic, and political problems, at the beginning of 1989, the GDR seemed to be stable, and its authorities looked as if they had effectively controlled the peoples' behaviour, their views, and preferences. Still, this assessment made at first glance was misleading. In fact, during the first three months, the moods within the state apparatus were

steadily but continuously deteriorating. The *Stasi* did everything it could to prevent inhabitants from taking an active part in public manifestations of their bitterness. However, as noted by the MfS functionaries – at the turn of 1988/89, the opinion of the GDR's citizens significantly shifted: if in the 1980s someone was arrested because of his/her views, the most frequent reaction of bystanders was a hardly positive one for those targeted with repressive measures. In 1989, even if declared opponents to the regime could not count on the open sympathy of the crowd, still the action of security forces and police were more and more frequently booed and their functionaries met with verbal aggression of eyewitnesses of their actions.<sup>[195]</sup> The number of GDR's citizens who managed to leave the state and to move over to the FRG dramatically increased as well. Only in January, the number of those who managed to escape to the West attained 4627, while the number of those who left the GDR's territory legally reached 3741. In February, both figures achieved 5008, and 4087 respectively; in March 5671 and 4487.<sup>[196]</sup> In April, the media informed about the acute deterioration of the supply in essentials, increasing lines at doors of food-stores, as well as about party officials urging other organs to improve this desolate situation quickly.<sup>[197]</sup> These warning signals were further exacerbated by the macroeconomic data: according to the information that Paul Gerhard Schürer submitted at the meeting of SED functionaries in charge of economic matters, monthly, the external debt was increasing by 0.5 billion DM. Schürer also added, that had this trend been stopped, then in 1991 the insolvency of the GDR would have been unavoidable.<sup>[198]</sup>

In 1989, both the fledgling opposition and the communist party were completely unprepared to face the imminent challenge. First of all, the SED's activities demonstrated a total incomprehension of the processes taking place, even though the GDR leadership and intelligence services were aware of the shift in the international situation to the detriment of Berlin. At this point of time, the signs of the erosion of the state power were visible to everyone, not only to party hacks, but also to all Eastern Germans: the decrease of morale among workers was caused principally by the lack of investment (which entailed more and more often breakdowns in production), lack of new equipment, poor quality of environment and unhealthy living conditions.<sup>[199]</sup> And even if critical comments on the current situation

were made only in private, not (yet) in public, still the growing unrest could not have been overlooked. All the same, Honecker decided to make his external and internal policy even stricter. The mounting crisis in relations with Moscow was evidenced by the conflict related to the subscription for the *Sputnik* monthly,<sup>[200]</sup> which the GDR authorities decided to discontinue in November 1988.<sup>[201]</sup> Although society in the GDR was not really used to voicing its discontent, this time the decision of the SED leadership outraged ordinary party members. Censorship of Soviet press was for most Marxists (in particular those raised in the Stalinist period, not used to criticising the will of Moscow) unacceptable. The 10,000 people sending letters to the Central Committee on this matter even included *Stasi* officers.<sup>[202]</sup> Because of the wide social reverberations of the letters, the matter was addressed by the Politburo, which saw these activities only as violations of party discipline. Consequently, the regime responded only with more or less stringent sanctions. The exact kind thereof depended in large measure on the social status of the sender and the penalties were meted out personally by the head of the *Stasi*, Mielke.<sup>[203]</sup>

The leadership of the *Stasi* saw with concern that sentiments demonstrating a lack of faith in further work could be seen even among *Stasi* officers, who previously had loyally obeyed all party orders.<sup>[204]</sup> These concerns were augmented by the fact that in November 1988, under pressure from the *Stasi*, the provisions of the regulation on 'International Travel by GDR Citizens' grew even stricter. Therefore, obtaining permission to leave the country became, contrary to all expectations, much harder than before. Social frustration mounted, as proved by the huge number of applications and appeals against negative decisions.

A partial change of the regulation in March 1989, an initiative of the Central Committee secretary for security, Egon Krenz, attempted to restore the legal state from before the unpopular changes. However, in March 1989, such a partial solution was unable to placate society.<sup>[205]</sup> The *Stasi* reacted to these amendments with ill-concealed resentment.<sup>[206]</sup> After the '*Sputnik* Affair' it had become moreover clear to everyone that most citizens very much liked Gorbachev, who embodied hopes for changes in the rigid dictatorship, and that his popularity greatly surpassed that of any GDR politician.

This was troublesome for Honecker, since Moscow had been the highest instance of interpreting communist dogmas.

Honecker would not hear of any prospects of getting rid of the Berlin Wall. His statement of 18 January 1989 went down in history: "The Wall will still be standing in 50 and even in 100 years, if the reasons for it have not been removed by then."<sup>[207]</sup> The party leader took this opportunity to sharply criticise all those in favour of scrapping the wall, who in that way 'tried to threaten peace in Europe'. That those were not merely empty promises was shown by the dramatic event of the shooting of Chris Gueffroy, who tried to cross, illegally, to the other side of the wall on 5 February. In the wake of worldwide protests, Gueffroy became the last victim of the Berlin Wall, as in April Honecker, "given the current situation," banned shooting at the escapees. However, his order did not come out in print and from the point of the view of the citizens, the guards' reaction was uncertain until the very collapse of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.<sup>[208]</sup>

The ever-stringent policy had to turn out to be counterproductive. *Stasi* reports indicated that while in 1987 only about 18,000 GDR citizens managed to legally or otherwise get to West Germany, in 1988 the number was close to 40,000,<sup>[209]</sup> and in the first two months of 1989 it was nearly 18,000. It became clear to *Stasi* executives that the policy of restricting trips abroad and the attendant sanctions had proved to be inefficient. A survey conducted on 4 January 1989 in Berlin's *Alexanderplatz* clearly showed that the ever more exhausted society pinned hopes on the continued reforms in the USSR rather than on their own government. The main wish for the regime was to facilitate further the travel between the two Germans.<sup>[210]</sup>

The elections of local authorities took place on 7 May 1989. Theoretically, because of growing social dissatisfaction, that may have been a good opportunity for the opposition to test both the readiness of the regime to enter into a dialogue, and the efficacy of its slogans.

However, the opposition activists were unable to adopt a common position. While Christian groups, represented by, for example, Stephen Bickhardt and Ludwig Mehlhorn, as well as the *Solidarische Kirche* group, initially tried to place their own candidates on the electoral lists, other groups remained adamant in the face of the un-democratic nature of the election law and called for a boycott.<sup>[211]</sup>

On their part, the SED executives were uninterested in taking advantage of the conflict within the opposition, treating both sides of the disagreement as, to use a language of the *Stasi*, 'hostile and negative forces' (*Feindlich-negative Kräfte*). As a result, no candidate supported by the opposition made it onto the ballot papers. Even moderate groups called for a boycott of the election or for casting a negative vote. Fearing the result of the vote, the regime rigged the election. The head of the GDR Central Election Commission (*die Zentral Wahlkommission*) Egon Krenz announced that more than 98.5 per cent of the vote had gone to the SED and its satellite parties.<sup>[212]</sup>

The opposition did not believe the results. Observers in various spots across the GDR estimated that the circa 10 per cent of votes had been negative, and in some electoral circuits – even up to 20 per cent.<sup>[213]</sup> Immediately after the election, there were smaller and larger rallies across the country, which were dispersed without any problems by the forces of the *Stasi* and the People's Militia.<sup>[214]</sup> The opposition naturally notified public opinion worldwide about the election fraud, yet it was unable to mobilise citizens for mass action, let alone to present any coherent programme.<sup>[215]</sup> Still, the falsification of the election results in 1989 had a definite impact on further developments in Germany. First and foremost, although the public reacted relatively silently to the obvious manipulations of the communist functionaries and state apparatus, it is completely certain that Honecker's clique was not able to persuade citizens that the results were honest. The fading confidence in the SED propaganda went hand in hand with the dramatic increase in the number of those who attempted to escape or to leave the GDR legally: compared to the previous months only in May 1989 the number of those who managed to escape as well as those who were permitted to leave by the regime – increased twofold.<sup>[216]</sup> Further, the results radicalized, even more, the protestant clergy, the part of which did not hesitate to lodge the official protest against falsification. What's more: even if the SED functionaries exerted pressure on the leadership of the Lutherans (on Bishop Krusche and Consistorial President), they refused to obey. They argued that without the change of the political course, the activities the authorities demanded to launch, which constituted nothing else but a new set of repressions targeting those pastors who dared to open their

mouth against fraudulent electoral practices was not the adequate answer to the existing problems.<sup>[217]</sup>

What is more, as pointed out by Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, those falsifications were very well recorded in the collective memory of all of the GDR's inhabitants, adding fuel to the general frustration, which was to erupt some months later.<sup>[218]</sup> The problem was that the opposition forces were still scant in East Germany and the GDR's residents were more and more aware that the events in Poland and Hungary were reform-driven, while the SED's leaders remained adamant and their response could have been violent. Honecker considered the events in Beijing's Tiananmen Square as the suppression of a counter-revolution. Therefore, the possibility of the use of weapons against potential 'rebels' in the GDR was an open question as long as the dogmatic Marxist leaders were in power.

Despite all this, the situation in spring slowly became unbearable for the citizens of the GDR, who, having heard of the agreement between Austria and Hungary in May 1989, pursuant to which Hungary had started to dismantle the fortified border between the two countries, began to leave for Hungary in great numbers in the hope of finding an easier way out to the West. The Hungarians and Austrians provided additional encouragement by holding a Pan-European Picnic in late August, during which the Sankt Margarethen checkpoint in Burgenland (in Hungarian Sopronköhida) was open for a few hours; approximately 600 citizens of the GDR left Hungary.<sup>[219]</sup>

In the wake of those events, c. 150 000 – 200,000 people arrived in Hungary, many of them openly admitted that they wanted to flee to the FRG. Since at that time the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was holding more or less confidential negotiations with Bonn as to a solution to this question, SED authorities were desperate to make the Miklós Németh government stop the refugees, which was Hungary's obligation under earlier agreements.<sup>[220]</sup>

That proved to be unfeasible. The elections to the *Sejm* of the People's Republic of Poland on 4 June, the onset of talks at the Hungarian Round Table, and finally Gorbachev's address in Strasbourg on 6 July 1989, during which the secretary general of the Soviet party's Central Committee explicitly implied that the USSR was departing from the Brezhnev Doctrine and that

the choice of the system was exclusively an internal affair of the individual state, greatly weakened the international position of East Berlin. In practice, all of the above meant that the GDR was no longer able to count on any military aid from Moscow, and the only allies, apart from far-away China, may be, possibly, Romania and the increasingly uncertain Czechoslovakia, where the opposition had also gained momentum.

Under these circumstances, Hungary's opening of the national border on 11 September 1989 was a serious blow for the regime and a media disaster for the SED. The myth of the 'good GDR' lay in ruins within a matter of a dozen hours when the whole world saw the long queues of Trabant and Wartburg cars whose passengers were overjoyed to finally leave the life behind the 'iron curtain'.

By the end of September, 34,000 GDR citizens decided to cross the Hungary-Austrian border with the clear aim of moving to West Germany. To make matters worse, according to the *Stasi* files most of those people were not only young and well educated but they were not known as having anti-regime views.<sup>[221]</sup> Thus, it was quite clear that the desperation was encompassing those circles, which had, until the summer of 1989, not been interested in politics. It was also clear that if this trend continued, the regime would face serious troubles.

The decision taken in Budapest only sped up the course of events as citizens of the GDR unable to leave for Hungary began to 'besiege' FRG embassy buildings in all of the countries of the Eastern Bloc on an unprecedented scale. The FRG's embassy in Prague received the most extensive media coverage, as close to 3,500 GDR citizens camped in front of it in difficult conditions.<sup>[222]</sup> Slightly less numerous was the group of East Germans trying to flee via the West German embassy in Warsaw (some 600 people). Upon consultations with the USSR and the GDR, West German foreign affairs minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher obtained consent for the transit of specially sealed trains with escapees via the GDR. Information about the possibility of escaping via Prague triggered another wave of travellers. In total, by the end of October, the 'freedom trains' had transported more than 17,000 people out from behind the 'iron curtain'. The reaction of the GDR authorities was unambiguous: on 3 October, the border with Czechoslovakia was closed.<sup>[223]</sup>

The party, headed by Honecker, his health steadily deteriorating, would not deviate from its policy, despite the 'escape frenzy' of citizens of the GDR. Worse still, deteriorating health of the *Gensek* who was battling cancer created a kind of political vacuum. During the July Warsaw Pact summit in Bucharest, Honecker (possibly under the influence of Gorbachev's speech in Strasbourg) argued with the Soviet leader and felt ill in the evening. A bout of biliary colic eliminated the SED's leader not only from further summit meetings but also from political activity for over two months.<sup>[224]</sup> This proved innumerable in terms of consequences for the party. Without Honecker, the Politburo would not take any decisions. Theoretically, Egon Krenz would have made a sure replacement, yet during his forced absence Honecker had entrusted chairmanship during debates to Günter Mittag. Party members were therefore left in the dark as to Honecker's successor. It was not sure whether Honecker, temporarily entrusting his functions to Mittag, would not change his mind and opt for Krenz and so the rank-and-file remained passive.<sup>[225]</sup> Mittag, a typical hardliner, whose health was only slightly better than Honecker's, had neither the potential nor the power to cope with mass escapes. The deadlock in the Politburo led to a disastrous delay, which stripped the SED of the remaining initiative. At this stage of the crisis, in the *Stasi* emerged certain doubts on the political usefulness of the continuity of the current course, as the increasing frustration was gaining terrain not only in the SED apparatus and other satellite parties like CDU or LDPD. According to the same reports, the loyalty of these actors might have been put under serious question had the crisis lasted without prospects of its final end. What worse: at the turn of August and September even the willingness of the army and some segments of the security services to obey the orders of the Politburo was everything but certain. Certain visible signs of the readiness to mutiny could not have been overlooked for the rulers even if the rulers kept all information on those incidents in strict secrecy.<sup>[226]</sup>

The real problem was that at a critical moment of the crisis intensifying, the SED literally 'grew silent'.<sup>[227]</sup> And even if the head of the *Stasi*, Mielke, was kept informed about the scale of the social protests, he was not able to persuade his comrades to adopt any new measures to handle the crisis in a more efficient manner.<sup>[228]</sup> This lack of initiative contributed to a large extent to the growing chaos within the party ranks and was probably

one of the most important factors of the dramatic erosion of the SED, which since January 1989 had significantly accelerated. Only until the end of September 1989, 30,000 of SED members dropped their party cards,<sup>[229]</sup> and that was only the first sign of the loss of control over developments by the communist authorities.

The wave of escapes, the growing crisis, and party inertia mobilised the leaders of the Lutheran Church, who decided to depart from their earlier policy. In blunt, unprecedented terms, the Church demanded that the Secretary General should engage in a dialogue with society. Talks were to concern first of all the mass exodus of citizens of the GDR. Taking that opportunity, the clergy of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR (*Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR* – BEK) condemned the party's policy on international travels and the domestic situation. As it turned out later, the divergences between the party and the Church had far-reaching consequences. Honecker felt offended and cancelled at the last moment a scheduled meeting with the leaders of the Lutheran Church. In response, Bishop Werner Leich called for a boycott of the pompous celebrations of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GDR planned for early October.<sup>[230]</sup> The Synod convened on 19 September showed that the situation in the Lutheran Church was beginning to get out of hand. The Synod supported the boycott and tolerated the distribution of critical leaflets prepared by ever more frustrated activists of GDR Christian democrats, contributing to the dissemination of the leaflets' contents across the country.<sup>[231]</sup>

The hysterical reaction of the party press added oil to the flames; the *Neues Deutschland* daily SED mouthpiece saw the critique of the party by the synod as the 'activity of certain circles' in the FRG. Günter Mittag went even further and described the synod's outcomes as 'counter-revolution'. The result was exactly the opposite of the expected one. While before the leadership of the Lutheran Church had been moderately critical of the party and had not overtly supported the opposition, after such accusations, offended by the SED's statements, they were increasingly (especially in Saxony) openly backing the dissidents.<sup>[232]</sup> It is hard to imagine a worse moment for tightening the policy and sharpening the rhetoric vis-a-vis the clergy than September 1989. Since the beginning of that month, Monday demonstrations (*Montagsdemonstrationen*) had taken place in Leipzig. They derived

from the tradition of debates and prayers for peace held by the Revs. Christian Führer and Christoph Wonneberger in the Church of St. Nicholas, and attracted ever more people.<sup>[233]</sup> The work of the security services was, because of the presence of numerous Western journalists, more difficult, since information about the demonstrations, taking place every Monday at 5 pm, spread by word of mouth. The conflict with the ecclesiastical hierarchy caused another problem: the traditional method of ‘silencing rebelling clergy’ by making a phone call to a local bishop failed abysmally. In a conversation with a Leipzig representative of the office for denominations, bishop of Saxony Johannes Hempel refused to impose any sanctions on the ministers holding prayers for peace and accused the party of causing the tension across the country.<sup>[234]</sup>

The authorities tried to act covertly, intercepting the activists prior to the rallies to prevent marches, and blocking access to the church, using the police and security services. This tactic fell through in Leipzig completely, mainly because the prayers for peace and demonstrations drew weekly ever more people (in late September also including random passers-by). The police were greatly outnumbered.

The authorities, however, would not stoop to discuss with anyone. Until the end of September, the *Montagsdemonstrationen* in Leipzig were the only such meetings in the GDR; no major protests were staged in the other cities, let alone in the provinces. Still, in late September, the regime raised criminal liability for participating in demonstrations and further extended the prerogatives of the *Stasi*. Mielke chose this political line to appease society and prevent any disturbances during the celebrations of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the state, which were to show to the public in the country and audiences abroad that the party was still in charge in the GDR. The plan, however, did not take into account that a few days after issuing relevant instructions for the security services and the police, trains would cross the GDR, with East German escapees travelling to West Germany from the embassies in Prague and Warsaw. This led to further complications, since the ‘freedom trains’ meant that the regime had admitted its own defeat, and the trains could have been used by other people who wished to leave the country.

In early October, the wave of protests resurged instead of subsiding. On 2 October, the security forces in Leipzig were again defeated, since

c. 20,000 protesters<sup>[235]</sup> proved too many for the riot police used to disperse them. This time, however, things took a violent turn.

The police used gas, water-cannons, truncheons, and dogs. The problem was further exacerbated by the fact that on 3 October the regime decided to close the border with Czechoslovakia. Hundreds of people were returned to the GDR; thus, the regime 'created' another group of 'oppositionists': those who were determined to leave but were refused the right to do so. The world's media provided information about the drama taking place in railway stations in Saxony, where hundreds of people tried to get on the platform to get on a train from Prague to West Germany and the regime used force to prevent that.<sup>[236]</sup>

Moreover, the idea of *Montagsdemonstrationen* began to spread to other towns in Saxony (in particular Dresden, Plauen, and Chemnitz – at that time known as Karl-Marx-Stadt), and then across the GDR (especially Thuringia and Anhalt); in mid-October, demonstrations also took place in the North, which had previously been thought to be 'more reliable'.<sup>[237]</sup>

Numerous clashes with the police took place in Dresden, especially on 4 October, when the last train with evacuees from the FRG embassy in Prague was moving through the town. c. 1,000 desperate residents of Dresden tried to get on the train, which resulted in a pitched battle.<sup>[238]</sup> The police arrested close to 1300 people, the railway station was thoroughly vandalised and the police regained control of it only the following day.<sup>[239]</sup> Directly responsible for that state of affairs was Hans Modrow, the SED first secretary in Dresden<sup>[240]</sup>, seen previously as a liberal and a moderate supporter of perestroika.

Despite desperate attempts to make 7 October (the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GDR) free from demonstrations apart from the ones celebrating the regime, the security services and the police were unable to stem another wave of rallies. When 70,000 people marched in front of the stand of honour in Berlin before persons such as Gorbachev and Ceaușescu, at the same time in Alexander Platz and near the Palace of the Republic desperate protesters chanted '*Gorbi, hilf uns*' ('Gorbi, help us'), marring the dictator's celebrations and making Mielke leave the official banquet to co-ordinate the operation of dispersing the demonstration.

A similar rally took place on the very same day in Plauen, where the police were especially violent and an intensification of the violence was prevented only by Superintendent Thomas Küttler, who agreed to mediate between the security forces and the demonstrators.<sup>[241]</sup>

The conduct of the GDR regime (most notably Honecker) showed the complete loss of any sense of political reality. The dispersed opposition tried to make up for the lost years and created seeds of political groups, which could take part in talks with the authorities. As early as 10 September, the New Forum (*Neues Forum* – NF) was set up and on 12 September, Democracy Now! (*Demokratie Jetzt!*) was founded. The Social Democratic Party in the GDR (*SDP in der DDR*), operating semi-legally since April, constituted itself on 7 October, and the *Demokratischer Aufbruch* (Democratic Awakening) was founded on 29 October. The process continued in the months to follow, when the Green League (*die Grüne Liga*), the Green Party, the Independent Women's Union (*Unabhängiger Frauenverband* – UVF) and other groups were set up. They tried to channel the mounting social rebellion. That, however, turned out to be far more difficult than had been initially assumed. Despite the talks held since the spring of 1989 on joint action, the opposition in the GDR was at the time of the 'Autumn of Nations' split into more than a dozen groups with no clearly-defined political goals, adequate headcount and facilities, or the necessary experience. For most intellectuals the rallies were primarily a chance to reflect critically on the SED regime and the idea of establishing a party that would fight to achieve particular aims (with indispensable hierarchy, discipline, and some established structures) was alien to the New Forum elite.<sup>[242]</sup> Initially, the regime would not treat the dissident groups trying to become institutionalised as partners in the talks, seeing them only as a threat to be neutralised via persecution. The opposition groups, aware of their weakness, did not put forth excessively radical demands at first.<sup>[243]</sup> Some of their leaders' statements were actually puzzling not only for Western observers, but also for citizens of the GDR, who sought answers to concrete, urgent issues.<sup>[244]</sup>

Demonstrations and vociferous demands for the right to leave the country, the abolition of censorship, the introduction of the freedom of speech and other civic rights plunged the GDR into ever-greater chaos. Moreover, from October onwards the rallies were joined by people previously impartial

in politics and even members of the SED. Faced with mass protests, a revolutionary atmosphere, and a lack of clear-cut guidelines from the Politburo and the Central Committee, regional party tiers (especially in Saxony) had to make efforts on their own to appease society. As a result, already in early October local dignitaries were forced to talk to the demonstrations' organisers, increasingly joined by well known and respected local figures, including leaders of the Protestant Church, writers, artists, academics and scientists. Holding talks when Honecker was still at the helm of the party was difficult, since the local secretary had no way of knowing whether the initiatives would not be seen as insubordination. On 8 October, both the SED's leader and Mielke dispatched two letters, one addressed to the SED's local units and the other to the *Stasi* structures. Both were stringent and demanded first of all reports on the developments and (Honecker's letter) the immediate elimination of riots (in the original "*vornherein zu unterbinden*"). Neither letter referred directly to any use of firearms against the demonstrators, yet careful analysis of them seems to indicate that Berlin was still inclined to use force rather than to negotiate with the opposition. Units subordinate to the Ministry of State Security were issued orders of highest readiness for action, persons authorised to carry arms were told to have those always at hand, and orders were given to compile lists and plans of detention of especially active individuals and of those suspected of active participation in the demonstrations. On the other hand, it was also clear that the *Stasi*'s leadership (most likely bearing in mind the June 1953 Uprising<sup>[245]</sup>) were also afraid that the weapons might be intercepted by the protesters and issued relevant regulations to forestall that.<sup>[246]</sup>

As was plainly shown in Dresden, the execution of the instructions was another matter, especially given that the general guidelines from the headquarters offered ample room for different interpretations. As a result, the SED first secretary in Dresden, Hans Modrow, believed that the peaceful demonstrations of the opposition should not be dispersed by riot police and therefore was in conflict with the local *Stasi* representative, General Horst Böhm, who demanded a continuation of the reprisals. In this case, the entire argument ended with a letter from General Böhm to Mielke, in which he denounced Modrow and demanded adequate steps on the part of the party leaders.<sup>[247]</sup> It must have dawned on the Politburo that if chaos

intensified, such conflicts would multiply and the East German centralised system, which empowered and privileged Berlin, was completely unprepared for the regional management of a crisis of the magnitude it assumed in September and October 1989.

The Politburo was sending contradictory signals. General Böhm and his subordinates did not receive any guidelines from Honecker. On the one hand, after Gorbachev's visit (6–7 October), when the Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was especially irritated by the passive approach of SED leaders, who exclusively counted on Soviet assistance, which Gorbachev would not grant, the Politburo announced that it was ready for dialogue. On the other hand, two days before that declaration was issued, classified instructions had been dispatched to all SED regional secretaries, recommending preventive crushing of demonstrations and preventing the access of international journalists to them.<sup>[248]</sup> Again, however, this instruction was in many places in Saxony impossible to implement. Prevention was possible only in riot situations or if a demonstration had attracted only a small group of activists, not if there were tens of thousands of participants, as was the case of *Montagsdemonstrationen* at the beginning of October 1989. Only military forces could crush such a mass demonstration. The problem was that on the one hand, no document dispatched from Berlin to the local state and party organs excluded any use of arms against people; on the other hand, no document clearly allowed to fire on protesters (with one notable exception of self-defence), not to even mention the possibility of using military forces. As a result, local party units decided to wait and were definitely not inclined to implement the 'Tiananmen Square solution'.<sup>[249]</sup>

Seeing that the situation at the top was slowly but steadily moving towards a breakthrough, Modrow decided not to take any drastic measures. Knowing that he could not count on the military, that the resources at his disposal were insufficient and their willingness to beat up the innocent protesters on the wane, in the evening of 8 October he made a small yet significant concession.<sup>[250]</sup> During a demonstration, the marching protesters were stopped by the police; however, the skirmish, which seemed imminent, this time did not take place. Thanks to two Catholic priests, Andreas Leuschner and Frank Richter, an agreement was reached with the commander

of the police unit whereby the clergymen promised to call on the protesters to discontinue the demonstration. In return, the authorities promised that the following day, a twenty-strong delegation would be received in the City Hall by city mayor Wolfgang Berghofer. The protesters were to present their demands, such as, for example, the releasing of detainees (at that time there were at least 1,000 people in the detention centres and prisons of Dresden), the legalisation of the New Forum, and the right to emigrate and to hold public assemblies. Although some of the demands were clearly political and Modrow had no competence to tackle them, the leaders of the SED in Dresden and the city authorities consented.<sup>[251]</sup>

The events of 8 October were significant for further developments in the GDR, at least for two reasons. Firstly, this was a major watershed in the history of the East German revolution, since for the first time ever the regime stopped exclusively abusing the protesters, and started to negotiate with them. Furthermore, the talks proved quite fruitful for East German standards. During the first meeting, the 'Group of 20' negotiated the release of the people detained and were promised to be received again, on 16 October. Thus, Dresden sent a signal to the rest of the country that protests and demonstrations might make the regime concede. Secondly, on 8 October neither the party's side nor the demonstrators' delegation knew that they were beginning one of the most interesting political processes during the German revolution of 1989, where grass-roots initiatives, bypassing Berlin, slowly transformed into local round tables, which in time, and depending on the circumstances in the given county or city, competed against or supplanted the crumbling structures of the party-state in local administration. In this sense, the emergence of the 'Group of 20' in Dresden was in a way a prototype solution, applied on a mass scale in other locations across the GDR.

The following day, 9 October, another Monday demonstration took place in Leipzig. This time, before the demonstration, the authorities had sought to terrify the public by spreading widely rumours about "hard measures" which were apparently to be used against those who would decide to take active part in the demonstration. Some days earlier, the local newspapers published a letter from a military officer who in no uncertain terms suggested that he and his colleagues were ready to "stop the counterrevolution once and for good; if we have to, then with weapons in hands."<sup>[252]</sup> This was not

the only propaganda attack on the Monday demonstrations: other newspapers also took active part in the hate campaign against demonstrators. On 9 October, rumours were circulated in the city that additional reserves of blood were safeguarded in Leipzig's hospitals, and that surgeons had been ordered to be at the constant disposal of the hospitals' directors.<sup>[253]</sup> Does it mean that all of those preparations aiming at intimidation of the potential and real opponents were tantamount to the readiness to open fire against innocent and armless people? According to Eckert, despite certain doubts with regard to this story, the answer is "No."<sup>[254]</sup>

Even before the demonstration had started, some of the local party committee, together with other prominent persons, had decided to sign a common appeal against the use of violence.<sup>[255]</sup> Still, although the regime did everything in its power to prevent it, 70,000 protesters were far too many for the forces amassed. In the case of the first secretary of the Leipzig committee, a hardliner named Helmut Hackenberg, he was not in a position to tell detachments to open fire and was dramatically seeking advice from the Central Committee. However, Berlin offered no response.<sup>[256]</sup> Since Honecker could not be reached by phone, Krenz asked for time to ponder over the case.<sup>[257]</sup> Before he managed to respond, the protesters had gone home. As a result, the demonstration proceeded in a peaceful manner.<sup>[258]</sup>

According to some eminent scholars, in the history of the German revolution 9 October should be treated as the "point of no return." After the Monday demonstration in Leipzig, people ceased to be afraid of the "Tiananmen Square solution."<sup>[259]</sup> From that date onwards, the pressure for rapid change drastically increased within the entire country and the difficulties of the SED leadership multiplied. It turned out in October that the rebellion had spread to the allied parties, which had previously played no role at all in the People's Chamber. On 13 October, the leader of the East German liberals, Manfred Gerlach, was the first to mention withdrawing his party's unconditional support for the SED policy, by questioning such a fundamental principle as that of the leading role of the communist party within the GDR's political system.<sup>[260]</sup> Signs of dissatisfaction were also heard among the trade unions and other satellite organisations 'transmitting the party to the masses'.

Under the circumstances, the SED was less and less an efficient power tool and the necessity for Honecker's dismissal became evident even

to the Politburo members, with the prominent positions of Willi Stoph and Erich Mielke. This belief was further strengthened by the uncompromising attitude of Erich Honecker, who still on 11 October seemed to exclude any sort of dialogue with protesting people (whom he classified as the “Counter-revolution”) and – according to some sources – he was still mulling over the idea of crushing down the crisis with the “use of force”.<sup>[261]</sup> In this situation, both veterans of East German politics, apart from Egon Krenz, naturally the most interested person, seemed to have become, the sparks of a kind of ‘coup d’état’ of 18 October.<sup>[262]</sup> On that day, the Central Committee issued a communiqué in which it publicly announced that they had consented to a request from Honecker and, because of his poor health, had relieved him of all of his positions. Whether this relieving was enforced (or took place with the knowledge or consent of Moscow) remains unclear. It seems, however, that a change of the leader did not take Gorbachev by surprise; still, in October 1989 the USSR did not intend to interfere in the internal affairs of the allied parties.<sup>[263]</sup> The impression of a ‘coup’ was additionally softened as leadership of the party was taken by Krenz, who had for a long time been believed to be Honecker’s successor. Ultimately, despite the unpleasant surprise, the Politburo elected a new secretary general on the motion of none other than Erich Honecker, who simply proposed Krenz for that position and tendered his resignation.<sup>[264]</sup>

The replacement of Honecker by Egon Krenz, compromised by the rigging of the local self-government elections, and rumoured to have a serious alcohol problem, could not appease society. Besides, Krenz’s authority within the party basis was weak from the outset: as he had been a long-standing Honecker loyalist, there was a general belief that his nomination meant continuation of the *status quo*; thus, he was seen as completely untrustworthy as a reformer.<sup>[265]</sup> However, it was not Krenz as such, but his inaugural address, televised shortly after his election that went down in history. The address, while still following the convention of party newspeak, contained some new elements. Firstly, Krenz promised “change” (*die Wende*), which aroused even higher social expectations; the word is currently used sometimes to define the entire era. Secondly, the new leader of the GDR tried to put an end to the conflict with Moscow. In his speech, he made it clear that perestroika was to be a model for *die Wende*.

Krenz's calculation was clear. The reference to the Soviet trends was intended by the SED strategists to rekindle the warm feelings of the USSR towards the GDR (counting, in particular, on economic aid). The mention of 'restructuring and new thinking' was another clear signal for the party that cases like the one concerning the *Sputnik* magazine were a thing of the past. The combination of the motto of change with the Soviet model indicated moreover a source of inspiration for a new ideological rationale, to be developed by relevant groups within the Central Committee. Finally, Krenz, who had heard the desperate chants of "*Gorbi, hilf uns!*" during the GDR's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, tried to adjust to the expectations of at least some citizens, who saw the resident of the Kremlin as a hope for any transformations.

It is more than debatable whether Krenz really wanted only to portray himself as a true reformer or he was really ready to pursue Gorbachev's political line. According to Malycha – the former is true, not the latter, as Krenz's promises of reforms were ambiguous and lacked any substantial content.<sup>[266]</sup> A top-down imposition of a policy of dialogue was far simpler than its implementation on the ground. This moment revealed the dramatic consequences of Honecker's crushing any ideas of change. No wonder the debates within the party about the reform of the state barely took off the ground in October 1989. The level of the preparation of party cadres for possible reforms was extremely low, which was to prove calamitous for the party's propaganda image. When Krenz sent a special instruction to district party secretaries requiring them to enter into a dialogue with society, they often demonstrated blatant ignorance as to even the fundamental notions of Marxism and Leninism.<sup>[267]</sup>

Another problem was an absence of more specific guidelines as to what interpretation the party leadership wished to use. The local party units were not accustomed to interpreting Berlin's intentions, only to carrying them out.<sup>[268]</sup> To be able to respond to questions from the demonstrators, the party would need to know exactly what dialogue was supposed to include, what could be promised, and which lines could not be crossed at all. However, those guidelines were never developed. Following the long years of Honecker's silence, the party intelligentsia were barren and unable to propose anything that would allow the party to regain the initiative. A special programme, prepared by scholars from Humboldt University

and the GDR Academy of Sciences when Krenz took power, showed that even 'party reformers' saw no need to legalise the opposition. The recognition of the leading role of the party was a precondition for starting talks with a given opposition group. Projects for such 'reforms', meant only to introduce cosmetic changes into the system, were found unsatisfactory by everyone in October, and the impact of the 'reformers' on Krenz's policy was virtually non-existent.<sup>[269]</sup>

If we add contradictory signals that everyday policy sent to the general public (attempts to regain the support of the Protestant clergy, releasing political prisoners without offering any hope for legalising the opposition, Krenz's ambiguous attitude to the possible use of force), and the evident lack of any ideas for a way out of the crisis, only one result was possible: a further escalation of protests, in which more and more people took an active part.<sup>[270]</sup>

It became plain to observers that the situation was getting out of the party's control. The desperate attempts taken by the Central Committee to hold counter-demonstrations ended with even more embarrassment, such as the propaganda disaster in Schwerin, considered earlier to be very reliable: party activists rounded up for a rally to outnumber the opposition instead joined the march organised by the New Forum. Observers noticed that with the growing number of demonstrations and their participants, the 'awakening' of the allied parties had entered another stage. As early as 2 November, Gerald Götting, the leader of the GDR CDU, had to resign. The head of the LDPD, Gerlach, tried to use the momentum of the moment and, having 'predicted Honecker's dismissal', wanted to put his group in opposition to the communists.<sup>[271]</sup> In late October, it was evident that the police had become tired of dispersing rallies. Changes affected the media, too. A commonly hated TV host, Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler, was too irritating for audiences to continue to run his programme *Der Schwarze Kanal*, which finally, after 29 years on the air, was scrapped on 30 October. While the party press continued to describe the demonstrators as counter-revolutionaries and FRG agents, CDU and LDPD newspapers adopted a different approach. East German television occasionally showed opposition representatives and the programme *Aktuelle Kamera* tried to retain a dose of objectivity.<sup>[272]</sup>

The situation in the country was very depressing for the party itself. There were many reasons for frustration. The absence of a concept of appeasing social sentiments and the commonplace conviction that middle class status in the FRG ensured a living standard higher than that of a district party secretary in the GDR were not the only reasons. Promotion under Honecker was extremely slow. Consequently, the generation born in the 1940s and 1950s, hungry for power and money that pinned their hopes for accelerating their political careers on the fifty-three-year-old Krenz, who was expected to remove the party elders and the Politburo gerontocracy, were greatly dissatisfied. Krenz's cautious approach in this respect (the former FDJ head did not seem eager to promote young people to positions of power) either made many SED activists join the protesters in the streets or else challenge the party leaders.

Krenz's domestic policy was extremely incoherent and led to intensified protests. One of the first real changes was the liberalisation of foreign travel regulations, but by then the demonstrators were demanding much more (for example legalisation of the opposition and free elections). Development of a precise reform scenario needed time, but neither the SED's leaders nor administration had a concrete plan. For the party hardliners, such as Mielke, still dominant in the Politburo, dialogue with the opposition meant not a Round Table in the Polish or Hungarian way, but rather absorption of parts of the opposition by the existing system. One way or another, by the end of October the question of legalising the New Forum (let alone other organisations) remained a contestable issue at best, and some SED leaders were dead against it.<sup>[273]</sup> Neither Krenz nor the Politburo were willing to abandon the premise of the leading role of the party as a constitutional provision, which set the tone for the governance of the country. Under such circumstances, the biggest rally in the history of East Berlin, with more than 500,000 people participating,<sup>[274]</sup> took place in *Alexanderplatz* on 4 November 1989. The demonstration, organised by opposition artists, was the first legal rally of this sort in the history of the GDR. It was attended not only by representatives of the opposition groups and intellectuals, but also high-ranking SED dignitaries, including SED Central Committee secretary Günter Schabowski and Markus Wolf. The presence of Politburo members was intended by Krenz to be a kind of sabotage. Aware of their greater experience of speaking to crowds, and sending representatives seen

as reformers, apparently Krenz assumed that they would dominate the rally, halt the demands for free elections and indefinitely postpone the question of legalising the opposition.

However, in *Alexanderplatz* the party was utterly defeated. Wolf's speech demanding respect for the work of *Stasi* officers and Schabowski's address, both delivered in tedious party newspeak, were booed.<sup>[275]</sup> If either of those politicians had thought of taking the initiative within the SED, of making Krenz resign, and making the necessary reforms within the party, they had lost any importance in the SED at that moment. A conflict between the young and the old emerged for the first time. After 4 November, it was evident that Gregor Gysi, on a threshold of a great political career, had the makings of a new party leader. His programme, at least in theory, envisaged a democratic reconstruction of the party and the removal of the politicians of the old regime.

Additionally, 4 November is an important date for one more reason: it was the day when the impact of the democratic opposition on the developments in the GDR was at its greatest. It was in *Alexanderplatz* that intellectuals such as Christa Wolf and Stephen Heym introduced a vision of a life in a new, better GDR which – after the reforms had been completed – would enter a 'third path', implementing the ideals of socialism and progress.<sup>[276]</sup> The next few days proved that the above-mentioned ideas were but an illusion.

The crowd's hostile reaction to the speeches of the party dignitaries made it ever more evident that the need for change was bigger than just the need to change the first secretary. With no successes to its credit, the Willi Stoph government stepped down on 7 November and the following day, the entire Politburo resigned, ushering in an interregnum in the GDR. Krenz tried to retain the principal influence of the party on the ongoing processes, supplementing the composition of the new Politburo with people who, while still being members of the party elite, had demonstrated some degree of independence of judgement during the Honecker era or were knowledgeable about economic issues. These included Paul Schürer, Wolfgang Rauchfuss and Krenz's protégé, Wolfgang Herger. The problem was that this composition of the Politburo prevented any contact with the party rank-and-file or ordinary citizens.

Close to half of the 'new' Politburo had been its members in the past; it included even General Heinz Kessler, whose troops had shot at escapees only a few months before. Everyone saw Krenz as utterly untrustworthy.<sup>[277]</sup>

Most importantly, the passage of time and continuing inertia had radicalised even more members of increasingly irritated society, who had not seen any concrete reforms. In early November, the street demanded not only the bringing of Honecker and his aides to justice for the crimes of the regime, but also the reunification of both German states. If initially the demonstrators' slogans were "*Wir sind das Volk*" ("We are the Nation"), as of November one could hear more and more often "*Wir sind ein Volk*" ("We are one Nation"),<sup>[278]</sup> thus directly expressing the political will of the establishment of just one German state. Even if in 1989 this postulate could have been treated as a sort of extravagance shared only by a minority of the GDR's citizens (according to polls taken at the beginning of December 1989, 73 per cent of East German preferred to sustain the existence of both states),<sup>[279]</sup> assessing this from the contemporary perspective it is clear that this was a sort of harbinger of the much more dramatic changes which were to come during the following year. The growing wrath of the GDR's citizens was caused not only by a lack of real reforms, but also by the scandals and irregularities revealed by the media, which were breaking free of party supervision. The first of the latter concerned of the Free German Trade Union Federation (*Freie Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* – FDGB), whose entire leadership was fired within a matter of hours when the *Berliner Zeitung*<sup>[280]</sup> revealed that the clique surrounding the head of the organisation, Harry Tisch, had built for themselves luxury cottages using construction materials imported specifically for this purpose from West Germany. To any ordinary mortal, such cottages remained but an unfulfilled dream, not to mention furniture and equipment in those cottages, also imported from the West. The article was a proverbial bomb in the history of East German press, if only because after its publication the editors received numerous phone calls notifying them of ever more abuses involving regime functionaries, accustomed to impunity.<sup>[281]</sup> As a result, in November the press abounded with articles on the *alleged* abuse of power on the part of Honecker himself, his family and the other Politburo members.<sup>[282]</sup>

In the meantime, on 31 October, the State Planning Commission (SPK) head, Paul Gerhard Schürer came to a Politburo session with information that caused another shock, which significantly changed the position of Krenz and his team. The documents presented by Schürer indicated that the GDR was on the brink of insolvency, that its debt was in the region of USD 49 billion, and containing the level of debt would require a reduction of living standards by 25 to 30 per cent in 1990.<sup>[283]</sup> Setting aside the problem, if that dramatic data painted an accurate picture of the economic situation of the country,<sup>[284]</sup> it is enough to state that in those critical moments no one was ready to put it into question. It was obvious to Krenz that a public announcement of that data would sign his political death sentence. As Honecker's 'disciple' implicated in the rigging of the May 1989 local election, he had little authority with the public to carry out such sharp cuts, for example in social expenditure. Consequently, the first foreign visit to Moscow was not only to fulfil an obligation involving a 'communist protocol', but also to notify Gorbachev of the situation and to ask for financial support. The host of the Kremlin flatly refused to provide such aid and the only advice he offered to Krenz was to encourage him to be frank with his society.<sup>[285]</sup> Unable to find support in the USSR, Krenz tried once again to use the proven methods, with the Berlin Wall, instead of domestic policy liberalisation, as a 'payment' by the regime for West German loans. However, it turned out that this time Bonn politicians would thwart the SED's calculations.<sup>[286]</sup>

## The Fall of the Wall

The breakthrough occurred on 9 November. Due to a mistake made at a press conference, Günter Schabowski (a member of the Politburo, who was also in charge of relations with the media) announced that later that day nearly all of the restrictions on foreign travel made by citizens of the GDR would be lifted and that the provisions had immediate effect.<sup>[287]</sup> Thanks to the instantaneous reaction of press agencies (Reuters, DPA, etc), the information about the opening of the GDR's borders made the headlines of news bulletins on TV programmes, which added to its dissemination. In addition, it had also been disseminated earlier in the day, as Schabowski's

conference, the first of that kind to be attended by foreign journalists, had been broadcast live by East German television and radio. Paradoxically, the only people who were not in the know were the SED Central Committee and the remaining Politburo members, who only after 8:47 pm had the chance to hear that the situation had changed irreversibly over the past two hours. During the dramatic hours of information chaos, Krenz made no decision, in effect shifting responsibility for the solution to the crisis onto officers of the *Stasi* and the National People's Army.<sup>[288]</sup> The latter were in a particularly difficult position. The news was only known from the media and no one had issued orders to checkpoint guards regarding the lifting of border checks. Therefore, the 'immediate effect' of the information mistakenly announced by Schabowski meant in practice disobeying superiors' orders, which in the reality of East German law enforcement structures exposed an officer to severe criminal sanctions. Initially, the guards permitted no one to cross the border, but the crowd of Berlin residents demanded immediate suspension of border checks and entry to the Western sectors, in keeping with Schabowski's promise.<sup>[289]</sup>

A turning point occurred at 11:30 pm, when in Bronholmer Strasse a *Stasi* officer, Harald Jäger, suspended border checks, and the border guards no longer barred entry to West Berlin.<sup>[290]</sup> Television screens around the globe showed Berliners in both sections of the town who, standing on the wall (and destroying it in the days to follow), celebrated the ultimate collapse of the dictatorship; the all-night celebration in *Kurfürstendamm*, also attended by residents of West Berlin, was a symbol of the fall of the GDR and of the communist system as such. The lack of reaction from the GDR's regime to the activities of the rebellious crowds concluded with the symbolic fall of the much-hated wall, another embarrassing situation for Krenz, unable to take any decision in an emergency. On 10 November, everybody understood that, contrary to the fears of SED leaders, the opposition and Western capitals, Moscow would not intervene.

This, however, appeased neither the crowd nor the increasingly fervent party. On 10 November, a row erupted at the Central Committee meeting, when the communist hardliners (notably represented by Kurt Hager) demanded that strong measures be taken. In fact, for a few days rumours of the resuming border checks by select *Stasi* units and the army spread

across the GDR, but in the end the stand-by alert was revoked and there was no assault.<sup>[291]</sup>

Observers knew that although theoretically, the use of violence was an option, in practice after 9 November, the SED had lost control over the situation in the GDR, and it never regained the full political initiative. After the resignation of Willi Stoph and his government, fervent work on the composition of a new cabinet went on. Eventually, only on 13 November was a new government formed by Hans Modrow, and it was dominated by the communists. However, Modrow's political position was very weak since the first day in office.

The party was in a deplorable state. Vast numbers of party members surrendered their party membership cards and it was clear that the rank-and-file were unwilling to carry out the orders of the Central Committee unquestioningly. By mid-November, all of the regional party secretaries and nearly all of their deputies had been replaced.<sup>[292]</sup> The deteriorating economic situation had its impact on the atmosphere in the country, where the *Stasi* and increasingly the party itself were held in common contempt (mounting to open hostility).<sup>[293]</sup> Some representatives of the East German elite could not withstand the pressure and committed suicide. This situation was aggravated by the fact that after Honecker's dismissal, satellite parties (first of all Ost-CDU), which until the autumn of 1989 were ready to follow any orders issued to them by the communists, apparently changed the front. This was of particular importance in the case of the Christian Democrats: on 2 November, their incumbent leader Gerald Götting was forced to step down, and the new party head Lothar de Maiziere definitely excluded any further cooperation with SED.<sup>[294]</sup>

Cornered, and with no major political backup, the SED finally agreed on 22 November to convene a Round Table, patterned on the Polish solution. However, that was too late for Krenz. Immediately after the swearing in, the Modrow government started to distance themselves from the SED, recognising that the Politburo, still dominated by communist hardliners, was a burden to attempts to appease society and to carry out talks with the opposition. In the ever more radical atmosphere of the street, the removal from the constitution by the People's Chamber of the provision about the leading role of the party on 1 December, and the removal from the SED

of Honecker and his acolytes (and then the issuing of arrest warrant for him) were nearly immaterial. Frustration among Party members was skyrocketing: it is enough to point out that by the end of December 1989, SED had lost 600,000 of its members.<sup>[295]</sup> What was worse, however, was the lack of faith in the capacity of the leadership to regain the political initiative. According to an internal survey carried out in December 1989, no more than 57 per cent of the SED members said they were ready to vote for their own party if a general election were to take place in the near future.<sup>[296]</sup> All those developments threatened the complete elimination of the SED as a political factor in the GDR.

Neither the Modrow government nor younger activists would hear of it. Among the latter, Gregor Gysi, acting in tandem with the mayor of Dresden, Wolfgang Berghofer, found support from Markus Wolf and the prime minister and launched an offensive. On 30 November, Gysi set up a special SED faction, the WF Platform (an abbreviation for *Werk für Fernsehelektronik* – the factory where the faction's founding meeting took place), of some 150 to 170 people. The Gysi group adopted a declaration in which it demanded a profound moral renewal in the party, observing at the same time that the current leaders were unable to carry out such far-reaching reforms and consequently WF Platform withdrew its allegiance from the party leadership. Within a few days, Gysi's initiative had been backed by many party organisations (including the Academy of Sciences), which held pickets and rallies in front of the SED Central Committee, demanding the immediate dismissal of the party leaders. The disillusion of party rank-and-file was indeed enormous. Apart from the frustrated young members, who had waited long years to be admitted to positions of power and now found out that they may never grasp power, the old communists were affected too.

A pungent and dramatic assault on the Politburo was launched by Bernhard Quandt and made history. This octogenarian veteran of the communist movement, with longer seniority in the party than even Honecker himself, evidently broken by the collapse of the SED regime, proposed during a Central Committee meeting that 'all those "who had brought our party into such disgrace that the whole world is faced with a scandal the likes of which it has never seen" be summarily executed.'<sup>[297]</sup> Aware that further resistance may provoke an uncontrolled outbreak, Krenz stepped

down; he was followed by the entire Politburo and, clearly pressured by Gysi, the Central Committee. A decision was taken at that very meeting to expel from the party Erich Honecker, Erich Mielke, Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski and other key figures of the previous era.<sup>[298]</sup>

Since the most important party bodies had been effectively dismissed, a political void appeared which, according to Hubertus Knabe, was precisely what Gysi's group was after. A party congress was to be prepared by a special commission, composed solely of new, lesser-known members, supported by Wolf and prime minister Modrow. The group, acting as an intra-party coup d'état, was to lay down new ideological foundations and contribute to the transforming of the old SED into the Party of Democratic Socialism (*Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus* – PDS), still based on the foundation stones of Marxism and Leninism. Furthermore, it was tasked with securing the huge amounts of the SED's property from its seizure by the state and from the claims of emerging East German social democrats. It was no secret that the lion's share of the property controlled by the SED had until the 1946 unification of the communists with the SPD been owned by the latter.<sup>[299]</sup> Demands for the return of stolen property were made by social democrats as early as 1989.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the loss of initiative by the party did not mean that the opposition had correspondingly grown in significance. On the contrary, paradoxically, 9 November was to prove to be doomsday for the entire movement calling for a democratic GDR.<sup>[300]</sup> Permission to travel to the FRG substantially changed the directions of the ongoing revolutionary processes. As from then, the slogan of German reunification was heard during demonstrations and the ideas of the opposition, seemingly revolutionary in early November, turned out to be almost conservative at the end of the month and incompatible with the will of the majority.

Still worse, the opposition, which in September and October was seeking to play an instrumental role in the process of the transition in the GDR,<sup>[301]</sup> tried to shift into reverse, causing outrage among citizens. This was the reaction to a statement by Bärbel Bohley, who said that the opening of the borders had taken place prematurely! Another opposition leader, Wolfgang Ullmann, allegedly considered the re-closure of the borders. This dilemma over how the opposition should react to the fall of the Berlin Wall and its aftermath

(notably the mass departures for the FRG) was never solved.<sup>[302]</sup> After 40 years of experiments, the citizens of the GDR had had enough ideological innovations, which the opposition, negotiating with the communists, tried to apply, especially since, in 1989, it appeared that an immediate merger with the richer West Germany would solve all the problems that had befallen the exhausted East German society.

These developments embittered the opponents of the regime, who felt betrayed by the masses.<sup>[303]</sup> As a consequence, as Rödder observed, while up until 9 November opposition intellectuals were trying to direct the protests, after the fall of the Berlin Wall a reversal of alliances had taken place. On the one hand, the masses, discouraged by the collapse of the institutions of the state, demanded the reunification of the GDR and the FRG, on the other hand the opposition tried to make arrangements with the SED at the Round Table, where the existence of the GDR as an independent state was at stake.<sup>[304]</sup> In this context, the opposition tried to tone down the sentiments and to halt the revolutionary impetus so as to preserve the GDR as a sovereign state.

The problem was that in order to salvage the GDR, a reliable partner for talks had to be found in the party, while what had happened within the SED most certainly left the other participants of the Round Table talks (the government, the opposition and the clergy, who moderated the debates) in an uncomfortable situation. During the first two days, the talks did not include key representatives of the party's side, whose composition of the executive body and future political line were at best nebulous. An SED congress ended only on 16 December; the party's name was changed to the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) and the Round Table talks could proceed relatively normally.

The word 'relatively' should be highlighted here. Unlike the events in Poland, where the government and party's side on the one hand and the Solidarity camp on the other managed to control the events, the negotiations at the German Round Table (*Zentraler Runder Tisch – ZRT*)<sup>[305]</sup> took place in a totally different atmosphere. The pressure from the street actually determined the scope and subject matter of the talks. The problem was not only the increasingly radical conduct of the protesters. In early Janu-

ary 1990, violent events had taken place when people forced their entry into the *Stasi* headquarters in *Normanstrasse* and vandalised the premises.

In December 1989, East Germans were more and more vociferous about the reunification of both German states, irrespective of the legal elements of process, but the Round Table participants wished to reform the GDR, to be ultimately confederated with the FRG but as a separate state.<sup>[306]</sup> However, ordinary citizens no longer approved of such a solution.

## Kohl's Shadow

West German politicians, their administrative staff and senior public servants, reacted with some delay to the events in the GDR. Although during the September UN General Assembly the head of the Bonn Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, raised the question of the unity of the German people, who had the right to self-determination, those formulas hardly deviated from the earlier political line. In addition, at the margin of the same meeting, some exchanges of views on the current situation in Germany took place; but it would be very difficult to say that by that moment Bonn had a clear vision of the future policy towards the GDR.<sup>[307]</sup> Thus, the first nine months of the 1989 were characterised by the continuation of the “business as usual” policy,<sup>[308]</sup> and even such an impressive event, so widely covered by the world’s media, as the summer migration crisis did not influence the general assumptions of West German foreign policy, which was still anchored in the doctrine of the existence of two German states.<sup>[309]</sup> At that time, Kohl himself was in a difficult position. In the late 1980s, inquiries had suggested that the German Chancellor might be implicated in a party donations scandal. During the CDU Congress in Bremen that took place in September 1989, he barely managed to put down a party putsch, which concluded with the forced resignation of the secretary general of the Christian democrats, Heiner Geissler. The head of government was rumoured to have had a nervous breakdown.<sup>[310]</sup> Matters were made worse still by the clear tug-of-war within the FRG’s administration, where the struggle was about the real impact on German foreign policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bonn, led by the ‘patriarch of diplomacy’

Genscher, was evidently unwilling to raise the issue of reunification; however, the foreign service had to respect the opinions of people such as the head of the Office of the German Chancellery, Rudolf Seiters, Kohl's advisor Horst Teltschik, and the head of a parliamentary faction and Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble. Those three, who were in Genscher's opinion incompetent in foreign policy, had an edge over him due to their strong position in the ruling party and immediate access to Kohl.<sup>[311]</sup> In hindsight, it seems that they also had much keener political instincts and sense of timing, which the head of West German diplomacy, who had held that post for many years, sometimes lacked in 1989. Moreover, the opposition SPD sensed that the earlier policy towards the SED had led nowhere and tried to come up with a novel strategy in next to no time. Hans-Jochen Vogel, the leader of the SPD, who had earlier established sporadic contacts with representatives of the GDR opposition, went as far as demanding the adoption of rhetoric of the CDU/CSU. Even Egon Bahr, the 'creator of the FRG *Ostpolitik*', doubted the survival of the GDR.

The slow change of the course of the West German social democrats outraged the SED's leaders, who called off a meeting of parliamentarians scheduled for 15 September.<sup>[312]</sup> The authorities were irate not only because the new tone (albeit rather modest) was a clear contradiction of the SPD's earlier political course. The GDR communists were concerned that while in early summer attempts at rebuilding the SPD's structures in the GDR by pastors Martin Gutzeit and Markus Meckel were rejected by the party leaders in West Germany, in late summer the SPD had looked closely at the initiative of both politicians,<sup>[313]</sup> and finally in October (after Honecker's removal) had established official contacts, even if they had also tried to maintain proper relations with the SED.<sup>[314]</sup> Thus, it was plainly visible that the adoptions of the new strategy towards the GDR came to the SPD activists with great difficulties and the official break off of cooperation between the SED and the SPD was announced only on 17 December 1989.<sup>[315]</sup> Observers clearly saw that the dynamics of the events had taken absolutely everyone in West Germany by surprise. Neither the government nor the opposition had a contingency plan for a situation in which the Honecker government collapsed and crowds of desperate citizens of the GDR took to the streets. Other Western capitals and Moscow were also in turmoil at that time.

Generally, by 9 November no one had raised the issue of German reunification. The GDR was treated as a sovereign state, which was in crisis but remained a subject of international law and its disappearance was considered unimaginable.<sup>[316]</sup>

West Germany, seeing that Honecker's dismissal had solved nothing and the crisis in the GDR had intensified, slowly began to change its position. This evolution was no doubt influenced by the talks with Schalck-Golodkowski, who, immediately after Paul Gerhard Schürer had disclosed the real state of the GDR's economy, authorised by Krenz, held talks on 6 November with Wolfgang Schäuble and head of the chancellor's office, Rudolf Seiters, about loans for the GDR. It remains an open question if the demand of DM 12–13 billion was excessively much for West German finances or whether the Western side refused because it was apprehensive about investing in a regime of whose sustainability it was unsure. The outcome of the talks, concluded three days prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, was negative.<sup>[317]</sup> Schäuble and Seiters advanced strictly political conditions, the most important of which concerned free elections and the legalisation of the opposition. If those were turned down, the negotiators were to reject other requests put forth by the SED.<sup>[318]</sup>

The result of the talks had a major impact on the contents of the Kohl government's 'Federal Government Address on the State of the Nation in Divided Germany'. Presented in the Bundestag on 8 November 1989, it contained new elements. For the first time in the history of the FRG, Helmut Kohl overtly made economic aid contingent on political conditions to be met by the GDR authorities, in that way notifying public opinion of what Schalck had heard two days previously.<sup>[319]</sup> In practice, the chancellor's speech marked the end of both the treating of the SED as a partner for talks and of the 'pragmatic co-operation', which had been characteristic of the previous two decades of German foreign policy. The fiasco of Schalck's talks with the Bonn negotiators sealed the economic collapse of the GDR.

The demands for political reforms did not mean that the question of German reunification was raised. The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November found Kohl and Genscher in Warsaw. After a short discussion, the chancellor decided to cut short his visit to Warsaw and landed in Berlin on 10 November. Then it was clear that Schabowski's mistake had put all of the actors in international

politics in a new situation. The comments made by the capitals of the world indicated that Kohl's room for manoeuvre was very narrow. Diplomats from the US and the USSR, as well as those from France and the United Kingdom, pressured Kohl not to take any action, which might lead "to further destabilisation of the GDR."<sup>[320]</sup> Given that on 10 November the issue of the use of violence was not yet clear, Kohl's address in Berlin, apart from stressing the significance of the event, had no major new elements. Initially it may have seemed that the pressure put on Kohl had been successful and that the two German states would remain on the map of Europe.

The situation in the GDR grew worse by the day. Krenz had no authority, the opposition was unable to set the new tone of the revolution, and "*Deutschland einig Vaterland*" ("Germany united fatherland") was being more and more frequently chanted by protesting crowds, especially in late November. Furthermore, some citizens of the GDR had begun to draw practical conclusions from this slogan. In November 1989 alone, as many as 133,429 people decided to move to West Germany.<sup>[321]</sup> In this situation, Moscow, realising that the *status quo* would be hard to maintain and the course of events was to its detriment, tried to take the initiative.<sup>[322]</sup> On 21 November, during a meeting of Teltschik with a representative of the International Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikolai Portugalov, the Soviet side stated that the USSR continued to object to the liquidation of the GDR, but most likely at some future time might accept a version of a confederation of both German states. On 24 November, the idea was reiterated in a conversation with Krenz and Modrow by the head of the International Affairs Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Valentin Falin.<sup>[323]</sup> Bonn and East Berlin realised that the Soviets saw West Germany first and foremost as a potential creditor. The USSR, in financial dire straits itself, was in need of money. In return for loans, Moscow was ready to make far-reaching concessions in its policy towards Germany. The reaction was immediate. On 28 November, in a speech in the Bundestag, Helmut Kohl announced a "Ten-provision programme of eliminating the division of Germany in Europe".<sup>[324]</sup> It openly stipulated that a confederation would be only an interim measure and later both states would set up federal structures.

Kohl's speech triggered an earthquake in every capital across the world. The announcement of the plan met with unfavourable reception by virtually all countries (apart from the United States). In a conversation with Genscher, Gorbachev said that Kohl's programme was a "dictate." The December EEC summit in Strasbourg showed, moreover, that the EEC members did not like the idea of German reunification (perhaps with the exception of Spain). As Rödder observes, the sharp reaction to the chancellor's words did not concern what he had said (apart from the statement on the reunification of Germany on some future date it contained little new), but the circumstances in which those words had been uttered (it was patently obvious on 28 November 1989 that the GDR was slowly disintegrating), and what the speech had not addressed. Warsaw was vehemently opposed to reunification because the question of recognising the state border on the rivers Oder and Neisse had not been dealt with. Additionally, Kohl did not mention a reunified Germany's joining the EEC and NATO, thus upsetting his allies in Paris and London.<sup>[325]</sup>

After the announcement of the 'Ten-provision programme', West Germany was also in turmoil. Genscher felt offended, since the chancellor (aware that the disclosure of the plan would be opposed by the minister of foreign affairs and his liberal party) had failed to notify his coalition partner about his idea. Kohl's address put the social democrats in an awkward position. The developments in the GDR were a hard nut to crack. Previously the SPD had consistently rejected the idea of German reunification, but, in the face of the rapidly changing situation, the party was desperately trying to look for ways to smoothly join the process.

Although in the vote in the Bundestag the SPD somewhat 'instinctively' supported Kohl's programme, Oskar Lafontaine, realising that the question of German unity may cause a serious split within party ranks, decided to censure the programme as early as 2 December, calling it a token of 'Ko(h)lonialism'. He warned residents of the Bonn Republic of the costs to be borne by the welfare system in the case of reunification.<sup>[326]</sup> Criticisms of the programme were heard from intellectuals (such as Günter Grass, whose statement that all who want German reunification must not forget about Auschwitz went down in history)<sup>[327]</sup> and the mass media (television, daily press, and magazines, for example *Der Spiegel*).

Much of the East German opposition protested, too. The day after the programme was announced, they put forward their own concept: *Für unser Land* (For Our Country), in which they clearly called for respecting the sovereignty of the GDR.<sup>[328]</sup> The protests from social democrats, Genscher's hesitation, and the cautious approach of the world capitals were to no avail. The Modrow government had no control over the situation; unable to solve economic issues, the prime minister carried out purges in the administration and the party. State security services made showcase arrests of former prominent party executives charged with corruption; in the first days of December, those included Erich Mielke, Willi Stoph and Günter Mittag. In January 1990, Erich Honecker was also detained for a short time, but was released for health reasons. An interesting solution was chosen by Schalck-Golodkowski, who overnight became the public enemy of the government. Sensing imminent detention, he established contacts with West German intelligence (*Bundesnachrichtendienst* – BND) and shared his extensive knowhow in return for security.<sup>[329]</sup> Seeking ever-new scapegoats, the GDR prime minister blamed the critical economic situation of his country on none other than 'Polish smugglers'.<sup>[330]</sup>

Since November, the disintegration of local administration structures had deepened; and the relevant functions could only partly be taken over by the local round tables. The chaos in the SED after the dismissal of Krenz and the old members of the Central Committee naturally posed a question about the possible partner for talks with Bonn when the government and opposition had long ago lost control over the course of events.

In early December, the revolution in the GDR entered another stage. Demonstrators began to take over local *Stasi* headquarters. Assaults on MfS buildings (provoked or not) demonstrated that the government was unable to perform its fundamental tasks.<sup>[331]</sup>

In turn, the opposition, which sought social support, took advantage of (usually true) information about the destruction of files, provided by the prime minister himself and the *Stasi* officers. The issue of state security files, access to them, and the role of the *Stasi* became, therefore, the principal subject of the Round Table talks.

Under the circumstances, during Kohl's December visit to Dresden, the request from the prime minister of the GDR for economic assistance

had to be rejected. However, thanks to it Kohl was able to overtly indicate that he had no hopes whatsoever in the East German side.<sup>[332]</sup> It became increasingly clear for the East German elites that whoever governed East Berlin would be treated by Kohl as an extra, rather than as a genuine partner.

Two speeches made on 19 December underlined the scale of the problem. Helmut Kohl, visiting Dresden, won the crowd saying that he aimed for the unity of Germany (those present in the square at the *Frauenkirche* failed to notice that the chancellor made this provisional and added, “When the hour strikes”). PDS head Gysi, speaking on the very same day in Berlin, did not intend to doubt the GDR’s sovereignty, and openly criticised the idea of reunification.<sup>[333]</sup> These dilemmas were not resolved until the end of 1989.

## Epilogue

The events taking place in 1989 set the framework for the social processes in the Central European states in the years to come. A description of the situation of Germany in 1990 should highlight two closely interconnected phenomena. On the one hand, there was the disintegration of the SED into warring factions and the inability of the opposition to take over power; on the other hand, there was mounting conviction in world capitals that, although the merger of the GDR with the FRG was not an ideal solution, no other scenario would be feasible.

Conflicts within the government and the opposition aggravated the chaos in the country. In practice, as of December the GDR’s administration operated only in theory. The chaos deepened the frustration of citizens, who were even more exposed to the psychosis of leaving the country,<sup>[334]</sup> and those who decided to stay were increasingly hostile towards the functionaries of the *ancien régime*. Both of the phenomena mentioned above culminated on 15 January, when desperate demonstrators (approximately 10,000 people), having heard rumours that the Modrow government had once again ordered the destruction of the *Stasi* archives, entered the *Stasi* headquarters in *Normanstrasse*, vandalising the offices in search of the lost files. The functionaries in charge of the security stood by and merely observed the havoc, convincing observers that there was a complete lack of respect

for the authority of the state. The morale and zeal for work also plummeted in the police force, which had lost any remaining respect of the people. Criminals could actually do anything they pleased. If Duisberg is to be believed, the chaos was so unprecedented that for a time Moscow was considering the use of the Red Army to restore a minimum of order, allowing the enforcement of such elementary issues as the road traffic rules.<sup>[335]</sup>

At the same time, the inability of the opposition and the communist party to come to an agreement as to the strategy for solving the crisis finally made most citizens of the GDR, voting for the *Allianz für Deutschland* (Alliance for Germany) on 18 March 1990, agree that their country would be incorporated by West Germany. The question arises here of why the Round Table initiative did not convince the public to back up the idea of a 'reformed GDR'. In Germany, few people want to remember the ZRT (as the German Round Table was known). This historic 'piece of furniture', a turning point in the process of systemic transformations in Poland and Hungary, evidently in the GDR had proved a far less efficient tool for launching a systemic change, which makes a more profound reflection worthwhile.

Limiting ourselves to a comparison with the People's Republic of Poland, it is enough to indicate the fundamental differences. Namely, in Poland the Round Table talks were the result of long months of preparations. The talks were held between the communist party, headed by Wojciech Jaruzelski and Czesław Kiszczak, the related satellite parties, and the activists from the Solidarity trade union and some opposition circles not related to it. Lech Wałęsa was commonly treated as the vehicle for the hopes for change. The talks were attended by the Church, the only commonly respected institution in the 1980s. The Round Table talks in Poland led to the adoption of a wide range of reforms and a concrete political plan, which culminated in the 4 June 1989 election and the subsequent appointment of Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government. First and foremost, however, the Polish Round Table was convened, for example, to prevent a situation in which all of the major social processes fell out of the control of the negotiating partners and to channel them into a compromise concluded in Magdalenka.

In contrast, the German ZRT was talking place amidst a revolution. By the time the talks started, for nearly three months the state had been repeatedly rocked by mass protests of millions of citizens of the GDR, and

in December 1989 the institutions of a sovereign state were increasingly disintegrating, at all levels of power, including the ministries in charge of the uniformed services.<sup>[336]</sup> The above circumstances had an impact on the composition of the groups participating in the ZRT, on the subjects of the talks and the roles of the individual actors.

The revolutionary circumstances of the convening of the Central Round Table had an impact on the composition of the groups negotiating there. In theory, as in Poland, on both sides there were representatives of the party and government, opposition activists and observers from the church. This is the only analogy to Poland. It is not that the German 'piece of furniture' actually resembled a quadrangle, with the parties on one side, the government on another, representatives of the church (as moderators) on the third, and representatives of the former SED satellite organisations (such as trade unions or other political parties) on the fourth side. Naturally, the pattern of negotiations privileged the government side since most social organisations had their roots in the party state. The crux of the problem was that none of them was able to present a unified position. The opposition was split into eight different groups, which did not speak in single voice. The groups, emerging amidst the revolution of the autumn of 1989, had a very different impact on the course of the talks and the choice of the participants, often accidental, was sometimes made on the spur of the moment.<sup>[337]</sup> Consequently, the question of the amount of support for particular groups was unclear until the March elections. The government's side did not manage to maintain a unified front, either. The satellite parties and the organisations earlier entrusted with 'transmitting the party to the masses' (mainly trade unions) read the signs of the times in the mood of the crowds and were not inclined to blindly follow Gysi, who could only dream of Jaruzelski's authority.

As to the subject matter, in theory the ZRT was to reflect critically on the state of the country. Such reflection, however, in order to be productive needs to take place in conditions where the participants do not need to solve urgent current problems, or at least to not administer the country. Yet the revolutionary mood of the street and the protesters, who wanted to see the effects of the Round Table immediately, did not offer such a luxury to the negotiating parties. Worse still, the waning authority of the Modrow government and the intense disintegration of the entire country forced

the ZRT to be actively involved in extinguishing the social unrest and the recurrent assaults of irate protesters on the offices of the former *Stasi*. This made the Round Table participants discuss first of all the status of the files of the former political police rather than the economic situation. As a result, in time the ZRT was transformed from a body negotiating the principles of the operation of the state in the future into a ‘parallel government’ (*Nebenregierung*), which supported or replaced the actions of the Modrow government, which after 15 January and the assault on the *Stasi* headquarters in *Normannstrasse* lost the remains of its authority.

The problem was that any actions had no impact on citizens’ decisions whether or not to remain in the GDR. Debate about the agenda for reform was impossible when society, on the brink of collective hysteria, demanded not only changes (which the ZRT were ready to propose), but immediate incorporation into West Germany. If, then, initially the Central Round Table talks were followed in the GDR with some interest, over time they resembled more and more often an incomprehensible game, the significance of which was lost on citizens in late February and early March, and when the debates were televised, viewers simply switched off their televisions.<sup>[338]</sup>

For its own part, Bonn never sympathised with the Round Table initiative, accusing the ZRT first of all of lacking unambiguous democratic legitimacy. Kohl believed that in the face of ever more radical social moods, such a ‘safety valve’ was to some degree indispensable,<sup>[339]</sup> but would not prolong its existence. To some extent, he was strengthened in his observations when notified about the course of the debates. Although theoretically it was in the interests of both the opposition and the government to maintain their state, in those critical days they were unable to speak in unison; on the contrary, they were engaged in a tug-of-war.<sup>[340]</sup> It is no wonder, therefore, that in such a situation the desperate citizens saw Helmut Kohl as the only way out of the crisis. To simplify matters, one can say that the activities of the opposition and the government resembled an attempt to race against the clock. Each time the actions taken by Krenz, Modrow and Gysi (who had taken over the party’s archives and property) and by the opposition, split into a few groups, came too late. The protesters demanded far more changes than the number of changes proposed.

Aware that time worked in favour of the dissolving of the GDR as an independent state, Soviet, American, French, and British diplomats tried to regain the initiative. In theory, the position of these four powers could stall the process of swift German reunification. That is what the Modrow government counted on,<sup>[341]</sup> treating the resistance of European countries to reunification as its trump card, the last one it had left in debates with Kohl. Still, the idea of a confederacy, in the context of internal arguments within the SED, the lack of a vision of the future on the part of the opposition and the deteriorating economic situation of East Germany, proved to be unfeasible. The same was true about the concepts put forward in early 1990, i.e. the idea of a neutral Germany, outside NATO (disregarding the opposition to that idea from the US) or in NATO, but with limited prerogatives of the Organisation. It turned out that Gorbachev's measures were always belated and the dramatic economic situation of the USSR ultimately reduced to zero the room for manoeuvre, which the Soviets had. In the end, Kohl was able to get virtually everything he wanted from Gorbachev, on the condition that the USSR would receive adequate financial recompense for it. After his visit to Berlin on 20–22 December, François Mitterrand noticed that the drive towards reunification could not be stopped and withdrew from the political game much earlier than other European politicians did. French diplomats came up with the concept of a permanent presence of Germany in European structures, where a common currency based on the strong Deutsche mark and the construction of a European Union based on three pillars would play the key role. Alone, the United Kingdom, whose prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, protested the most vociferously against the incorporation of the GDR by the FRG, was too weak to single-handedly block the process. To sum up the result of the negotiations about the German question at the global level, we should first of all pay attention to the numerous safeguards against the excessive growth of German power, which were enshrined in the treaties that were to be binding on Germany. In this context, we should point not only to agreements such as the 'Two Plus Four Treaty'<sup>[342]</sup> or the Maastricht Treaty, a logical consequence of the dissolution of the GDR, but also to the treaty between the Republic of Poland and the German Federal Republic on the confirmation of the existing state

border between them, signed by foreign ministers Krzysztof Skubiszewski and Hans-Dietrich Genscher on 14 November 1990.<sup>[343]</sup>

The above circumstances help one understand why in 1990 the leadership of the GDR's regime were increasingly becoming extras rather than genuine participants in the German reunification process. From November 1989 to February 1990, the approval of reunification among the citizens of the GDR rose from a mere 27 per cent to 75 per cent.<sup>[344]</sup> Nevertheless, although as early as January 1990 Modrow had realised that the subject of German reunification was unavoidable, he tried to do everything in his power to postpone that process. The plan introduced on 30 January 1990 to the People's Chamber was an unmistakable reference to the concept of a neutral Germany and the prime minister of the GDR envisaged a gradual rapprochement of both German states, culminating in reunification. That idea could not be implemented, first of all because the government's authority in the eyes of East German citizens was not improved neither by the cabinet reshuffling and the entry to it, as of 2 February, of activists from the opposition (their admission as ministers without portfolio undermined the sense of the entire move), nor by the setting of an earlier date for the elections to the People's Chamber, initially scheduled for 6 May. The Round Table decided on 28 January to hold that election sooner, and so brought the date forwards to 18 March 1990.

It may have initially seemed that the above decision privileged the East German social democrats. The party of pastor Meckel and playwright Ibrahim Böhme had tried to attract the attention of society as early as April 1989, and relatively quickly received support from the SPD's central office in Bonn, where the new political group was warmly supported by Willy Brandt (the honorary chairman of the SPD in the GDR). Unencumbered by any legacy of the past or connections with the SED, and nicely fitting the strong socialist traditions, the SPD in the GDR would have probably won the election had it not been for a lack of imagination and a mistaken interpretation of the mood of the moment by the then leaders of the West German SPD. Kohl's pledge of 6 February to establish a monetary union and to introduce the Deutsche mark in the GDR and his statement of 13 March 1990 that the exchange rate of the Eastern and Western marks would be 1:1 clinched the election result. The reaction of the SPD to Kohl's electoral bid was

mixed at best. Even before 1989 the question of reunification of both states had been extremely controversial within the German Left, and the events of the Autumn of the Nations further aggravated the internal conflict, dividing the members into two conflicting groups, where Willy Brandt, Hans Jochen Vogel or Johannes Rau were decisively “for”, and Oskar Lafontaine, Gerhard Schröder or Egon Bahr were obviously “against”. In the end, instead of countering Kohl with a clear alternative vision for GDR policy, the SPD was forced to seek a sort of internal compromise which – as Schmeitzner correctly noted – was simply too ambiguous to attract the support of citizens in upcoming general elections.<sup>[345]</sup> To make matters worse, Vogel’s speech in the Bundestag, which was extremely bad from the point of view of the SPD, implying that his party did not approve of the solution proposed by Kohl, dramatically affected the electoral mood, which was not captured by any opinion polls until the very end. While in early February as many as 54 per cent of the citizens of the GDR, encouraged by the electoral campaign, in which Brandt played a significant role, had wanted to vote for the SPD in the GDR, after Kohl’s statements, the irresolute reaction of the Bonn headquarters, and the congress of social democrats in the GDR<sup>[346]</sup> the pendulum of social mood swung in the opposite direction.<sup>[347]</sup>

The winner of the election was the Alliance for Germany (*Allianz für Deutschland*) supported by Kohl. The Alliance was composed of the GDR CDU of Lothar de Maizière (referred to as the Ost-CDU); the opposition *Demokratischer Aufbruch* (the Democratic Awakening), which was led by Dr Wolfgang Schnur, and the Rev. Rainer Eppelmann, and the German Social Union (*Deutsche Soziale Union*), led by Pastor Hans-Wilhelm Ebeling. The Alliance received as much as 48 per cent of the vote. It won even though Kohl, and even more so the secretary general of the party, Volker Rühe, had long been opposed to co-operating with the Ost-CDU,<sup>[348]</sup> which was not inclined to always follow Kohl. It won even though in the past, Lothar de Maizière had not been in the opposition and even within CDU, he was seen as having been loyal to the previous system. Interestingly, the victorious coalition was rocked by conflicts; activists from the *Demokratischer Aufbruch* were reluctant to be on the same list as members of the old *nomenklatura*. Three days prior to the election, the media disclosed that Dr Schnur had been a willing informant to the *Stasi* for many years, which, given the degree

of hatred towards *Stasi* officers in March 1990, should have stripped the *Allianz* of any chance of success.<sup>[349]</sup> All these factors made the *Allianz*'s victory all the more surprising.

Commentators unanimously agree that the election result was tantamount to a death sentence for the GDR as a sovereign state. It showed that only an unconditional incorporation to the FRG, with no transition period and no prolonging of the existence of the former GDR, was to the liking of East Germans. The calamitous defeat of groups of the former opposition, such as the New Forum, which had tried to demonstrate that a reform of the new state made sense, and the worse than expected result of the SPD (21.9 per cent), whose sister party in the FRG had been unable to adopt an unambiguous stand on reunification, convinced everybody that the new government of de Mezière was only a temporary one. The role of the new People's Chamber and the government it had appointed was limited to implementing indispensable laws that paved the way for the incorporation of the GDR into the FRG, such as the introduction of the Deutsche mark in East Germany pursuant to the 18 May 1990 treaty on the Monetary, Economic and Social Union and the introduction of a new administrative division of the country based on federal states.

The role of the 'technical cabinet', whose only *raison d'être* was to be the dissolution of the GDR, was not favoured by the head of the *Allianz für Deutschland* and his coalition, composed mainly of activists from the *Allianz* and the SPD in the GDR. Until the very last, de Maizière tried to play the role of a head of a sovereign state and to demonstrate that Bonn was treating him like a partner rather than an errand boy. In his policy speech delivered in the GDR People's Chamber on 19 April 1990 de Maizière stressed that the debate on the introduction of the Deutsche mark as the only legal tender in East Germany had made him realise the risk of a sense of underappreciation that could be felt by the citizens of the Eastern federal states and consistently demanded that the achievements of the GDR should be taken into consideration in the process of German reunification.<sup>[350]</sup>

Moreover, for a long time, he supported the concept of German reunification seen as a merger of two sovereign subjects of international law, with the prospect of writing a constitution for the new state and of composing a new anthem (an issue of his special interest, as he was a musician by

education), based on the anthem of the former GDR! De Maizière opposed plans for the re-privatisation of property nationalised by the communist regime. In many particular issues, he tried to retain the unique elements, which were considered by the pastor-ministers, embracing the traditions of leftist evangelical denomination, to have been particular accomplishments of the GDR.<sup>[351]</sup> Some regarded de Maizière (a pastor and an ardent member of the Evangelical Church) as actually a representative of the concept of 'Protestant' Germany, in which the ideological legacy of the GDR would consist of, for example, the spiritual legacy of Martin Luther according to the specific theology practiced by the circles of East German Christian democrats.<sup>[352]</sup>

The seasoned Bonn and West German officials and party activists did not treat de Maizière and his people seriously.<sup>[353]</sup> West German diplomats were especially ironic towards Pastor Meckel, the minister of foreign affairs, who in all seriousness opted for German neutrality although it was evident that, given the position adopted by Washington, such option was completely unrealistic.<sup>[354]</sup> The West German side reacted unfavourably to this idealistic approach to politics and, something noted by commentators, the clear primacy of equality over liberty and of a centrally planned economy over a market one, present in de Maizière's speech. In addition, the demands for taking into consideration the historical injustice towards the GDR (which had been unable to tap into the Marshall Plan) were incomprehensible for the FRG. Although de Maizière was often criticised for his 'thoughtless Prussian strong-headedness', he too began to apply pressure for a rapid conclusion of the negotiations in late July, probably fearing that their prolongation may only worsen the situation of the citizens of the eastern federal states. Earlier, on 18 May 1990, a treaty was signed establishing a monetary, economic, and social union between the GDR and the FRG (referred to as the state treaty). It provided the general framework for the later economic transformation of the Eastern states (practically entirely reflecting the vision of incorporation developed in Bonn). During the "Two Plus Four" conference, which ultimately confirmed in September 1990 the formal legally binding consent of the superpowers to the merging of the GDR with the FRG, all decisions were made by Helmut Kohl, even if some members of the last government of the GDR had a dissenting opinion.<sup>[355]</sup> On 31 August, the GDR and the FRG signed a treaty on establishing

German unity, and on 12 September 1990 (when the Paris treaty was also signed) the treaty on the final regulations with respect to Germany, also known as the 'Two Plus Four Treaty', in which: Germany gave up any possibility of possessing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons; the upper limit for the number of Bundeswehr troops was set at 370,000; it was agreed that Berlin was no longer divided into individual sectors; and Germany gave up any and all territorial claims. At the same time, the USSR committed to withdraw its army from German soil by no later than 1994 and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation undertook not to place its troops and missiles in the territory of the former GDR. On 3 October 1990, the incorporation of the GDR into the FRG became a fact.

Thus, despite huge international pressure halting (or at least prolonging) the process of dissolving the GDR, the resistance of the GDR's elites, the disapproval of the opposition SPD, the ambiguous position of intellectuals, and the concerns of ordinary citizens of the Bonn Republic, who since the time of Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* had considered the question of reunification as closed, the opponents of the process lost. No doubt, diplomatic pressure at one stage could have been able to enforce a more profound reflection on the part of Bonn. As we know, in mid-December 1989, in light of the vehement opposition of Paris and Moscow and the practical diplomatic isolation, an idea was put forward in Bonn to offer Moscow a 'moratorium on reunification'.<sup>[356]</sup> In 1990, however, all of these factors proved to be insufficient in the face of the 'excursion frenzy', which, as Modrow fittingly observed, was the principal engine of social transformations in the GDR from its establishment until 1989, inclusive.<sup>[357]</sup> And during the Autumn of the Nations, the real agent of the change was the East German population, which was always one step ahead of political plans that had to be constantly adapted to public feeling that was at those critical moments in constant flux.<sup>[358]</sup> Built on the logic of confrontation between the West and the East, which had been the principal axis of international relations after 1945, the GDR became a hostage of those circumstances, which were extremely unfavourable to any politician who claimed the necessity of its reform, without jeopardising its mere existence, irrespective whether they were members of the SED or opposition activists. A state created 'from scratch' in 1945, neighbouring a wealthy state whose citizens spoke the same language

and in 1989 drove Mercedes cars while the citizens of the GDR waited for a long time to be given a coupon for the purchase of a Trabant, was not competitive enough and, since reforms were unfeasible, it had to collapse.

In 1990, it was too late for reforms that would allow the retaining of the *status quo* (two German states, possibly in some unspecified confederation). The SED regime would not hear of any debate, especially about the struggling East German economy. Any assistance in this area might only come from the FRG. Kohl, having realised in Dresden on 19 December 1989 what the real social aspirations in the GDR were, evidently took the path of a speedy German reunification, and would not support Modrow, who lacked any democratic legitimacy and real social backing.<sup>[359]</sup>

Kohl was later criticised for letting the penitent Modrow and the democratic opposition 'starve'. Moreover, the Christian democrats were allegedly more concerned about their own political position than about the interests of the state and saw that they would be able to defeat SPD during the 1990 parliamentary elections only if the faithful electorate were to be strengthened by 16 million grateful voters from the east.<sup>[360]</sup> The chancellor was also widely criticised for the economic and social conditions offered to the citizens of the eastern states under the treaties incorporating the GDR into the FRG.

This criticism does not seem to be entirely justified. It is true that the reunification process proved to be far more costly than Kohl had anticipated, even though when he promised GDR citizens the famous '*Bluhende Landschaften*' (land of milk and honey), he had seriously believed those words.<sup>[361]</sup> Kohl's closest aides believe that from the date of his visit in Dresden he had clearly become convinced of his unique mission.<sup>[362]</sup> That conviction made him take decisions single-handedly, without prior consultations with his partners (Bundesbank President Karl Otto Pöhl learned from the press about the idea of a monetary union, which was announced in February 1990).<sup>[363]</sup> The chancellor would not listen to warnings from administration experts and criticism from economic circles who (like Pöhl) openly warned him that the implementation of the social agenda promised to the citizens of the GDR was too excessive a burden on the federal budget.<sup>[364]</sup>

The problem was that in 1990, as Rödder observes, there was no other idea, which could have been implementable in German realities.<sup>[365]</sup> Lafontaine's concept (disregarding the fact that retaining the 1980s prosperity

only in the Bonn Republic, to the detriment of citizens of the GDR, was the top priority of the SPD's programme) did not stand the test of time, since it was founded on an untenable *status quo*. Its implementation was based on the GDR remaining as an independent state and gradually edging up to reach the living standards of the FRG. However, in fact the people of the GDR would wait no longer. The only thing Lafontaine could offer was to recognise them as foreigners, like the Austrians or the Swiss, with concurrent visa requirements at the borders.

No one in the GDR would agree to such a plan. It is doubtful whether Lafontaine's restrictions would have been effective had it not been for the orders to shoot persons attempting to cross the border with the Federal Republic of Germany illegally. For obvious reasons, however, such a solution was out of the question. But in this context, it is worth mentioning that even before the Autumn of the Nations, West German migration authorities had noted that more and more members of medical staff had sought to flee, bringing the entire health care system in the GDR into the open crisis, as replacement were not available.<sup>[366]</sup> Furthermore, in January 1990 technical and intellectual elites, disillusioned by the dramatic economic situation in the GDR, with the Deutsche mark more and more common as legal tender, started to emigrate to West Germany.<sup>[367]</sup>

All in all, in 1989 more than 344,000 citizens of the GDR moved to the FRG: in the short period from 1 January 1990 to 18 March 1990, more than 184,000 made the move.<sup>[368]</sup> The elites were not the only ones who wanted to leave the country. In an interview with *Die Welt* Lothar de Maizière estimated that in the period in question some two to three million people intended to move to West Germany.<sup>[369]</sup> If that were to happen (which, in hindsight, seems very likely), the entire system of the welfare state, allegedly protected by Lafontaine's concept, would have gone bankrupt even earlier and the ramifications would have been dire for the systemic foundations and social well-being of the Bonn Republic. Needless to say, this could irreversibly debilitate the meagre potential of the GDR for reconstruction and – keeping in mind all of those circumstances – it is more than probable that only a quick and positive answer to the demands made by the protesting people could stop this dangerous process. Indeed, it seems not to have been a pure coincidence that the number of GDR citizens seeking to emigrate

to West Germany went significantly down only after 18 March 1990 (the date of the general election to the People's Chamber).<sup>[370]</sup>

It is also doubtful whether, in light of the complete disintegration of the SED and the structures of local administration, the Modrow government would have succeeded in making efficient use of the economic aid they applied for so fervently. As it was stated above, under Honecker, neither the SED was aiming at any substantial reforms, nor the democratic opposition had any concrete plans of the future economic system. No surprise then, that Modrow's ideas in this respect were still deeply anchored in such anachronistic solutions like central planning, a stark role of state interventionism, as well as the predominant role of the state-owned companies.<sup>[371]</sup> With such obsolete views on economy, one could expect everything but a quick recovery, and this is why the last communist government of the GDR could not be a trustworthy partner for Kohl and his cabinet members. The local round tables would not have managed it, since they lacked the necessary democratic legitimacy and experience in financial matters and were in a permanent conflict with the remnants of the former party state. Under the circumstances, it is no wonder that Dieter von Würzen, the secretary of state in the West German Ministry of Economy, during Seiters' trip to Berlin in January likened economic aid to the GDR to throwing money into a black hole.<sup>[372]</sup> Moreover, Modrow and representatives of the opposition parties did not adopt a uniform stand during talks with the Bonn authorities. This helped convince Kohl that the opposition was scarcely a partner for talks, as it had no clear ideas, and that only early parliamentary elections were a solution to the crisis.<sup>[373]</sup>

Therefore, the 'excursion frenzy' was responsible for the fact that any other solutions became unrealistic, since any solution other than the one finally adopted (i.e. the 18 March 1990 election and its result: the dissolution of the GDR) seemed worse to the politicians concerned. Although Kohl's plan was not ideal, the others had to agree to it, as this was the only idea with social backing.<sup>[374]</sup> The only alternative was the use of violence, which, for obvious reasons, was out of the question in 1990.

## The Aftermath

Probably even at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a large part of Polish society would still have regarded the events in the former GDR as a paragon of settling old scores with communism. The trials of Honecker and other members of the Politburo contrasted with the inability to bring to justice Jaruzelski and his aides. The figure of Pastor Gauck and the creation of the office of the Federal Commissioner for *Stasi* Files (BStU), the wide access to *Stasi* documents and the lustration procedures stood in stark contrast to the prolonged work on a similar law in Poland. The meticulous purges in the judiciary and the pushing of the post-communists into the opposition were points of reference for the Polish right as to what the settling of old scores with the past should be like. Poles' disillusion grew when they looked at the treatment of the citizens of the GDR, where no widespread riots or social protests had taken place after 1953, yet they were commonly regarded in Western Europe and the United States as the 'fathers' of the victory over the totalitarian system. Today Europeans tend to associate the fall of communism with the fall of the Berlin Wall rather than with the Polish Round Table; Europe seems oblivious to the Polish contribution to the collapse of communism. Poles were actually somewhat jealous that the East Germans did not need to fight for their freedom, which they actually got as a present. Nor did they need to negotiate painstakingly their accession to the European Union, since by a quirk of fate they found themselves in it at once. Polish frustration was even deeper in the face of West German generosity, supposed to bridge the gap between the standards of living in the Eastern and Western federal states. Was this Polish frustration justified? In hindsight, that seems arguable.

Firstly, the collapse of the GDR occurred suddenly: neither the communist party, nor Western analysts, and still less the German society, had foreseen the pace of the events of the *Autumn of Nations* and their final outcomes. What was worse, however, the Honecker era, which lasted c. 18 years, was characterized by, on the one hand, without doubts – oppression and terror, but on the other hand, the stability granted to all those who did not want to express too loudly their opposition towards the communist regime. This systemic immobility, which granted to anyone a certain level

of consumption at the expense of the investment and technological development of the country as a whole, could last so long as the regime was able to find money to buy the social calm.<sup>[375]</sup> This is why – despite its obvious shortcomings, which were more and more visible – the system remained stable. However, just because one of the main characteristics of the GDR system, as it stood under Honecker, was the inherent lack of any reforms, its collapse produced a wave of shock for all the actors taking part in the events of the 1989/90 in Germany. In essence, the main effect of those circumstances was a total unpreparedness of the German population and public institutions for the challenges which were to come during some next decades. Having regard that it has never been possible for Germans (as it has never been possible for anybody else) to switch off the eternal rules of politics, the final results of the transformation in the new *Länder*, even 30 years after the unification, still arouse controversies.

It should be stressed again that the incorporation of the GDR into the FRG was contingent on an uncontrolled social eruption caused by the unshakeable policies of the Honecker regime. At the critical moment, no one controlled the crowds and thus the events of 1989 in the GDR were, apart from the ones in Romania, the most revolutionary in nature, although fortunately this was a completely bloodless revolution.<sup>[376]</sup> It should be underlined once again that it was this lack of capacity of the GDR's democratic opposition to take control over events, which made the incorporation of the GDR the sole realistic scenario. As the political views of most prominent members of the dissident movements were in 1989 still enclosed in visions deeply anchored in the Marxist traditions or formed a part of the leftist ideology at best and thus – they were at odds with the expectation of the GDR's citizens who wanted to have more personal freedom and more consumption. To put it in another terms: as the programmes of the former dissidents were unacceptable for the rest of the society, and the scenario of stabilization of the state by the forces of the ancien regime was out of the question, the sole solution which the internal and external political actors – albeit reluctantly – finally accepted – was the direct and almost unconditional incorporation of the East Germany into the FRG.<sup>[377]</sup> Still, Kohl too was subject to the strict Tocquevillian principles applying to any revolution. Also, in this case, the complete rejection of the forces

of the *ancien régime* proved impossible. After all, someone had to carry out, on behalf of the GDR, the necessary changes preceding the incorporation of the German states. Someone also had to sign a treaty providing for incorporation along the lines proposed in Bonn, where the recognition of the provisions of the 1949 Fundamental Law as an act of constitution and the extension of the binding force of German federal law onto the Eastern states had to be one of the key provisions. To implement that plan, the People's Chamber had to include political forces both dependent on Kohl and well organised.

In this context, it is more evident why the role of the members of the GDR's opposition had to be marginal. They were poorly organised, had no plan, and were unable to decide on a single vision for Germany. All of the above factors prevented Kohl from treating them as serious partners for negotiations. Gysi and his party were not such partners either, mainly because he had been reluctant to dissolve the GDR from the start. Consequently, Kohl's plan was executed by Lothar de Maizière's 'pastor government' and the CDU in the GDR, which played a role analogous to the Polish agrarian United People's Party (ZSL).<sup>[378]</sup> This moreover explains why the 1990 elections for the People's Chamber, the first and only properly conducted election for a legislative body in the history of the GDR, was won by a party which shortly before had assured the SED of its loyalty. The chancellor wanted more than just a won election. Everyone in Bonn realised that after the incorporation of the GDR some of the local elites would be necessary for the construction of democracy in the Eastern states. Kohl understood that the GDR Christian democrats (like the ZSL and the SD in Poland) had been joined by many professionals who, for a variety of reasons (for example religious ones) would not join the SED. Therefore, Kohl was faced with a dilemma similar to that of Lech Wałęsa after the parliamentary election in Poland on 4 June 1989; Kohl decided to make use of the 'Polish option' in the German circumstances, and to get rid of the party state. Unable (and unwilling) to make agreements with the SED, he opted for the satellite parties.

The fundamental difference with the option chosen in Poland was that the head of the West German government did not need his eastern colleagues to hold power but instead to carry out the operation of incorporating the eastern *Länder*. After 3 October 1990, top activists in the former

Ost-CDU, along with Lothar de Maizière (whom the chancellor disliked, as he did those who opposed him) were forced to resign. Although often withdrawal from politics was forced by accusations of collaboration with the *Stasi* (for example de Maizière, Wolfgang Schnur, Gerd Gies, Josef Duchač, etc), the departure of those figures was no doubt convenient for Bonn. As Wolfgang Schäuble noted in a conversation with Duisberg, “de Maizière did not foresee that Kohl would squeeze him like a lemon and then have him kicked out.”<sup>[379]</sup> This effectively prevented the establishment of another ‘post-GDR’ wing in the party and paved the way for Bonn to fill the key positions in the Christian democratic party and in the governments of individual federal states with West German politicians (Kurt Biedenkopf, Georg Milbradt, etc). A symbolic role was maintained for those who, like Angela Merkel, came from the former GDR, but until the end of the Kohl era remained fully dependent on him.

In this context, the trials of Politburo members, Honecker included, carried out after 1990 and covered extensively by the Polish press, were misleading. It is true that the vast majority of members of the highest party instance were put on trial. The problem is that the German courts were not willing to break the law and sentence to prison people who had acted legally under the GDR law. After all, the East German state had been a subject of international law, recognised by the governments of most countries worldwide. Consequently, it had also been able to issue binding decision within its borders. Given that, the German courts in most cases had to evaluate the possible unlawfulness of an act in light of East German law. An additional factor that prevented guilty verdicts was the age and health status of the defendants. As early as two days after the commencing of the trial of the GDR National Security Council (12 November 1992), which was to establish first of all which persons had been responsible for the issuing of an order to shoot at those who tried to illegally cross the state border, Willi Stoph had to be excluded because of his poor health. On 17 November, a similar decision was taken with respect to Erich Mielke, ultimately found guilty only of homicide, which he had committed in 1931 as a communist militant; the court found no legal grounds to give the head of the *Stasi* a prison sentence for his activity during the SED regime. The sentence was only symbolic: Lavrentiy Beria’s 87-year-old loyal disciple was paroled in 1995.

The arrogant Honecker unashamedly rejected all charges of having given orders to have the Berlin Wall constructed, accused the FRG of assaulting a sovereign state and regarded the charges pressed against the *Stasi* as trumped up by the imperialist press. He also had to be released because of advanced liver cancer. Eventually the toppled dictator went to stay with his daughter in Chile, where he died on 29 May 1994. He was never sentenced, which enormously irritated the citizens of the eastern *Länder*, close to 63 per cent of whom were deeply disappointed with such a court decision.<sup>[380]</sup>

In the end, former GDR minister of national defence, General Heinz Kessler, was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison (and released after five years, in 1998) and Hans Albrecht to four and a half years. Krenz, Schabowski and a few other prominent party activists went on a separate trial. Schabowski, the only defendant to assume moral accountability for the crime he was charged with, was sentenced to three years in prison (but due to the pardon granted by Governing Mayor Eberhard Diepgen, he served only one year). Krenz was sentenced to six and a half years, and Hans Modrow was sentenced to nine months (suspended), for electoral fraud.<sup>[381]</sup>

The trials were of symbolic significance really. Given that, unlike in Poland or Hungary, the German communists had never been involved in reforming the system, sentencing a few functionaries to a few years in prison can hardly pass for settling the crimes of the communist regime. This view is further supported by the fact that although after 1990 the German courts initiated nearly 30,000 trials of *Stasi* officers, merely 20 resulted in prison sentences. The then Federal Commissioner for the Records of the *Stasi* (and a former opposition activist), Marianne Birthler, quite appropriately defined this result as the “acme of cynicism.”<sup>[382]</sup> No doubt, the sentences passed were in large measure caused by the concern not to start building democracy in the former GDR by breaking the law. However, it is plain that an overwhelming majority of those responsible were not held accountable, not even symbolically.<sup>[383]</sup>

The conviction, widespread in Poland, that after 1990 ‘everyone was kicked out’ in the GDR is false too. In practice, real purges concerned the highest echelons of power of the GDR, where very few people retained their positions. The fall of the GDR made nearly all the staff members of the old ministry of foreign affairs jobless.<sup>[384]</sup> The *Bundeswehr* provisionally decided

to employ former soldiers of the GDR National People's Army (even if only a fifth of the enlisted men were employed, although the opposition within the *Bundeswehr* to that was no less intense than that of the foreign affairs ministry<sup>[385]</sup>), and only a handful of former *Stasi* officers was employed by the Federal Intelligence Service BND.<sup>[386]</sup> However, teachers, police officers, and public servants (unless they were found to have been secret informants) were able to continue working.<sup>[387]</sup>

A lack of adequate personnel prevented the dismissal of all of the staff of the judiciary. Of the total 3,000 judges, nearly 1,000 continued to adjudicate in criminal and civil cases, although the presidents of the highest courts of the particular states were 'imported' from the West.<sup>[388]</sup>

Changes in academia varied. In the humanities, which were hugely affected by ideology, close to 80 per cent of professors had to leave their universities, while in the exact sciences the relevant per centage was only slightly higher than 30 per cent. Practically no exchange of personnel took place at the local authorities' level, which before long fell into the 'old hands'. Surprisingly, there was continuity of employment in the media (although some journalists had totally compromised themselves) and in industry, where as many as 42 per cent of old factory managers remained in their jobs.<sup>[389]</sup> It may come as a shock that the dissolution of the uniformed services of the former GDR, the *Stasi* included, was often connected with their officers' acquiring pension rights. By contrast, opposition activists continued to experience financial hardships.<sup>[390]</sup>

Provisions giving a small monthly allowance of EUR 250 on top of the retirement benefits to those persecuted by the GDR's regime entered into force only in 2007. As Hubertus Knabe mentions, the inability to pursue a career in state administration did not mean any restrictions in participating in the economic life of the country, which many *Stasi* officers joined after they left their ministry, in time making sizeable fortunes. Major Matthias Warnig, known also in Poland, who after the transition became a board member of the Dresdner Bank and later the president of Nord Stream AG (the company responsible for the construction of the Nord Stream gas pipeline) does not seem to be an isolated case. The process of 'enfranchising' and amassing of wealth by the East German nomenklatura resembles that of the other countries of the Eastern Bloc, Poland included.<sup>[391]</sup> To sum

up, even if the retribution policy took in the GDR a more concrete shape than in any other country of the former Eastern Bloc, still it would be false to believe that the measures adopted were particularly severe, keeping in mind the very cruel nature of the Ulbricht/Honecker regime. Anyway, most of those guilty of communist crimes went unpunished or were released from prison just after few years or months.

To make matters worse, the people protesting in the streets in 1989 and 1990 who at the end gave the mandate to the government to wind up their state were not aware that the achievement of standards of life comparable with these in the FRG would be everything but an easy task. Or – to put it more clearly – the emigration trends show clearly that what they wanted (immediately) was to have **not comparable** but **the same** standards of living as those enjoyed in the FRG. This is exactly what they understood when they were hearing Helmut Kohl promises during the electoral campaign in 1990. However, meeting the demands of the crowd proved to be extremely costly. Today it seems to be beyond doubt that when in December 1989 Kohl promised to transform the area of the former GDR into the *Blühende Landschaften* he really wanted to equalise the living standards in both parts of Germany as soon as possible, and he believed that this goal could have been achieved quickly.<sup>[392]</sup> However, it was easier said than done. For one thing, there was the monetary union and its effects, frequently quoted in relevant literature. Pursuant to the political decision taken by the Kohl himself, GDR marks were to be exchanged into Deutsche marks at the rate of 1:1 (whereas the black market value of the former was at best 1:4),<sup>[393]</sup> which pushed production costs up to extreme levels and as a result destroyed entire production sectors.<sup>[394]</sup> For another thing, from the date of the monetary union companies in the GDR stopped receiving the subsidies they had benefitted from during the Honecker era. In many cases, that meant a ‘double death sentence’. This drama was further exacerbated by the collapse of the main trade partner of the former GDR, the Soviet Union<sup>[395]</sup> and by the actual state of the East German economy, which many experts had believed in 1990 to be in a far better condition<sup>[396]</sup> than it actually was in reality.<sup>[397]</sup> Finally, Kohl’s excessively optimistic calculations proved to be in many respects erroneous, which pertained to the financial capabilities of the Bonn republic (which in practice proved smaller than he had expected), as well as to his

hope for quick economic recovery, similar to the one that had taken place in West Germany at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>[398]</sup> Keeping all these factors in mind one should not be surprised that for many former citizens of the GDR, the 1990s and the first years of the new century were anything but happy ones. The growing de-industrialisation led to mass unemployment, which as early as July 1990 exceeded 500,000 people. In 1997, the total number of unemployed people in the new federal states stood at 4 million (19.5 per cent of the labour force) and even in 2005 (despite dramatic demographic changes)<sup>[399]</sup> it was approximated to be 11 per cent.<sup>[400]</sup> This was a significant blow for many former citizens of the GDR. In theory, the problem of unemployment could have been addressed in two co-ordinated ways. Firstly, the authorities could have tried to attract foreign and domestic investors to the territories of the former East Germany. Secondly, they could have tried to support the creation of workplaces at the cost of the German taxpayers. Without dwelling on this topic, it is enough to state that the authorities tried both ways, but without any visible results. The private sector, keeping in mind enormous costs of work-hours, caused by “the drama of a monetary union”, was not particularly interested in any serious investment in the new federal states, considering this region to be simply uncompetitive. This real obstacle was further exacerbated by the legal chaos caused by the potential and real claims of those whose property had been confiscated (legally or illegally) by the communist regime from 1945 onwards, and the lack of clear provisions regarding that issue. As a result, over many years after 1990, in the eyes of the West German business community the former GDR territory had a very limited role to play, i.e. the one of a market for goods and services produced in the western parts of the country, and nothing more.<sup>[401]</sup> With regard to the direct investment by the Treasury, the story is more complex. From 1990, all inhabitants of the former West Germany were required to pay a special tax for “the reconstruction of the East”, and it would be wrong to state that the eastern part of the unified Germany was left without any concrete financial assistance; in fact, the opposite is true. Uwe Müller calculated that within the first 15 years, transfers from the western part of the country to the new states were no less than EUR 1.4 trillion. It follows that annual expenditure on the former GDR was in the region of four to five per cent of German GDP, far more than the annual budget

of countries such as the Czech Republic or Hungary.<sup>[402]</sup> Still, the general results were mixed at best. On the one hand, although successive German governments have done a lot to bridge the gap between the living standards in eastern and western federal states, the intention has not been implemented fully. In the 1990s, the average unemployment rate in the east exceeded 15 per cent; still, despite mass scale investment, rapid infrastructure extension and modernisation (sometimes in a better shape than in the western states), in 2010 pay packets in the former GDR continued to oscillate at around 80 per cent of those in the western federal states.<sup>[403]</sup> On the other hand, one can subscribe to the view of Gerhard A. Ritter, who doubts if, in general, it was reasonable to expect that the state alone would be able to bring a break-through in economic life in the former East Germany without the active participation of private investors.<sup>[404]</sup> The answer is probably “no”, keeping in mind that the main barrier (labour costs) was in both cases just the same.

Obviously, the results above are in open contradiction to Kohl’s promise to create in the east a ‘land of milk and honey’ and caused general frustration and disillusion in German society as a whole, which strongly affected the social lives of citizens of the former GDR.

First of all, experts from the Berlin Institute for Population and Development (*Institut für Bevölkerung und Entwicklung*) have shown that between 1991 and 2005 the negative migration ratio in the eastern federal states was more than 1.5 million people, who seemed irretrievably lost to that territory.<sup>[405]</sup> If we consider the negative ratio of deaths and births, it becomes clear that another 1 million should be added to that number. Neither Honecker, nor Kohl or his successors have been able to solve this dilemma. Worse still, the outflow of qualified personnel has dramatically reduced the capital attracting capacity of the new federal states. Low-skilled jobs proved to be too costly and qualified workers were still scarce.<sup>[406]</sup>

Secondly, the conditions of political reunification had a decisive impact on the mental process of reunification of the citizens of one Germany. The need to recruit many persons for top positions from the western Länder led to a situation in which, according to studies published in 1995, as many as 40 per cent of executive administrative positions in the eastern Länder were held by experts and activists imported from the FRG.

The higher the level, the harder it was to find there a citizen of the former GDR.<sup>[407]</sup> Even if initially citizens of the former GDR were not in principle opposed to such ‘imports’, and some FRG officials managed to win over the local population and establishment, the over-representation of citizens of the former Bonn Republic in administration, parties, and business must have augmented the sense of low self-esteem of citizens of the former GDR.<sup>[408]</sup> Furthermore, as Duisberg, an expert and long-standing member of the FRG civil service, points out, oftentimes the public officials from the Bonn Republic were ‘third-rate specialists’ who, for a variety of reasons, had not made a career in Bonn and embraced an opportunity to climb up the career ladder in the eastern federal states. As usually happens, ministries and other institutions took the opportunity to get rid of unpromising staff members. Those officials usually did not demonstrate a higher degree of intelligence or ethics, and arrived in what they called ‘Stasiland’ with a feeling of superiority, and contemptuous and prejudiced towards the locals.<sup>[409]</sup> Quickly, the other side reacted traumatically, in particular because the collapse of the former GDR had meant in many cases the need to ‘start learning to live from scratch’. Experts usually mention the problems of transferring Western standards to the former GDR, the low level of civic involvement and the problems with the construction of party structures and non-governmental organisations.<sup>[410]</sup> However, something more is at stake here. The principal question to be addressed by the Bonn Republic after the incorporation of the former GDR was unification of citizens’ consciousness. To discuss the issue of the division into East Germans (*Ossies*) and West Germans (*Wessies*) exceeds the framework of this text, but a few general comments would be in order here.

As early as the first half of the 1990s, it transpired that the above-mentioned division was an insurmountable feature of German society, and the removal of it might take decades. Both sides were mutually distrustful and frustrated.<sup>[411]</sup> Residents of the Western states were disappointed because those in the East evidently were unable to appreciate the financial burden placed on the former Bonn republic. They did not understand why, despite the marked improvement in the living standards of the majority, the eastern federal states were increasingly given to GDR nostalgia, as evidenced by the ever better election results of the post-communist PDS.

It seems, however, that the reasons for this 'Ostalgia', often covered by the German media, were very mundane. When incorporating the eastern federal states into the FRG, Kohl had unleashed mechanisms which automatically brought with them all the drawbacks and advantages of one state being incorporated by another, but privileged the citizens of the former Bonn Republic.

There are no doubts that those first years of unity improved the living standards of the residents of the former GDR because of their eligibility for the generous social welfare system. The collapse of the GDR's industry and the attendant unemployment levels coupled with the loss of communist identity must have created a dangerous explosive mixture. Under Honecker, a citizen of the GDR had his or her designated place in society. The state guaranteed a lower but unchanging level of social welfare. When the GDR was incorporated into the FRG, and the 'rules of the game' changed drastically, society was – as was already stated above – completely unprepared for that freedom. The crucial problem here may be summed up as follows: because of rapid changes a large number of people felt a loss of their social status. A former member of the SED, a director of a research centre, learned that his institute would not be needed any longer or at least that his skills were no longer appreciated in the context of a market economy. At the same time, a worker in a factory X was notified that the factory was closing down because it was unprofitable. Theoretically, neither the director nor the worker should complain, since, having become unemployed, they were eligible for a wide array of social welfare benefits. However, the sense of being socially demoted and a low self-esteem must have taken its toll on the mentality of residents of the eastern part of Germany. During the Honecker era they had had a job and a position and had lived in a country which even as recently as 1970 had been among the ten best developed worldwide, whose sports teams broke ever more world records, and had a strict hierarchy of values, with equality as the fundamental element of the communist ethos. They had lived in a country where working for the *Stasi* was seen by many as an honour and party membership a token of distinction; a country where no one asked questions about the moral aspect of the ideological choices imposed by the party leaders.

A true catastrophe occurred in 1989. The uniqueness of the GDR, where communist ideology merged with a Prussian and Protestant ethos, where work, discipline, sense of duty, primacy of a collective over an individual and equality over liberty had been unquestionable for a long time, where the work-place was one's "father and mother" (as it provided employment and also drove children to school and planned the workers' shared free time, etc)<sup>[412]</sup> had disintegrated. It turned out that none of these values counted in the free market reality and that freedom and individualism were of prime significance.

The loss of a job, experienced periodically by more than 20 per cent of the former citizens of the GDR, must have been a huge emotional burden. Although unemployment benefits and other social welfare benefits made far less affluent Poles jealous, little did they change the fact that the social status of a jobless person is low. Certainly, this is not what the protesters had expected in 1989. Kohl's message was seen primarily as foreshadowing an immediate bridging of the gap between the living standards in both parts of Germany, rather than an improvement of material status. A better financial status, no doubt evident relative to the standard of living in the 1980s, does not screen the fact that life in Bavaria or Baden-Württemberg is still better.

The revolution, then, necessitated drastic revaluations of one's entire life, which was a huge difficulty for many citizens of the former GDR. It seems that this is also the reason for the bumpy construction of the structures of the civic society. Since for most of the citizens of the former GDR the state was 'them', not 'us', no wonder that, despite the experience of local round tables, a few years after the reunification experts flagged the issue that the construction of networks of NGOs or classical political parties faced serious challenges.<sup>[413]</sup> Perhaps all those difficulties might have been assuaged by information about successful careers of citizens of the former GDR in the united country. The fiasco of de Maizièrè's (inept) attempts had a deplorable outcome. It is true that the Western side did not consider which elements of the GDR's legacy might be incorporated in the ideological canon of the unified state. Since the principal roles in the March 1990 elections were played by West German politicians and the former opposition groups of the GDR were very much defeated, practically no major dissident figures from the ZRT could be found in German politics.<sup>[414]</sup> The absorption of the economically

weak GDR, with only 16.7 million citizens, by an economic superpower with a population of 62 million did not offer much chance to anyone wishing to operate outside of the FRG's party system framework. Most opposition leaders naturally drew conclusions from the provisions of the election law and joined all-German parties. Among them, the Green Party (which was considered the most radical) was the most popular among former members of the GDR's opposition. Some of those involved in the opposition won seats in the Bundestag (e.g. Gerd Poppe, Wolfgang Ullmann and Konrad Weiss). Some former activists from the *Demokratischer Aufbruch*, including Pastor Rainer Eppelmann, joined the CDU; some of the politicians from the New Forum (e.g. Regine Marquardt and Rolf Henrich) chose the SPD, which was also joined, naturally, by members of the SPD in the GDR (e.g. Markus Meckel and Martin Gutzeit). Some former activists worked in human rights organisations (e.g. Bärbel Bohley and Gerd Poppe), still others became lecturers (for example Ulrike Poppe).

Another question is the evolution of the respective worldviews (*Weltanschauung*) of former opposition activists. The mechanisms of social change unleashed in 1989 were not to everyone's liking, since they generated ever-growing social disparities. For most of the opposition members, the principal engine of rebellion against the East German reality was the 'reform of socialism', seen as a 'patched-up version of the GDR', rather than the Bonn Republic, which many criticised. This criticism did not relate exclusively to economic aspects. The vast majority of the opposition activists (for example Wolfgang Ullmann and Erika Drees) considered that the democratic standards of the Fundamental Law of the FRG left too much discretion to bureaucracy. The discontent, sometimes expressed in extremely radical forms, in 2002 led to Erika Drees, representing the NF, being detained for unlawfully entering the premises of a Luftwaffe military unit in Buchel where she believed nuclear weapons were stored. As a result, the court sentenced her to a few weeks behind bars. Another dissident, one of the founders of the *Demokratischer Aufbruch*, Pastor Friedrich Schorlemmer, in 2009 joined an organisation of anti-globalists (*Attac*). Rolf Henrich underwent a unique 'evolution': once one of the key experts from the New Forum, after reunification he defended soldiers accused of shooting at those who wanted to escape from the GDR.

The above comments on the lives of opposition activists let us draw a rather sad conclusion that the group of former dissidents played no significant role in Germany and only few individuals are publicly recognisable. That is due to the circumstances of reunification and Kohl's policy, and to lustration, which had an indelible impact on the destruction of the image of the opposition held by the citizens of the eastern federal states. During the lustration process many people who were otherwise distinguished for opposing the regime in the 1980s had to explain their earlier contacts with the *Stasi* (willing, as faithful Marxists, or coerced).<sup>[415]</sup> What worse, in some cases, the allegations on the presumed involvement of particular persons, which had been formulated publicly in the first half of the 1990s, when the mechanisms of functioning of the MfS had not been fully explained yet, appeared to be false, or half-true.<sup>[416]</sup> In some cases, the long-lasting and time-consuming proceedings could not establish beyond reasonable doubt whether a particular person served as a *Stasi* agent or not, thus leaving their story without any final settlement.<sup>[417]</sup> The manner in which the lustration proceeded explains partially why the Lutheran Church, which until the end of the Honecker era was a significant factor in the GDR could not regain its credibility within society. Today it is safe to say that – despite some previous expectations – the incorporation of the GDR into the FRG did not prompt the advancement of Christianity in the East *Länder*.<sup>[418]</sup> On the contrary: the secularization continued to progress and today the former GDR territories are one of the most secularized parts of the world.

Therefore, millions of residents of the GDR heard only one message from the western government (transferred to Berlin, which was immaterial): 40 years of living behind the Wall actually had made no sense. Such a message could only result in a vehement defensive reaction.

As early as the first part of the 1990s, it was clear that the PDS, trying to take advantage of the 'Ostalgie', would be a major political force, at least in the eastern federal states (periodically posing as a defender of interests of the new federal states) and, after Lafontaine left the SPD and it was transformed into the Party of the Left (*die Linke*), it would be a group of country-wide aspirations.<sup>[419]</sup> But – to be sure – however: until 2015 (the date of the migrations crisis, and the beginnings of the sharp increase of the influence of the far right political party – AfD), over many years

the political programme of *die Linke Partei* was addressed to the largest extent to the average citizens of the GDR, who liked movies such as “Good Bye Lenin!” and cafés whose decor included communist symbols, and where Erich Honecker’s speeches were played in a loop.

Over many years, the assessment of the GDR differed between political parties and members of the public. PDS members, to a large extent hostage of the post-communist system, and those who have failed to succeed in the German reality after 1989 naturally tried to whitewash the GDR. For example, Bodo Ramelow, a PDS candidate in elections for the prime minister of Thuringia, said that while the GDR was no state of law, he would not use the term a ‘state of lawlessness’ (*Unrechtstadt*), because in some areas, like labour law, the legacy of the GDR surpassed the law of the FRG. Besides, according to that politician the term *Unrechtstadt* harmed the memory of inhabitants of the former GDR, most of who did not feel they were under surveillance by the *Stasi*.<sup>[420]</sup> The above statement, criticised by the CDU and the SPD, triggered an interesting reaction among the leaders of the Party of the Left. Oskar Lafontaine was primarily critical, and even Gregor Gysi did not support Ramelow.<sup>[421]</sup> A question arises if this distancing from a statement by the head of the party in Thuringia was frank or opportunistic. It is more interesting, however, that studies show that the above ideas are not alien to a sweeping majority of citizens of the former GDR. The case of the chairwoman of the faction of the Party of the Left in the Brandenburg Parliament, Kerstin Kaiser, who openly admitted to having collaborated with the *Stasi* for a few years as a secret informant (although she pointed out that that had been a mistake),<sup>[422]</sup> shows that this fact does not prevent the path of a political career in the former GDR. In 2008 and 2009, cases of collaboration with the *Stasi* by a few mayors of Brandenburg municipalities revealed by the media demonstrated that voters did not want them to step down from their positions.<sup>[423]</sup>

In this context, the abridged results of sociological studies should not come as a surprise. In May 2010, the *Stern* weekly and the Forsa Institute for public opinion research conducted a survey, asking if Germans would want to live once again in a divided country. Seventy-four per cent of the respondents replied in the negative, but as many as 21 per cent said that they would.<sup>[424]</sup> In a survey conducted in March 2009 by the *Leipziger Instituts für Marktforschung*

and commissioned by *Super Illu* weekly, where citizens of the former GDR were asked whether East Germany had been a state of lawlessness (*Unrechtstadt*), as many as 41 per cent replied that it had not been. Only 28 per cent of the respondents fully agreed with the statement that it had been and 25 per cent partially agreed. Most of the respondents were against penalizing statements denying the existence of an order to shoot at those trying to illegally leave the GDR, or claiming that the GDR had been a state that did no harm to anyone. As to the last issue, the responses were more polarised (46 per cent against and 42 per cent in favour).<sup>[425]</sup> Finally, what should have been the point of concern for the German elites, according to the survey conducted for the N24 station in October 2009, c. 75 per cent of Eastern German respondents felt discriminated against by their Western co-nationals. On the other hand, 75 per cent of West Germans were of the opinion that no discrimination of former GDR citizens truly existed.<sup>[426]</sup>

The above opinions reflect the glaringly low knowledge of history among German society as a whole, in particular German young people. In 2008, only a third of Germans were able to provide correctly the dates of the construction and the fall of the Berlin Wall. This is no doubt a failing of the education system. It turns out that more people remembered when the Second World War broke out (the date of 1 September 1939 was given by 61 per cent). Fifty-seven per cent of respondents knew that the First World War lasted from 1914 until 1918.<sup>[427]</sup>

A more intense scandal broke out after the publication of a report by scholars from the Free University of Berlin concerning facts from the history of West and East Germany. Students at Berlin schools offered most peculiar answers, such as saying that Konrad Adenauer had been a GDR politician, that there had been free elections in Honecker's state; that Willy Brandt had been the head of the SED, and the Berlin Wall had been built by the Americans!<sup>[428]</sup>

The authors admitted that once the publication came out, they received many letters, only few of which expressed an outrage with such a one-sided picture of the GDR. A marked majority tried to defend the views of the students taking part in the study. Most of the authors of the correspondence, probably in defence of their own lives, were decidedly positive about the GDR.<sup>[429]</sup> In their opinion, the issue of the Berlin Wall should

be seen within the context of the Cold War, for which East Germany was not accountable since it had been a response to the confrontational course of Adenauer and NATO, which had sought the destruction of the GDR, and the dissolution of the state in 1990 made ‘modern slaves’ of its citizens. The correspondents stressed that democratic values were good for nothing without the support of the state, required to ensure social justice.<sup>[430]</sup>

## Conclusions: Some Remarks on the Legacy of 1990 for Germany

When in 1990 Helmut Kohl set in motion the project of incorporating the GDR into the Bonn Republic, crowds cheered and greeted him as a hero. The CDU’s sweeping victory in the eastern part of the country during the 1990 Bundestag election left no doubt as to the broad sentiments of the public. Nearly thirty years later, we can safely say that little, if anything, has remained from the enthusiasm of that time. For some scholars, the story of “reunification” is clearly a history of the political, economic, and moral fiasco.<sup>[431]</sup>

“More than 25 years have passed since German reunification. Since then, the Federal Government has continued to pursue the constitutional aim of creating equal living conditions in eastern and western Germany. Equal, however, does not mean identical. The focus is more on the comparability of living and development opportunities. With a view to eastern Germany, this essentially means overcoming the imbalances and disadvantages that stem from the former division of Germany. This is an aim that has not yet been fully achieved today despite the considerable progress already made. It therefore remains a central challenge to continue the economic levelling process and to foster equal living conditions.”<sup>[432]</sup>

The quote above, taken from the *Annual Report on the Status of German Unity* by the German government, may serve as a good illustration of the complexities which have been continuously associated with the official narrative on the “reunification” of Germany. On the one hand, it would be absurd to say that the story of unification is a “story of failure”. After all, during the last three decades, the unemployment in the new Länder dropped dramatically,<sup>[433]</sup>

and the average wages attained the level of 82 per cent of those paid in the West of Germany.<sup>[434]</sup> The mass outflow of people to the West, so characteristic for the first two decades, practically ceased to exist as a sociological phenomenon.<sup>[435]</sup> As the authors of the Unity Report stated recently, – when compared to other European regions, this catch-up process means that eastern German *Länder* now have an economic strength that is comparable to many French or British regions. For example, the GDP per capita (weighted according to purchasing power) in the Dresden administrative district reached the level of the Greater Manchester region in England and the state of Thuringia, or the level of the Region Centre in France.<sup>[436]</sup> Moreover, there is no more *Stasi* or other instruments of mass terror and the inhabitants of the former GDR are free, they may travel abroad without any limits, whenever they want, and wherever they want. Given the above, why not to accept the official narrative of the German government, which puts such a strong emphasis on the successes of the Unification achieved over the last 30 years? For the reasons stated below – there are numerous reasons, which warrant a due caution against a blind subscription to the views of German bureaucracy or to an official narrative of speeches delivered by some prominent German politicians.

At first glance, one cannot but totally agree with the thesis of the 2018 *Annual Report*, which states that, since reunification, standards of living in the eastern German states have again moved closer to those in western Germany and the gap has also continued to narrow in the social sphere, and legal and social policy adjustments have largely been completed.<sup>[437]</sup> Having said that, however, one cannot omit from discussion some less successful details of the transformation in Germany's East, notably its horrendous costs in economic and social terms and – last but not least – its legacy which impacts not only the day-to-day lives of former citizens of the GDR, but also – influences – at least indirectly – the performance of the political system of the FRG as a whole. This is why, as part of the concluding remarks, this topic should be examined more thoroughly.

One should never forget that, although in the 1980s West Germany was quite often considered as a country at the height of its power (at least in economic terms), more careful observers, including the prospective prime minister of Saxony, Kurt Biedenkopf, were certain that the social

expenditure of the Bonn republic in the context of increasing globalisation of the economy could not be maintained in the long run. Biedenkopf had already then demanded that the labour market be deregulated and labour itself less taxed. In his opinion, an additional burden on Germany's federal budget must have been 'doubly suspect' from the economic standpoint. Firstly, the 'old FRG' had not carried out any reforms. Secondly, the incorporation of the GDR pushed it in a very different direction. It is in order to observe that Xavier Kaufmann had already by that time pointed out the dramatic dynamics of demographic changes and their ramifications, such as the rapid ageing of society, with obvious effects on the social insurance system.<sup>[438]</sup> Those observations are further confirmed by the research of Gerhard A. Ritter. He also shares the opinion that such problems as aging population, increasing (although slowly increasing) unemployment, the increasing public debt and the effects thereof (i.e. the gradual deterioration of the competitiveness of German economy) preceded the momentum of the collapse of communism in Europe.<sup>[439]</sup> The same author opines that the West German ruling elite were aware of those challenges: that is why in the late 1980s programmes inspired by economic conservatism were on the political agenda.<sup>[440]</sup> But all those projects of state reforms were put on hold after 3 October 1990, as the State was forced to play an active role to implement Kohl's dreams of the *Blühende Landschaften*. The results of this policy did not need to be waited long for: just because of the necessity to cover the expenditures entailed by the incorporation of the GDR, the total debt of the FRG skyrocketed and attained the level of 1996 billion DM, that is, it grew twice compared to the level of 1989<sup>[441]</sup> and the labour costs had increased dramatically not only in the eastern parts of Germany but also in all the rest of the country.<sup>[442]</sup> As the result, the economic model that had been widely promoted by West Germany in 1970s (the *Model Deutschland*), which by the late 1980s had come under increasing pressure due to the factors mentioned above, not only failed to regain its vitality but, even worse, solely because of the conditions of the incorporation of the GDR, the overall performance of this model became even weaker.<sup>[443]</sup> In this sense, the famous "reunification" of Germany must be seen as anything but beneficial, as substantial reforms of the state (the necessity for which was more and more obvious) was effectively stopped for years.<sup>[444]</sup>

Thus, it is safe to say that those enormous financial transfers aiming at the reconstruction of the GDR over many years dragged feet on reforms of the FRG, which – in essence – had been necessary to maintain the competitiveness of German economy on the global market.<sup>[445]</sup> To what extent those East German policies contributed to the serious problems, which plagued German economy at the beginning of this century (which around 2005 was very often labelled as “the sick man of Europe”) is out of the scope of the present analysis.

Still, measuring the effects of those policies rather in equity, not efficiency terms, it is not excluded that at the end of the day – despite horrendous costs, which entailed the collapse of East Germany – the increase of federal debt caused by the incorporation of East Germany into the FRG could have been justified, had their ultimate goals been achieved. Ultimate goals, that is, the full equalisation of the living standards all across Germany coupled with the setting up of a new, modern eastern German economy capable to compete, without any direct assistance from Federal authorities, with its own goods and services on domestic market as well as abroad. However, during the 30 years, which have passed since the incorporation of the GDR into the FRG, neither the former nor the latter has been attained. Thus, in light of the Annual Report 2016 quoted above,<sup>[446]</sup> the economic strength calculated per capita in eastern Germany is still around 27.5 per cent lower than that in western Germany.<sup>[447]</sup> The authors also state that, “All in all, it must be noted that over the past 15 years the eastern federal states have recorded worse economic growth than the western federal states.”<sup>[448]</sup> Further, the Annual Reports 2018 does not hide that (...) “differences persist between the east and west despite the many positive results – and this is felt by people in the east. Wage levels and economic strength in eastern Germany are still behind those in western Germany. The fragmented economy in eastern Germany and the lack of company headquarters are key factors behind disparities. For example, not a single eastern German company is listed on the DAX-30, the leading stock exchange index. And almost no major companies have their headquarters in eastern Germany; many eastern German businesses are part of western German or foreign groups, which frequently limits their development potential in the region. Among other things, this structural difference is also reflected in lower research and innovation activities and in a lower degree

of internationalisation. This is compounded by lower productivity and a lack of top salaries.”<sup>[449]</sup> Thus, the policies adopted by Kohl and continued by his successors, even if they contributed to the visible improvement of the living standards of the population on the territory of the former GDR, had also some side effects, which – in the longer term – will be felt more and more painfully for two different reasons. On the one hand, the GDR’s reconstruction – at least to a certain extent – forestalled economic and other reforms in Germany. On the other hand, it failed to fulfil the pledges made in 1990 to citizens of the sinking GDR.

Against this backdrop, it is worth noting that the evolution of the political scene in Germany after 1990 was also significantly affected by the developments of 1990 and the mixed results of the economic transformation. As stated above, the construction of structures of civil society has brought about only partial effects, the political parties are far less rooted in the east than in the west,<sup>[450]</sup> the SED’s dictatorship has only partially been held accountable, and all three factors – at least to a degree – influenced the political life of the whole country. It is true that over many years the post-communist PDS party, led by former apparatchiks and members of the nomenklatura, was treated by the political mainstream mainly as a vocal expression of the interests of the “losers” of the GDR’s transformation. It is also true that only because of its origins, most of its supporters and members were former citizens of East Germany, and that in the 1990s and the first decade of this century the party scored well in the regional elections in the areas, which before 1989 had been part of the GDR.

However, due to political ostracism by other political forces, they were, with some exceptions, largely unable to join government coalitions formed at the national and regional level. Still, it is an undeniable fact that, with time, the wave of “Ostalgie” fell away and the former post-communists were successively replaced by the younger generation of political activists. This new generation secured mergers with some radical leftist groups from West Germany which created *Die Linke* (the Left), a political force which attracted nearly 9 per cent of the vote in the September 2017 general elections. What is more important, they are considered, at least by some SPD activists, to be a potential partner rather than a competitor, still less as a threat to democracy. Thus, one of the “unintended” effects of the transformation

in the former GDR has been the resurgence of the radical left in Germany. This force, at least in the present situation, is unable to enter the federal government. However, by their mere presence in the Bundestag they may in the future threaten the political stability of the entire country. What is more important, however, is that the same (unintended) effect of the transformation in East Germany (i.e. the inability of the local elites to develop a network of mainstream political parties and NGOs in the new federal states) has created a *sui generis* social vacuum, which in the longer term was filled not only by leftists but also by the extreme right, namely the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD). It is not a pure coincidence that PEGIDA and other organisations which during the migration crisis, which erupted in 2015, vociferously criticised Angela Merkel's asylum policy, found mass support principally in the territories of the former GDR, where today it is the AfD which is the most popular political party. This is also, as with the case of *Die Linke*, a logical consequence of the conditions within which the economic transformation was carried out in eastern Germany. Taking all of this together, one must come to the conclusion that it would be naïve to reduce the effects of the incorporation (and the politics followed in the new federal states over the last 30 years) to certain problems which have been affecting the territory of the former GDR and its citizens only. In fact, the above-mentioned shortcomings left by Kohl's legacy influence the political, economic, and social life of the contemporary Germany in a much more profound manner than is generally acknowledged. If, according to the political programmes designed by Kohl, the FRG was to transform profoundly the GDR, making its territories undistinguishable from the rest of the country, this goal was achieved only partially, and even worse. The shocking effects of the economic and social transformation, coupled with the low performance of the democratic political parties, created a dangerously fertile ground for all kinds of extremism, no matter whether identified with the far left, or – on the contrary – with the far right. Even if, for now, none of them is strong enough to decisively influence politics at the federal level, still they have sufficient social strongholds to sketch out more ambitious plans, that is, to cross the invisible border of the former GDR, and to seek to develop their networks within the former West Germany as well. And considering that the implementation of those plans has already been

partially successful,<sup>[451]</sup> it is safe to call the story of transformation of Eastern Germany one of the principal factor determining the current change of the political landscape characterized by the growing fragmentation of the political scene, where 3 or 4 traditional parties (the CDU, the SPD, the FDP and the Greens) are more and more supplemented by the radical left (The Left) and the radical right (the AfD). The time will reveal if, and when so, to what a degree this political transformation can expose the political stability of the country to a genuine risk. For now, it is beyond any doubt that firstly, in the nearest future, the composition of governments in Germany (at the federal as well as at the regional level) will be a much more complicated task than it used to be previously. Secondly, the mere existence of the extremist fractions in the Landtags and in the Bundestag has already limited, on some occasions, the room for political manoeuvre of the Federal Government (at least in the domestic policy context).<sup>[452]</sup>

In these circumstances, one could express serious doubts if the FRG is still strong enough to cope effectively with the above-mentioned challenges in the foreseeable future. Firstly, it is more than debatable whether the economy of the former GDR can operate without the continuous support of the western lands. Even if, undoubtedly, for the last two decades the territories of the Eastern *Länder* witnessed visible and robust economic development of small and medium-sized enterprises, it is noteworthy that, until now, the Federal Government did not dare to switch off its channels of assistance for the former GDR territory.<sup>[453]</sup> Moreover, for the reasons discussed below, it is more than debatable whether it will dare to do so in the years to come.

Keeping in mind that the demographic downturn of the last two decades is deepening, this questions should be answered negatively: even if – as a matter of fact – the migrant flux from the east to the west ceased to exist as a phenomenon, the legacy of the demographic change, which took place on the territory of eastern Germany at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries left its visible open wounds for which – so far – German politics has not found any remedy. Thus, according to the data attached to the Annual Report 2018, the total number of inhabitants living within the GDR territory diminished from 14,624.700 (1991) to 12,569.400 (2017).<sup>[454]</sup> No surprise then that those data are a point of deep concern for German decision-makers

in Berlin, as well as outside of the capital. This is because most of reports published after 2015 seem to reach a common conclusion that the demographic change will significantly affect the economy in the next few years. In theory, the positive side of this change will be a radical drop in unemployment, which had plagued the new federal states for many years at the turn of centuries. However, this decrease in the total number of jobseekers was not caused by a radical increase of new, future-oriented workplaces created by the state or the private sector in some innovative branches, but instead was a sort of spillover of the mass migration to the West coupled with the ongoing process of population ageing. It is not particularly astonishing that ever-increasing numbers of economic experts indicate demographics as the key obstacle for the smooth development of the former GDR in the near future. On the one hand, the falling number of inhabitants entails almost automatically a reduction of the capacity of the internal market. On the other hand, it makes the recruitment of the well-educated staff for the public and private sector a true challenge.<sup>[455]</sup> Needless to say, the above-mentioned factors entail a set of other harsh consequences for Eastern Germans. It is enough to note that the popular press releases information that because of mass migration of women, in the future some of the eastern federal states will be dominated by ill-educated, mostly jobless men who will not start a family due to a lack of marriageable females.<sup>[456]</sup> In theory, this negative balance could have been compensated by the recent wave of migrants coming to Germany from the Middle East and some Asian countries. Still, with the way that the situation is today, the actual impact of this phenomenon on the economy and social life of Germany (including its eastern parts) is not easy to assess. However, in this context one should not overlook the fact that, firstly, the number of newcomers who are interested in living in what was the GDR is not too high. Secondly, because of the lack of the appropriate staff, as well as the strong anti-Muslim sentiments, which seems to be deeply anchored in the souls of a not insignificant number of Eastern Germans, the integration of the newcomers seems to be anything but an easy task.<sup>[457]</sup>

It is unquestionable that, in the long run, the policy of reconstruction (if it were to follow its previous path) may bring further negative consequences, this time for all the rest of the country. Not surprisingly, the late

chancellor Helmut Schmidt warned that if the situation did not change, Germany would have its own *Mezzogiorno*,<sup>[458]</sup> only without the mafia. This is neither the time nor the place to discuss whether Schmidt was right or wrong. The core of the problem is not only that transfers for the reconstruction of eastern federal states started to exceed the financial capacity of the state. Another catalyst for possible conflicts along the east-west line is, moreover, the steadily worsening economic status of such federal states as Saarland, Bremen and parts of Rhineland-Westphalia and Lower Saxony, which causes additional new conflicts of interests between the east and the west of Germany.<sup>[459]</sup>

Did the Germans lose their revolution? While the answer to that question is complex, in 2019 there is no doubt that the Germans did not win the 1989 revolution. If at the onset of the transformation the main concern was the potential German supremacy, which, according to some, would lead to an uncontrolled increase of the power of Berlin and a risk of the FRG politically dominating the EU, today we can safely say that those fears have proved to be unfounded, even if the role of that country within the European Union is the source of constant controversy. Still, the FRG has not become a global superpower after reunification and the scope of this publication does not permit a thorough evaluation of the impact of that fact on the process of the transition of the entire European Union into a major actor of contemporary international relations. Be that as it may, with the EU, which is anyway outside the scope of this chapter, there is no question that the circumstances, conditions and the developments associated with the process of the transformation of the former GDR very strongly affected not only the citizens of the former GDR but also Germany as a whole. A vicious circle was created, which the German political elites have not been able to break to this day. The problem was obvious to all save German politicians who, unwilling to reject the reunification myth, pushed for the far-reaching programme of bridging gaps in the living standards in both parts of Germany at the cost of gigantic debts. None of them would listen that most of the debts would have to be paid off by the next (half as numerous) generation of German young people. Apparently, the political risk of offending senior citizens, increasingly the core electorate and members of the main parties, was considered too great.<sup>[460]</sup>

Still, over many years the FRG's elites remained 'hostage to the reunification myth', which in large measure was based not only on the introduction of democratic standards to the GDR. Dreams of reunification with the FRG were mainly pinned on the fact that it was there that an ordinary citizen of the GDR saw a better realisation of Honecker's slogan of the unity of the economic and social policy. In turn, Kohl, apprehensive of a mass exodus of East Germans, decided on a solution, which in practice meant the implementation of an economic programme left as a political testament by the German communists.<sup>[461]</sup> At the price of social stability citizens were 'bribed' by a relatively high standard of living, even if it was clear that there was a growing discrepancy between the economic efficiency and pay levels in the eastern states, which, thanks to western transfers, far exceeded the real GDP produced in the area of the former GDR. Thus the Polish dream of 'socialist work and capitalist pay' nearly came true, but the solution proved extremely costly; in practice, it meant curbing structural reforms in Germany as a whole. But as far as matters are now, no German politician dared to put into open question the achievability of Kohl's legacy, i.e. the construction of *Blühende Landschaften* in the east of Germany.<sup>[462]</sup> What's more, after more than twenty-five years having elapsed since 3 October 1990, it is more than obvious that, in reality, the implementation of this programme is still very far from being completed. One could even question whether the goals set by the German government at the beginning of the 1990s are still achievable. In that regard some recently published data seems to suggest that the answer is "no", and – to add bad to the worse – this failure will be felt painfully in the upcoming decades all across Germany at least, and – could be – that also in other parts of Europe as well.

[1] More on fundamental principles and practical effects of the GDR's public education system, cf. Angela Brock, *The Making of the Socialist Personality: Education and Socialisation in the German Democratic Republic 1958–1978*. Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D. University College London Department of German September 2005, text available at: <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1363641/1/529718.pdf> (last accessed on 1.02.2020) (see especially: pp. 42–45), who notes that even if the ambition to reeducate or to bring up the society as a whole can be quite easily observed in the practice of German communists as early as in 1945, still the exact meaning of the idea of "the socialist personality" was never stable. It evolved over time and its kinship with other

systems of values (e. g. traditional Prussian morality) was quite evident. Still it is also generally acknowledged that “the socialist personality” was declared as the purpose of the public education not earlier than in 1958 (see: id. pp. 25–26; Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, “Was war die „sozialistische Persönlichkeit“?”, [in:] *Die 101 wichtigsten Fragen – DDR*, Verlag C. H. Beck, Munich 2009, p. 43).

[2] NSDAP: *Nationale Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei* (the National Socialist German Workers' Party, the official name of Hitler's party).

[3] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Nicht mehr mitmachen – Ausreise als Ausweg* (*Stop Participating – Exit as a Way Out*), Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, available at [http://www.bpb.de/themen/90NHIE,0,0,Nicht\\_mehr\\_mitmachen\\_Ausreise\\_als\\_Ausweg.html](http://www.bpb.de/themen/90NHIE,0,0,Nicht_mehr_mitmachen_Ausreise_als_Ausweg.html) (last accessed on 7 March 2018).

[4] Incidentally, this caused not only serious demographic problems in East Germany, which the authorities tried to rectify by rolling out family-oriented programmes. Another problem, a legacy of the 1950s, were mass transfers to the West of all the key companies which before World War Two had been the pride of Saxony and Thuringia (Carl-Zeiss Jena, Dresdner Bank, Audi, etc). This impoverished the area of the GDR, which had been one of the wealthiest parts of the Reich prior to the war. Experts unanimously agree that the transfer of the financial (and, more importantly, human) capital, additionally enhanced by the mass plundering of state and private property by the USSR, not only contributed to the later economic fragility of the communist Germany but was also one of the major obstacles to the reconstruction of the eastern federal states after 1990. Uwe Müller, *Supergau Deutsche Einheit* (*A Disaster German Unity*), Rowohlt, Hamburg 2006, pp. 50–57.

[5] Erhardt Neubert, *Ein politischer Zweikampf in Deutschland. Die CDU im Visier der Stasi* (*A Political Duel in Germany. The CDU Targeted by the Stasi*), Herder, Freiburg 2002, pp. 51–61.

[6] Egon Bahr (1922–2015) was a German Social Democrat politician, a friend and one of Willy Brandt's closest aides (from 1969 onwards the secretary of state in the chancellor's office). He played a key role in the adoption of the ideological foundations of the concept of ‘Change through rapprochement’ (*Wandel durch Annäherung*), and in the negotiations of treaties with the countries of the Eastern Bloc and the USSR in the 1970s (including the accord with Poland of 1970 and the ‘fundamental accord’ of 1972, where both the German states recognised their existence as separate and autonomous entities of international law).

[7] For the full text, see: [http://www.schnitzler-aachen.de/Texte/Der\\_Streit\\_der\\_Ideologien.htm](http://www.schnitzler-aachen.de/Texte/Der_Streit_der_Ideologien.htm) (last accessed on 7 February 2018). See also: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel. Die Revolution von 1989 in der DDR* (*The Endgame. The Revolution of 1989 in the DGR*), C.H. Beck, Munich 2009, pp. 97–100. For clarity, we should recall that on 17 June 1989 the principal negotiator of the text, Erhard Eppler, clearly indicated in the Bundestag that the policy of ‘appeasement of the regime’ had not brought about any results.

[8] Hans-Dietrich Genscher (1927–2016) was a German Liberal politician; in the period 1974–1992, he was the minister of foreign affairs of West Germany, and from 1974 to 1985, he served as the chairman of the German Liberal Party (*Freie Demokratische Partei* – FDP), which between 1969 and 1983 formed a coalition with the Social Democrats, and from 1983 to 1998 with the CDU, led by Helmut Kohl.

[9] Hubertus Knabe, *Honeckers Erbe: Die Wahrheit über die Linke* (*Honecker's Legacy: the Truth about the Left*), Propyläen, Ullstein Buchverlage GmbH Berlin 2009, pp. 96–106.

[10] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution: die Geschichte der Jahre 1989/90* (*Our revolution: the history of 1989/90*), Piper Verlag GmbH, Munich 2008, p. 59.

[11] For more on the discussion within SPD on the topic of reunification in 1989, see: Mike Schmeitzner "Die SPD und die deutsche Frage 1989/1990" ("The SPD and the German Question"), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.). *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90: Als in Deutschland die Realität die Phantasie Überholte (Revolution and Unification 1989/90: When in Germany the Reality Overtook the Imagination)*, DTV GmbH, Munich 2009, p. 404.

[12] The text of both speeches delivered by Kohl and Honecker respectively during this visit (so-called *Tischreden*) can be found at: [https://www.100dokumente.de/index.html?c=dokument\\_de&dokument=0252\\_bon&object=translation&st=FRIEDEN&l=de](https://www.100dokumente.de/index.html?c=dokument_de&dokument=0252_bon&object=translation&st=FRIEDEN&l=de) (last accessed on 20.01.2020).

[13] *Christsoziale Union* (literally the Christian and Social Union), a Bavarian Christian democratic party within the CDU. Because of the history and strong sense of Bavarian autonomy, it has a high degree of autonomy of organisation, even if in the Bundestag it is part of one Christian democratic faction.

[14] More on the credits negotiated by Strauss in the section 'Economic Crisis' below.

[15] Claus J. Duisberg, *Das Deutsche Jahr. Einblicke in der Wiedervereinigung 1989/1990 (The German Year, Insights into the Reunification 1989/1990)*, WJS Verlag, Berlin 2005, p. 16.

[16] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland: Die Geschichte der Wiedervereinigung (Germany United Fatherland: The History of Reunification)*, C.H. Beck, Munich 2009, p. 27; Jens Gieseke, Andrea Bahr, *Die Staatssicherheit und die Grünen. Zwischen SED-Westpolitik und Ost-West Kontakten (State Security and the Greens. Between SED-Westpolitik and East-West Contacts)*, C.H. Links Verlag, Berlin 2016, pp. 100, 101, 102.

[17] Some attempts at institutionalising émigré members of the opposition in the form of the 'CDU in exile' (*Exil-CDU*) and the East Office persisted into the 1950s, but in the 1970s were no longer continued in the atmosphere of the "détente policy".

[18] Relevant texts in German sometimes refer to the exceptions to the rule: Roland Jahn (b. 1953) and Jürgen Fuchs (1950–1999). See, for example, Jens Gieseke, *Der Mielke – Konzern. Die Geschichte der Stasi (The Mielke Group. The History of the Stasi)*, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Munich 2006, p. 164. Interestingly, both activists represented the younger generations, while there was a distinct shortage of people in the GDR, born between the world wars, who would make the effort to influence public opinion similarly to Giedroyc's *Kultura* or Radio Free Europe.

[19] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 36.

[20] Walter Süß, "Die Untergang der Staatspartei" ("The Fall of the State Party"), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.). *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 285. Author's own calculations on the basis of data on satellite parties listed on the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung website, see: KAS, *DDR Mythos und Wirklichkeit (The GDR Myth and Reality)*, available at <http://www.kas.de/wf/de/71.6613/> (last accessed on 7.03.2018).

[21] It should be stressed in this context, that the Lutheran religion proved no major obstacle for SED-driven instilment of atheism. Although in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Church hierarchy tried to confront the government (about the exclusion of religious instruction classes from schools and the pressure from the party and administration that every child should pledge allegiance to the state [*Jugendweihe*] instead of traditional confirmation), the Church was utterly defeated. It turned out that only a few GDR citizens were ready to confront the regime and take the risk of harming their children's careers by refusing to participate in the party upbringing process. See: Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten Deutschlands (Protestantism in Eastern Germany)* (2 korrigierte Auflage – 2<sup>nd</sup> edited edition), Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Leipzig 2011

(e-book), pp. 21–108; Reinhard Henkys, “Kirche in Sozialismus: Knotenpunkte im Verhältnis von Evangelischer Kirche und Staat in der DDR” (“Church Under Socialism: Nodes in the Relationship between the Evangelical Church and the State in the GDR”), [in:] Trutz Rendtorf (ed.), *Protestantische Revolution? Kirche und Theologie in der DDR: Ekklesiologische Voraussetzungen, Politischer Kontext, Theologische und historische Kriterien (Protestant revolution? Church and Theology in the GDR: Ecclesiological Prerequisites, Political Context, Theological and Historical Criteria)*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1993, pp. 19–20; Detlef Pollack, “Der Umbruch in der DDR, eine protestantische Revolution? Der Beitrag der evangelischen Kirchen” (“The Upheaval in the GDR, a Protestant Revolution? The Contribution of the Protestant Churches”), in Trutz Rendtorf (ed.), *Protestantische Revolution?...*, op. cit., pp. 49–51. Some authors (see, for example, Theo Mechtenberg, “Jak żywotne jest chrześcijaństwo między Łabą i Odrą” (“How Vital is Christianity between the Elbe and the Oder?”), *Więź*, 2000, No. 11, pp. 25–26) believe that this largely opportunistic position was in a large part caused by the profound involvement in the Nazi regime of many leading Church leaders and theologians active in the GDR. Under this approach, the legacy of the Nazi period caused a wide chasm between society and the Church, which the communists took advantage of without any problems or qualms.

[22] This difference between Poland and GDR is better understood, when one keeps in mind, that – contrary to Poland – in the GDR it was the state which totally controlled the economic life of the country as well as access to work place and professional carrier. As Danuta Kneipp noted, “The enterprises should become the most important “socializing” in the GDR. Against the background that “work organization [...] is for a long time also life-course organization”, the negative state intervention into working life could cause extreme disruption to the life-course organization.” Danuta Kneipp, “Dies ist kein Arbeitsrechtsstreit, sondern eine politische Sache.’ Das Arbeitsrecht als Herrschaftsinstrument gegen widerständiges Verhalten” (“This is not a Labour Law Dispute, but a Political Matter’. Labour Law as an Instrument of Rule Against Resistance”), [in:] Leonore Ansorg, Bernd Gehrke and Thomas Klein (eds), *“Das Land ist still – noch!” Herrschaftswandel und politische Gegnerschaft in der DDR (1971–1989)*; Böhlau, Köln 2009, p. 94. The same authors also state “(...) in the majority of society, the professional exclusion of SED’s political opponents was often supported, at least not rejected” (ibid., p. 108). In case of persons suspected of some “subversive activities” (no matter, if those allegations were true or false), those drastic consequences in the form of lower standard of living were very often further exacerbated by so called *Zersetzungsmassnahmen* (dismantling measures), that is, a set of measures orchestrated by the *Stasi* to undermine the credibility of persons suspected for views incompatible with official ideology (especially if evidenced – by the more or less clearly stated – wish to emigrate to the FRG) within their milieu, – e.g. society, neighbours, to destroy their self-confidence, and – by pushing them into isolation – to influence their psychological stability and to make them unable to resist against the will of the authorities. Cf. Wolfgang Schuller, “Staatsterror aus dem Dunkeln – die Zersetzungsmassnahmen des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit und ihre strafrechtliche Aufarbeitung” (“State Terror out of the Dark – the Decomposition Measures of the Ministry of State Security and their Criminal Investigations”), [in:] Annegret Stephan (ed.) *1945 bis 2000 – Ansichten zur deutschen Geschichte : zehn Jahre Gedenkstätte Moritzplatz Magdeburg für die Opfer politischer Gewaltherrschaft 1945 bis 1989 (1945 to 2000 – Views on German History: Ten Years of Moritzplatz Magdeburg Memorial for the Victims of Political Tyranny from 1945 to 1989)*, Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung Sachsen-Anhalt, Magdeburg 2002, pp. 69–82.

[23] Konrad Hugo Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, Oxford University Press US, New York NY 1994, p. 17; Hartmut Wendt, “Die deutsch-deutschen Wanderungen – Bilanz einer 40jährigen Geschichte von Flucht und Ausreise”, [in:] *Deutschland Archiv* 24 (1991), 4, p. 387.

[24] Hans-Herman Hertle, Maria Nooke (eds) *Die Todesopfer an der Berliner Mauer 1961–1989, Ein biographisches Handbuch*, C. H. Links Verlag Berlin 2009, p. 537.

[25] The exact number of “the victims of the border” is still hotly debated among professional historians. If the total numbers of victims of the Berlin Wall approximates 140 persons (cf data on <https://www.berliner-mauer-gedenkstaette.de/de/todesopfer-240.html> (visited on 17.03.2020), the question who could eventually be qualified as so called *Opfer des Grenzregimes* is still the matter of the ongoing discussion. The outcome of the research of Jochen Staadt and Jan Kostka posit that the total number of the regimes killed at the GDR/FRG state border between 1949–1989 attained 327 persons. Still not all researches are persuaded with the methodology adopted by these authors. Short summarise of the main arguments cf. Jochen Staadt, Jan Kostka, *Todesopfer des DDR-Grenzregimes. Eine Recherche*, 13.08.2019, available at: <https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/deutschlandarchiv/295022/todesopfer-des-ddr-grenzregimes-eine-recherche> (accessed on 17.03.2020); see also the polemics of Michael Kubina, *Wer war Opfer des Grenzregimes? Eine andere Sicht* 13.08.2019, available at: <https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/deutschlandarchiv/295024/todesopfer-des-ddr-grenzregimes-eine-andere-sicht> (last accessed on 17.03.2020).

[26] See, however, Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk (who contests this thesis), *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 111.

[27] It is debatable to what extent sport (apart from being evidently used for propaganda and for strengthening the conviction of the strength of the state) played the role of building social ideological identity. It is certain that sports schools, *Kinder – und Jugendsportschulen* (KJS), enjoyed exceptionally high prestige and admission to them was regarded as an honour, if only because of the high fitness requirements at enrolment and the educational regime throughout the education process. Paradoxically, the vast majority of the successes of East German athletes took place in individual sports (especially in athletics, boxing, cycling, and ice-skating), while the medal count for team sports was far more modest.

[28] Ulbricht, like Władysław Gomułka in communist Poland, was not an enthusiast of foreign debt, promoting, first and foremost, the investment sector, paying less heed to ongoing consumer needs.

[29] André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan: Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR (From Plan to Plan: an Economic History of the GDR)*, Aufbau Taschenbuch, Berlin 2007, p. 191; Andreas Malycha, *Die SED in der Ära Honecker. Machtstrukturen, Entscheidungsmechanismen und Konfliktfelder in der Staatspartei 1971 bis 1989 (The SED in the Honecker Era. Power Structures, Decision Mechanisms and Areas of Conflict in the State Party from 1971 to 1989)*, De Gruyter Oldenbourg, Berlin 2014, pp. 182 ff.

[30] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 185.

[31] André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan...*, op. cit., p. 191.

[32] For more on the fears of potential social eruption as a factor determining Honecker's economic policies, cf. Gareth Dale, *Between State, Capitalism and Globalisation: The Collapse of the East German Economy*, Peter Lang, Bern 2004, pp. 183–185.

[33] For more on the SED economic doctrine during Honecker's era, cf. André Steiner, *Von Plan zu plan...*, op. cit., pp. 187–202; see also: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, “Was hieß «Einheit von Wirtschafts – und Sozialpolitik?»”, [in:] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Die 101 wichtigsten Fragen – DDR (Beck'sche Reihe) (German Edition) (Kindle Locations 1376–1377)*.

- [34] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit: die Wiedervereinigung und die Krise des Sozialstaats (The Price of German Unity: Reunification and the Crisis of the Welfare State)*, (Special Edition), C. H. Beck, Munich 2007, p. 106.
- [35] *Ibid.*, p. 105; Ralf Ahrens, “Aussenwirtschaft, in der Schuldenfalle” (“Foreign Trade, in the Debt Trap”), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 111.
- [36] Jens Giesecke, *Der Mielke – Konzern...*, op. cit., pp. 223–224; Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., p.106.
- [37] Adam Zwass, *The Economies of Eastern Europe in a Time of Change*, First published by M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1984, quotation after Routledge & Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York 2015, p. 38.
- [38] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., p. 110.
- [39] Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen. Die DDR im internationalen System 1949–1989 (Foreign Policy within Narrow Limits. The GDR in the International System 1949–1989)*, De Gruyter Oldenbourg, Munich 2007, pp. 477–486. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Moscow’s policy put the East German authorities in an awkward position. This factor largely contributed to the worsening of relations between the SED and the CPSU.
- [40] More on this issue, cf. Andreas Malycha (*Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 189–190, 194–195, 204–206, 217, 219, 266), who on the basis of the analysis of *Stasi* reports argues that, as a matter of fact, the first signs of apathy, disillusionment, or even the erosion of power could be noticed as early as in the late 1970s (*id.*).
- [41] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 200.
- [42] *Ibid.*, p. 204.
- [43] *Ibid.*, p. 189.
- [44] *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- [45] *Ibid.*, pp. 248–249.
- [46] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 68–69, 71.
- [47] Cf. André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan...*, op. cit., pp. 246–247.
- [48] For more on the GDR’s indebtedness as well as on the efforts of the SED leadership to find the way out, cf. Maximilian Graf (2019), “The East German Struggle to Avoid Bankruptcy During the Debt Crisis Revisited”, [in:] *The International History Review*, DOI: 10.1080/07075332.2019.1641542. On the Schalck-Golodkowski–Strauss negotiations, see: Stephan Kieninger, “Freer Movement in Return for Cash. Franz Josef Strauß, Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski, and the Milliardenkredite for the GDR, 1983–1984”, [in:] Bernhard Blumenau, Jussi M. Hanhimäki, Barbara Zanchetta (eds), *New Perspectives on the End of the Cold War: Unexpected Transformations? (Cold War History)*, Routledge, London 2018, pp. 117–137.
- [49] André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan...*, op. cit., pp. 224–231. See also Adam Zwass, *The Economies of Eastern Europe...*, op. cit., pp. 35–37.
- [50] André Steiner, “Die DDR Volkswirtschaft am Ende” (“The GDR Economy at the End”), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 115.
- [51] Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., p. 18.
- [52] Adam Zwass, *The Economies of Eastern Europe...*, op. cit., p. 34.

- [53] André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan...*, op. cit., pp. 246–247.
- [54] Werner Plumpe, “Die alltägliche Selbstzermürbung und der Stille Sieg der D-Mark” (“The Everyday Wear and Tear and the Silent Victory of the D-Mark”), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 102.
- [55] Detlef Pollack, “Wir sind das Volk! Sozialstrukturelle und ereignisgeschichte Bedingungen des friedlichen Massenprotests” (“We are the People! Social-structural and Event-historical Conditions of the Peaceful Mass Protest”), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p.182.
- [56] Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen...*, op. cit., pp. 477–486.
- [57] Contrary to some views, popular in Poland and elsewhere, i.e. that there was no room for manoeuvre and the GDR's foreign policy was entirely subject to that of Moscow, more recent studies indicate that the bilateral relations were far more complex in the 1970s and in spite of the ostensible, almost absurdly highlighted, loyalty of Berlin to Moscow, it was not free from contentions. See Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen...*, op. cit., pp. 394–410. See also Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p.72.
- [58] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 251–253.
- [59] Michael Kubina, Manfred Wilke (eds), “Hart und kompromisslos durchgreifen”. *SED gegen Polen 1980–1981. Geheimakten der SED Führung über die Unterdrückung der Polnischen Demokratiebewegung* (“Tackle Hard and Uncompromisingly”. *The SED Against Poland 1980–1981. Secret Files of the SED Leadership on the Suppression of the Polish Democracy Movement*), Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1995 (see in particular the introduction, pp. 33–47 and the documents on pp. 47–53).
- [60] More on this issue, cf. Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen ...*, op. cit., pp. 434–442.
- [61] *Ibid.*, pp. 477–486; Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 254.
- [62] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 279–280.
- [63] Moscow was infuriated first of all because of lack of prior acceptance of the deal by the Kremlin: the mere fact that the GDR acted unilaterally, out of scope of mechanisms of cooperations within Soviet-block was assessed very negatively by the Soviet leadership. (Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. it., p. 287).
- [64] Joachim Scholtyseck, *Die Aussenpolitik der DDR (The Foreign Policy of the GDR)*, Oldenbourg, Munich 2003, pp. 41–42; Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 100.
- [65] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 292.
- [66] *Ibid.*, p. 258.
- [67] *Ibid.*, pp. 256ff.
- [68] *Ibid.*, pp. 303–304.
- [69] In this vein, see: Gareth Dale, *Between State, Capitalism and Globalisation...*, op. cit., pp. 247–249.
- [70] André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan...*, op. cit., p. 233. See also: Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 305 and 317. Erich Honecker was utterly convinced about it, even in October 1989, when the exaggerated celebrations of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GDR were orchestrated by the SED's leaders as a show of power for their own citizens and a lesson for Gorbachev of what communism should look like.

[71] What Stalin himself thought about the concept of the division of Germany – is the issue that falls outside of the scope of the present chapter (a short summary of the present-day knowledge on this problem cf. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, “Wollte Stalin die DDR?”, [in:] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Die 101 wichtigsten Fragen – DDR* (Beck’sche Reihe) (German Edition), C.H. Beck. Kindle Edition, loc. 404). It is a well-established fact that at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, Moscow made a series of diplomatic demarches aiming at the unification of Germany, which – according to the Soviet strategies – was to remain a neutral state deprived of the right to join any military or economic integration organization. As in the practical terms the acceptance of this proposal had to entail the exclusion of all German territories from audacious projects such as for example the EEC and from NATO as well, the Western Powers (notably the US) never consented to these Soviet concepts (cf. the same author “War die berühmte «Stalin-Note» ernst gemeint?”, Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Die 101 wichtigsten Fragen – DDR* (Beck’sche Reihe) (German Edition) (Kindle Locations 434–435), C.H. Beck. Kindle Edition, loc. 434. See also: Horst Pötzsch, Winfrid Halder, *Deutsche Geschichte von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart: Die Entwicklung der beiden deutschen Staaten und das vereinte Deutschland* 4. aktualisierte und erweiterte Auflage 2015 Lau-Verlag & Handel KG, Reinbek/München (Olzog Edition) (German Edition). Lau-Verlag. Kindle Edition, loc. 1776–1839. Still, the question of how to drive out Germany from the sphere of direct influences of the US and other Western allies never disappeared from the agenda of Soviet diplomacy. This is why the fears of the GDR leadership of the observed Soviet-FRG rapprochement in the late 1980s were very well-founded as they constituted the first harbinger of the end of the era of the unconditional Soviet support for the mere existence of the East German state.

[72] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 303–304.

[73] For more on the Soviet foreign policy in the late 1980s, cf. Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas Blanton, Vladislav Zubok, *Masterpieces of History: The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989* (new edition [online]), Central European University Press, Budapest 2010 (quotations after version e-book 2018) loc. 539–545–551, 1686, 1693.

[74] In general, on tensions in GDR – Soviet relations over the Gorbachev proposal of the Common European Home, cf. Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution of 1989*, Manchester University Press, Manchester-New York 2006, p. 2.

[75] On the question of concerns about the situation in Poland and Hungary, see a conversation of Stasi head Erich Mielke in April 1989 with the deputy head of the KGB, Leonid Shebarshin, “Notiz über die Besprechung des Genossen Minister mit dem Stellvertreter des Vorsitzenden des KfS [Komitee für Staatssicherheit] der UdSSR und Leiter der I. Hauptverwaltung – Genossen Generalmajor Schebarschin am 7.04.1989” (“Note on the meeting of the Comrade Minister with the Deputy Chairman of the KfS [Committee for State Security] of the USSR and Head of the First Headquarters – Comrade General Maj. Shebarshin on 7 April 1989”), BStU, ZA, ZAIG 5198, Bl. 100–140, available at: [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRgeschichte/Revolutionskalender/April-1989/Dokumentenseiten/07-April/07\\_apr\\_text.html](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRgeschichte/Revolutionskalender/April-1989/Dokumentenseiten/07-April/07_apr_text.html) (last accessed on 8.03.2018). It should be added that this concern was at least in part shared by all those, who, like the Politburo member Werner Krolikowski, are considered in historiography as Honnecker’s opponents. It is enough to state that when in August 1988 Krolikowski sent to the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs a discrete question about whether the GDR as such was still necessary to the Soviet Union, the question did not receive any answer. Michael Lemke, “Die Sowjetunion und die deutsche Einheit: Warum Moskau die DDR aufgab” (“The Soviet Union and German Unity: Why Moscow Gave Up the GDR”), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 466.

[76] Quoted after: a reprint of the interview in *Neues Deutschland*, 10 April 1987, p. 3; the text is available in *SED und KPD zu Gorbatschows "Revolution" (SED and KPD on Gorbachev's "Revolution")*, Deutschland Archiv 20, No. 6 (1987), pp. 655–657. Excerpts are available in English at: <http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/Chapter13Doc8.pdf> (last accessed on 8.03.2018).

[77] Wojciech Pięciak, *Jak obalono mur. Niemcy 1988–1996 (How the Wall Was Knocked Down. Germany 1988–1996)*, Oficyna Literacka, Cracow 1996, p. 43. Unexpected information uncovered by the media a decade ago sheds new light on the relationship between the USSR and the GDR in the late 1980s. Gunter Schabowski told historian Dmitry Chmelnizki that Gorbachev actually tried to orchestrate a coup within the SED in late 1986 and early 1987, meant to result in Markus Wolf replacing Honecker. See: Dirk Banse, "Wie Gorbatschow in 1987 Honecker loswerden wollte" ("How Gorbachev Wanted to Get Rid of Honecker in 1987"), available at: <https://www.welt.de/politik/article4310194/Wie-Gorbatschow-1987-Honecker-loswerden-wollte.html> (last accessed on 8.03.2018). If the coup, whose planning involved, for example, Hans Modrow (later the last prime minister of the GDR) and talks about it in early 1987 were personally led by KGB head Kryuchkov, is not a figment of Schabowski's imagination (and there is reason to believe that his information is not trumped up), we should wonder what Gorbachev's intention was. This question cannot be answered unequivocally without access to Soviet archives, so we can only surmise that the action was underpinned by the Kremlin's fear of further indebtedness of the GDR. A further financial dependence on Bonn increased its position in contacts with Berlin to the detriment of Moscow. The toppling of Honecker, who tried to find a way out of the impasse, and his replacement by the staunch KGB-man Wolf, was to convince first of all the US and the EEC countries that only the communist party of the Soviet Union would determine what happens in the GDR; it would moreover have dissuaded the SED from seeking any 'road to the West' without the prior consent of the Soviet Union. Cf. however Andreas Malycha's opinion, who seems to be rather sceptical about the hypothesis of the alleged coup against Honecker which supposedly was to be orchestrated by the Kremlin, although he recognizes, that there was within the SED Politburo a group of politicians (notably Stoph and Krolikowski) who were seeking to push Moscow to take radical steps, that is, to oust Honecker from power. Those efforts however did not bring the results this group expected, as the USSR did not want to get involved directly in the process of change of power in the SED (Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 350–351, 447).

[78] On the question of the tighter relations between the GDR and China, see: Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen...*, op. cit., pp. 531–537.

[79] *Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe: "Information über beachtenswerte Aspekte des aktuellen Wirksamwerdens innerer feindlicher oppositioneller und anderer negativer Kräfte in personellen Zusammenschlüssen"* (Central Evaluation and Information Group: "Information on Noteworthy Aspects of the Current Effectiveness of Internal Hostile Opposition and Other Negative Forces in Personnel Associations"), BStU, ZA, MfS BdL/Dok 008932, pp. 3–4, available at: [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRgeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Juni-1989/Dokumentenseiten/23-Mai/23\\_mai\\_text.html?nn=1930920&gtp=1940464\\_list%253D7](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRgeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Juni-1989/Dokumentenseiten/23-Mai/23_mai_text.html?nn=1930920&gtp=1940464_list%253D7) (last accessed on 8.03.2018).

[80] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 224–227.

[81] See the section above addressing the issue of mass departures in the 1950s and ambitions to "produce a new man". On the origins and activities of the opposition in the GDR, see the dedicated section below.

[82] <https://www.saurugg.net/2018/blog/stromversorgung/stromkollaps-im-extremwinter> (last accessed on 3.04.2019).

[83] Hubertus Knabe, *Honeckers Erben ...*, op. cit., p. 24.

[84] As Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk noted, “Anti-fascism played the role of a substitute for patriotism, which the community of the GDR citizens should attain, in which all should be treated as victims of Hitler’s dictatorship and as the fighters against it.” Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 54.

[85] In this vein: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 54–55. Needless to say, such a “dialectic approach” had dramatic consequences: by the end of the 1980s, anti-fascism had, to a large extent, lost its mobilizing force, even if it was pretty clear that the groups of skinheads (who, occasionally, could even murder a person because of his/her skin colour) were in practice not pursued by the police. And, because of the abusing of the word “fascist” by propagandists, the general public remained indifferent (see id. pp. 168–175). This question is more thoroughly examined in the set of contributions published in 2002, cf. Manfred Agethen, Eckhard Jesse, Ehrhart Neubert (eds), *Der missbrauchte Antifaschismus. DDR-Staatsdoktrin und Lebenslüge der deutschen Linken (The Misused Anti-fascism. GDR State Doctrine and Life Lie of the German Left)*, Herder Verlag, Freiburg 2002; see in particular the contributions of Ehrhart Neubert, “Faschismusvorwurf und die Opposition in der DDR” (“Fascism Accusation and the Opposition in the GDR”) (id. pp. 186–201) and Annette Simon, “Antifaschismus als Loyalitätsfalle” (“Anti-fascism as a Loyalty Trap”) (id. p. 145–155).

[86] According to Kowalczyk, the people of the GDR never believed in the theory of the “GDR nation” as a separate entity. Thus, the efforts of the propaganda ended with total failure. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 64–65 and 72.

[87] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution ...*, op. cit., p. 34; Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 260.

[88] As Claus J. Duisberg recalled, this was the dominant view not only among the party executives but also in circles that in the other socialist countries would normally be seen as potentially interested in reform of the system. Duisberg, a high-ranking public servant in the chancellor’s office (later also of the Interior Ministry in West Germany), recalls a conversation with Prof. Rolf Reissig from the GDR Academy of Sciences, who openly admitted that the biggest problem in 1989 was a lack of identification of the GDR’s citizens with their state (see: Claus J. Duisberg, *Das deutsche Jahr...*, op. cit., p. 10). In this respect, the GDR differed significantly from Czechoslovakia, let alone Hungary and Poland.

[89] Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland ...*, op. cit., p. 25.

[90] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 134–135.

[91] Jens Gieseke, *Der Mielke-Konzern ...*, op. cit., p. 175.

[92] As is commonly known, East German border guards had orders to open fire (*Schießbefehl*) in the event of any attempted illegal crossing of the state border. After 1990, that was the principal line of the accusations of the German prosecutors against Honecker and other Politbüro members.

[93] André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan...*, op. cit., pp. 250–251.

[94] Detlef Pollack, *“Wir sind das Volk!” ...*, op. cit., p. 183.

[95] Jens Gieseke, *Der Mielke – Konzern...*, op. cit., p. 173.

[96] Marion Detjen, "Permanente Existenzbedrohung: Abwanderung, Flucht, Ausreise" ("Permanent Threat to Existence: Emigration, Flight, Departure"), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., pp. 70–71.

[97] Jens Gieseke calculates that if in the USSR there was one KGB officer for every 595 Soviet citizens, the ratio in the People's Republic of Poland was 1 to 1,574, but in the GDR, it was 1:180! (Jens Gieseke, *Der Mielke-Konzern ...*, op. cit., pp. 103 and 106). According to Kowalczyk, in 1989 the number of *Stasi's* secret informants was 189,000. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p.36.

[98] Jens Gieseke, *Der Mielke-Konzern ...*, op. cit., pp. 94–95.

[99] For more on this meeting, see: Theo Mechtenberg, *Jak żywotne jest chrześcijaństwo...*, op. cit., p. 30; Trutz Rendtorf, *Protestantische Revolution?...*, op. cit., pp. 24ff. See also: Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 132.

[100] Rudolf Mau, *Protestantismus im Osten Deutschlands...*, op. cit., pp. 132–134.

[101] Jens Gieseke, *Der Mielke – Konzern ...*, op. cit., pp. 154–156.

[102] *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137.

[103] André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan ...*, op. cit., pp. 217–218, 234–235. See also: Ralf Ahrens, "Aussenwirtschaft, in der Schuldenfalle" ("Foreign Trade, in the Debt Trap"), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 106.

[104] Jens Gieseke, *Der Mielke – Konzern ...*, op. cit., pp. 152–153. In the history of efforts of the GDR's authorities to cope with the economic crisis, the role of the MfS (*Stasi*) and that of Mielke himself does not seem to be deprived of inherent contradictions and – at least to the large extent – must be assessed as counterproductive. On the one hand, similarly to Stoph and Krokowski, Mielke was – at least to a degree – truly concerned about the potential consequences of economic troubles. There is no doubt that at least some of his officers, who very often felt a sort of pressure put on them by more and more exasperated SPK's functionaries and other personalities responsible for economic affairs, were of the opinion that MfS indeed could and should do more to impel Honecker to adopt a more reasonable political course. But those expectations never materialized; *Stasi* very often changed the content of reports submitted to it by economy functionaries whenever it found that it could have been received as too pessimistic or still more too critical for Honecker. This was perhaps because MfS analyzed those reports through the lens of its own priorities (that is, internal and external security), Mielke never adopted a decisive stance on those issues or even blocked some reforms. For example in 1979, some moderate price increases were introduced by the Politburo. This step was absolutely necessary to secure a minimum of macroeconomic balance of the country and thus to avoid the state insolvency, the risk of which was at this time clearly in sight. Still just because of the fear that those increases could entail "a Polish scenario" those increases were very quickly put on hold, and this decision was adopted i.e. under the visible pressure of the *Stasi* head who did not want to be coerced to handle mass riots. Mielke had adopted a similarly ambiguous position in 1982, when he had received on his desk two reports whose authors urged the leaders of the party and of the state to change the *status quo*. Even now, the researchers are not able to establish if he ever discussed their conclusions with Honecker or left them without answer. Anyway, even if the *Stasi* was perfectly aware of the severe economic troubles, it did nothing to add some flexibilities to the increasingly ailing system, let alone to reform it in a substantial manner. (More on this issue, cf. Adreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 241–243, 247, 249–250, 266, 269–270, 272–274, 277–278.

[105] This is especially true of Paul Schürer, and Willy Stoph, who on some occasions sought in vain to draw the attention of the SED Secretary General to the accumulating economic problems. Both of them were castigated during a Politburo session, without achieving any results (Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 204, 249.

[106] Jens Gieseke, *Der Mielke – Konzern ...*, op. cit., pp. 132–133.

[107] *Ibid.*, pp. 124–126.

[108] Robert F. Goeckel, “The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church”, [in:] *German Politics & Society* No. 31 (Spring 1994), pp. 84–108, p. 86; see also: Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., pp. 134–135, 145.

[109] Recently, the topic of the secularization of the GDR society was once again discussed by Karsten Krampitz, see: Karsten Krampitz, “Jedermann sei untertan”: *Deutscher Protestantismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Irrwege und Umwege*, Alibri-Verlag, Aschaffenburg 2017, pp. 287–290.

[110] According to R. F. Goeckel, if in 1946 c. 80% of the population of the-then-not-yet-existing GDR adhered to the Lutheran Church, this share dropped to c. 25% in 1989. Robert F. Goeckel, “The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church”, [in:] *German Politics & Society* No. 31 (Spring 1994), pp. 84–108, p. 94.

[111] *Ibid.*, pp. 84–108, pp. 95–96. In a similar vein, see also: Reinhard Henkys, *Kirche in Sozialismus...*, op. cit., pp. 23–24.

[112] As R. F. Goeckel observed, Schönherr rejected a political ghettoization of the Church by the state and the Lutheran tendency towards “internal emigration” (by Christians from society). But he also rejected the extremes of both political opposition and “a church for socialism” (emph. added AG). Robert F. Goeckel, *The GDR Legacy...*, op. cit., pp. 84–108, p. 88.

[113] Bishop Werner Leich, who over many years served as the President of the Conference of the Boards of the Churches, which constituted one of the principal organs of the League of the Lutheran Churches in the GDR openly admitted it. See: Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 191.

[114] Still this support had also certain limits: cf. Robert F. Goeckel, *The GDR Legacy...*, op. cit., pp. 84–108, 86–87.

[115] This reluctance was present as early as 1978; cf: *Jahresanalyse, 1978, Staatssekretariat für Kirchenfragen, VD-Nr.: II-3/78 Blatt 3–9*: this document was published in: Richard Schröder unter Mitarbeit von Johannes Zachhuber, Karsten Laudien und Christian Raschke *Der Versuch einer eigenständigen Standortbestimmung der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR am Beispiel der „Kirche im Sozialismus“*, p. 1350. See also: Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., pp. 134–135.

[116] Carsten Dippel, *Das „Spitzengespräch“ 1978 zwischen SED und Protestanten*, the information available at: [https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/kirche-im-sozialismus-das-spitzengespraech-1978-zwischen.886.de.html?dram:article\\_id=412085](https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/kirche-im-sozialismus-das-spitzengespraech-1978-zwischen.886.de.html?dram:article_id=412085) (visited on 02.01.2020).

[117] Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p.133.

[118] Robert F. Goeckel, *The GDR Legacy...*, op. cit., p. 87. On the attitude of Stolpe, cf. Michael Hollenbach, *Die Rolle der Kirche im Sozialismus Der Weg der Protestanten bis zur Friedlichen Revolution (Beitrag 28.11.2009)* text available at: [https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/die-rolle-der-kirche-im-sozialismus.1278.de.html?dram:article\\_id=192448](https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/die-rolle-der-kirche-im-sozialismus.1278.de.html?dram:article_id=192448) (visited on 20.01.2020).

[119] Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p.140. On the critical stance of Frenkel, who rejected any idea of compromise with the “Godless regime”, cf. Robert F. Goeckel, *The GDR Legacy...*, op. cit., p. 87.

[120] Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 140.

[121] *Ibid.*, pp. 135, 164–165.

[122] The exemplary list of measures discriminating believers in the GDR, cf. *Protestantisch und mündig in der DDR* (text at the Homepage of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung <https://www.kas.de/de/web/ddr-mythos-und-wirklichkeit/protestantisch-und-muendig-in-der-ddr> (visited on 20.01.2020); see also: Robert F. Goeckel, *The GDR Legacy...*, op. cit., pp. 84–108, 95.

[123] This hard-line and stubborn policy could be quite easily observed, especially during the discussion on the admissibility in public of the emblem “swords into plowshares”, which was very popular among students and members of the dissidents’ movement as well. The pressure exerted on the Church to actively assist in state-sponsored propaganda campaign purposing to deter young people from exposing this emblem (because of its hidden critical content of the SED’s policies purposing to re-militarize the society) partly succeeded. Even if the Church as a whole did not decide to follow the party line, still the majority of its Bishops officially abstained from lending support for the protesters. Some of its members adopted more ambiguous stance (e.g. by attempting to persuade more radical pacifists that their action went too far). Cf. Vladimir Tismăneanu, “Nascent Civil Society in the German Democratic Republic”, [in:] *Problems of Communism* (January – February) Vol. XXXVIII 1989, pp. 95–99.

[124] One could only speculate on the true motives of the Schönherr’s demission, which he offered in 1981 from all posts he occupied in the Church structures. It is rather clear that his attitude towards the communist regime had been a matter of concern in Protestant communities in the GDR and the FRG as well, even before he decided to adopt the compromise with the SED. Nonetheless, the direct cause of his departure was his suggestions (expressed in public) that the discrimination of Lutherans pupils in scholar establishments is not a point of grave concern. This pronouncement caused the wave of strong condemnation and general outcry among Lutherans in the GDR. Keeping in mind those circumstances – it does not seem a pure coincidence that it was Gottfried Forck, who was elected as his successor as the Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg. Forck’s positions on such controversial issues like “swords into plowshares” and some other initiatives of the emerging opposition in the GDR on occasion contradicted the official line of the leadership of the Church and – of course – the communist party political line as well. See: Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 140. See also: Robert F. Goeckel, *The GDR Legacy...*, op. cit., p. 100.

[125] Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., pp. 52–153, 166–167.

[126] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Nascent Civil Society...*, op. cit., p. 96. Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 145.

[127] Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Nascent Civil Society...*, op. cit., p. 99.

[128] On the increasing frustration of younger clergy – cf. The observation made by Vladimir Tismăneanu, *ibid.*, p. 99.

[129] According to Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, just because of these experiences, by the late 1980s, the formula *Kirche im Sozialismus* was on the verge of disappearance from the official vocabulary. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 220.

[130] Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 142.

[131] Since in the GDR believers were openly discriminated, the younger generations of Lutherans were particularly susceptible to demands of more or less radical change. Therefore, especially in the first wave of protests which took place at the beginning of the 1980s, they were Christians, who were over-represented in the activities of the emerging opposition movement. Steven Pfaff, “The Politics of Peace in the GDR: The independent peace movement, the church and the origins of the East German opposition”, [in:] *Peace & Change* Vol. 26, No. 3, July 2001, pp. 280–300, p. 285.

[132] Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., pp. 142–143, 166–167, 180, 182.

[133] In hindsight, one could even question if those activities, just because they were contributing to the further aggravation of the relations between the State and the Church, were in fact – counterproductive. In the light of the documents disclosed after the collapse of the GDR, it is beyond any doubts that even if the *Stasi* was quite successful in recruitment of secret agents inside the Lutheran Church structure, still this network of informants was not so dense as to allow to control the activities of the Church as a whole (cf. Robert F. Goeckel, *The GDR Legacy...*, op. cit., pp. 100–101; Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., pp. 131, 219–221). Such a total control was not possible, partly because of the democratic structure of the Lutheran communities, which made the task of influencing the views of their members (and still more their behaviour) quite tricky. In the late 1980s, when the general feeling in the country took a more and more anti-regime course and the influence of the pro-governmental wing within the Lutheran Church dramatically dropped, the operational environment for *Stasi* agents became even more challenging. In effect, all those factors taken together, one may pose legitimately the question on the efficiency and final results of the operative work of the MfS and its functionaries on the “clerical front”. It is true that the *Stasi* was quite successful in creating havoc within the structures of the Church (Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 219). Undoubtedly, by intimidating clergymen and dissidents, and by using standard operational measures (e. g., information collections, provocations, conversations taping, etc.) the MfS effectively prevented the transformation of the institution of the Church as whole into the centre of anti-governmental activities. Still, they were not able to dissuade some pastors from delivering active support to some members of the opposition. Simultaneously, the same measures effectively blocked the process of transformation of the Church into a mediator between the state and society. It follows that probably this lack of a “third force” having a sufficient moral authority to convene all social actors together to save the country against the threat of its extinction was one of the decisive factors which brought the statehood of the GDR to its end.

[134] Still, even in the late 1970s some clergymen, like Reiner Eppelman, were courageous enough to protest against the persecution of the youth who were critical towards the GDR responsibilities.

[135] This issue is further explored in the subchapter on the democratic opposition in the GDR.

[136] Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., pp. 152–153.

[137] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

[138] Anke Silomon, *Synod and the SED State. The Synod of the Federation of Euvangelical Churches in the GDR in Goerlitz from September 18 to 22, 1987*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1997.

[139] For more on this group cf. the subchapter on the GDR's opposition.

[140] Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 177.

[141] The question whether or not Stolpe was a *Stasi* agent is out of the scope of the focus of the present Chapter (cf. a summary on this issue <https://www.tellerreport.com/news/2019->

12-30---portrait--manfred-stolpe--kirchenmann--preu%C3%9Fe-and-prime-minister-.HyhHGDDJI.html, last accessed on 5.03.2020).

[142] Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 177. This was not the last time when, after the wave of arrests targeting dissident groups, the Church officials were seeking to help them, by negotiating with authorities their immediate release. (see: id. p. 180).

[143] Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 177.

[144] *Ibid.*, p. 185.

[145] *Ibid.*, pp. 187–188.

[146] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[147] *Ibid.*, p. 185.

[148] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 40; Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 220–221, 278–279.

[149] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 299.

[150] On the topic of slow promotions within the party and state machinery of those born in the 1960s, see: Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 182, 294–295, 297–298; cf. also: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 56.

[151] This group encompassed such persons as Georg Mittag, Paul Gerhard Schürer, Horst Sindermann, Gerhard Beil, and Schalck Golodkowski. Gareth Dale, *Between State, Capitalism, and Globalisation: The Collapse of the East German Economy*, Peter Lang, Bern 2004, p. 239. It seems that to the persons who – from time to time – expressed similar views also belonged some younger members of the Politburo, such as Günther Schabowski and Siegfried Lorentz.

[152] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 309, 354–355

[153] In this context, it is interesting to note that despite strong objections of the Soviet leadership as well as of dogmatic wings of the SED, Honecker tried to open the door for the cooperation between the FRG private firms and the GDR state-owned companies. At the end of the 1980s, more than 100 German-German joint ventures were performing economic activities on the territory of the GDR. Still, this small and modest step, whose purpose was to add some flexibility to the stagnating socialist economy, was almost immediately denounced in Moscow by the SED hardliners who feared that by this “tacit reform” Bonn could gain an instrument to influence politics in East Germany. Gareth Dale, *Between State, Capitalism, and Globalisation...*, op. cit., pp. 219–221. It seems that the same author is also correct when he posits that such fears were to an extent shared even by those SED high-rank activists, who – in theory – were able to speak openly on the economic difficulties of the country, such as Günther Mittag. According to Dale, Mittag was even to state that this tactic was leading directly to “reunification” and rather recommended a cautious approach (id. p. 239).

[154] Some modest proposals submitted by Schürer, which sought to place certain limits on the military budgets, were rejected by the Politburo, because of the opposition of the representatives of military and security complexes supported by the most ideologically dogmatic hardliners such as Alfred Neumann, Kurt Hager or Joachim Hermann Jorg Roesler. “Der Einfluß der Außenwirtschaft auf die Beziehungen DDR-Bundesrepublik”, *Deutschland Archiv*, 5, 1993, p. 569.

[155] Charles Maier, *Dissolution*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ 1997, p. 57.

[156] Gareth Dale, *Between State, Capitalism, and Globalisation...*, op. cit., pp. 248–249.

[157] For more on the case of Wolf Biermann, see: Erhardt Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949–1989* (History of the Opposition in the GDR 1949–1989), Ch. Links Verlag, Berlin 2002, p. 224. See also: Ralf Schnell, *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur seit 1945* (History of German-language Literature since 1945), Verlag J. B. Metzler (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Stuttgart-Weimar 2003, pp. 400–401.

[158] Andrea Jäger, "In einer Fremde die meine Sprache spricht", [in:] Monika Estermann, Edgar Lersch (eds), *Deutsch-deutsch Literaturtausch in den 70<sup>er</sup> Jahren* (German-German Literature Exchange in the 1970s), Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2006, p. 126.

[159] For more on the position and the role of Havemann within the emerging GDR opposition, as well as on the attempts undertaken to compromise him, cf. Erhardt Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition...*, op. cit., p. 220. See also: "Robert Havemann, "hrsg. v. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung und Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft e.V., Letzte Änderung Dezember 2019, [www.jugendopposition.de/145377](http://www.jugendopposition.de/145377).

[160] See Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., pp. 111, 124–125; See also: Erhardt Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition...*, op. cit., p. 275.

[161] Still, singular and isolated as they were, according to some eminent scholars, the impact of those acts should not be underestimated. Thus, Mau or Neubert opine, that the self-immolation of Brüsewitz profoundly shocked at least some communities as well as particular churchgoers, and the memory about this dramatic event influenced discussions ongoing at the turn the 1970s and the 1980s within the Lutheran Church (cf. Erhardt Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition...*, op. cit., p. 275; Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., pp. 124–129).

[162] Those measures were not applied against Havemann, who passed away on 9 April 1982. Before his death, he had managed to establish some contacts with activists of the emerging peace movement acting independently from the organizations sponsored by the communists. He was also one of the drafters of the text of Berlin Appeal calling for the disarmament in Europe, and the neutralization of Germany. The text of the Appeal is available at: <https://www.jugendopposition.de/node/150380> (last accessed on 22.02.2020).

[163] See: W. Wiczorek, A. Hajnicz, L. Mehlhorn, T. Garton Ash, *Solidarność 1980/1981 und die Folgen in Polen, in den sozialistischen Nachbarländern, insbesondere in der DDR und der VR Polen, sowie im Ost-West-Verhältnis*, [in:] *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission. Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland*, Baden-Baden 1995, Vol. 5, p. 209. Still, it should be underlined, that the contacts between Polish and East German dissidents took place rather sporadically. Besides, keeping in mind the radically different social ground in both countries, as well as significant differences in ideological content as well as strict monitoring of those contacts by the *Stasi*, any closer cooperation between members of the Polish and GDR's opposition was simply out of the question. Cf. Karolina Pietras, "Dziesięciu to czasami więcej niż dziesięć tysięcy. Przykłady kontaktów między opozycją polską i wschodnioniemiecką", [in:] Monika Bielak, Łukasz Kamiński, *Letnia Szkoła Historii Najnowszej 2008. Referaty*, IPN, KŚZpNP 2009, pp. 176–177.

[164] Information after: "Von starken Frauen und Blues-Messen – Friedensbewegung in Berlin", hrsg. v. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung und Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft e.V., letzte Änderung Dezember 2019, [www.jugendopposition.de/145410](http://www.jugendopposition.de/145410). See also: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Die 101 wichtigsten Fragen...*, op. cit., p. 127.

[165] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Die 101 wichtigsten Fragen...*, op. cit., p. 127.

[166] The information after: “Friedensgemeinschaft Jena“, hrsg. v. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung und Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft e.V., letzte Änderung Juli 2019, [www.jugendopposition.de/145328](http://www.jugendopposition.de/145328) (last accessed on 20.02.2020).

[167] Ibid.

[168] One should not forget that at the beginning of the 1980s, there were some notorious cases of deaths, where the victims passed away probably because of the brutality of methods of interrogation applied in the prisons or places of detention controlled by the *Stasi* (cf. Matthias Domaschk, biography available at: <https://www.jugendopposition.de/lexikon/personen/148287/matthias-domaschk>). Still, it is rather clear that such cases contributed – to a degree – to radicalization of opposition circles; during the 1980s, they remained rather exceptional. Those cases should not be mingled with cases of deaths of persons seeking to cross the border illegally. If the former death cases were directed against persons connected with members of the opposition movement, the latter were the consequences of the drastic measures applied against anybody who without prior authorization issued by the competent GDR organs sought to leave the territory of East Germany.

[169] Cf. Ehrhart Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition...*, op. cit., pp. 421–473.

[170] See <https://www.jugendopposition.de/themen/145393/initiative-frieden-und-menschenrechte> (last accessed on 23.07.2018).

[171] Information after: “Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte“, hrsg. v. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung und Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft e.V., letzte Änderung Dezember 2019, [www.jugendopposition.de/145393](http://www.jugendopposition.de/145393), According to the same source, the IFM managed to maintain its continuity until the collapse of the Berlin Wall when members of the group joined the founders of one of the small political parties Bündnis 90 (id.), Still, after the wave of arrests that took place at the turn of 1987/1988 and suspension of publishing of the *Grenzfall* – the scale of activities undertaken under the banner of the IFM drastically dropped.

[172] Cf. the first sub-chapter.

[173] Jan Philipp Wölbern, *Der Häftlingsfreikauf aus der DDR, 1962/63–1989. Zwischen Menschenhandel und humanitären Aktionen (The Freedom to Buy Prisoners from the GDR, 1962/63–1989. Between Human Trafficking and Humanitarian Action)*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2014, pp. 301–302.

[174] There is no doubt that the *Stasi* was kept very well informed about almost all steps planned or taken by the opposition, and the network of secret agents acted very efficiently until the very end of the GDR. Today, it is widely known that at least some of the most prominent members of the dissident movement in the GDR were simultaneously secret agents of the *Stasi* (e.g. Wolfgang Schnur, Ibrahim Böhme, Monika Haeger, and many others). See: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 286–290).

[175] The conflict of this kind took place within the IFM and terminated with the breakup of the group. If the majority of its members decided to stay within the IFM, which was primarily focused on the human rights protection, the minority within which two *Stasi* agents played a crucial role, decided to split from the IFM and to set up another organization, so-called *Gruppe Gegenstimmen*. More on this issue, cf. “Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte“, hrsg. v. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung und Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft e.V., letzte Änderung Dezember 2019, [www.jugendopposition.de/145393](http://www.jugendopposition.de/145393) (last accessed on 20.02.2020).

[176] This view is not in contradiction with the thesis that some pastors were quite successful “on the youth front”. For example, as early as in the mid 1970s, pastor Reiner Eppelmann

organized famous Blues Messe, which were attended not only by Lutherans but also some young people who were religiously indifferent (Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 145). It seems, however, to what extent Eppelmann initiatives remained rather an exception, even if it is beyond any doubts that in the 1980s, there were some other pastors, whose attitude towards the regime as well as towards some other contemporary problems attracted the sympathy of non-believers. After all, one should never forget that even in that decade, the secularization of the GDR society was progressing even further, and neither Eppelmann nor any other prominent member of the Lutheran community could find an efficient remedy against this trend.

[177] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 49–50. The differences mentioned above serve as examples only. On the more fundamental questions concerning the attitude towards West Germany and potential cooperation with the political circles of the CDU, see: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 249–251.

[178] Therefore, some authors, among them Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk who opines that *Die Ausdifferenzierung nahm Mitte der achtziger Jahre wiederum einen so hohen Grad an, dass es unmöglich ist, von «der» DDR-Opposition zu sprechen* (*The differentiation took on such a high level in the mid-1980s that it was impossible to speak of “the” GDR opposition*). Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Die 101 wichtigsten...*, op. cit.

[179] “Nikolai ist Schicksalsstelle, aber nicht die ganze Kirche”. Die evangelische Kirche in Revolutionsjahr 1990 (“Nikolai is a place of fate, but not the whole church”. The Evangelical Church in Revolutionary Year 1990), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 249 (passim).

[180] That was also the case of Reiner Eppelmann. When in 1982 he co-drafted the Berlin Appeal in cooperation with Robert Havemann, he was arrested by the *Stasi*. In the wake of the strong protest that his superiors sent to the authorities – they decided to release him from the place of detention. However, “in return,” the Church functionaries effectively prevented the distribution of the Appeal in churches and other premises managed by the Lutherans and publicly dissented from the other action. For more on the case cf. <http://www.gesellschaft-zeitgeschichte.de/geschichte/der-berliner-appell-1982/> (last accessed on 20.02.2020).

[181] However, even this tolerance had certain strict limits. When in 1986, a group of dissidents attempted to organize a seminar on human rights abuses in the GDR within the premises belonging to the Lutheran community, the clergy and functionaries of this community refused to host this event. They did it under the pressure of the *Stasi* <https://www.jugendopposition.de/themen/145393/initiative-frieden-und-menschenrechte>. (last accessed on 20.02.2020). After such experiences, the persons involved in the preparation of the seminars decided to set up the IFM. This group from the outset declared its distance towards the authorities as well as towards the Lutheran Church.

[182] This was especially true in periods, which came up just after a wave of repressions targeting democratic opposition. For example, after the pacification of protests at the turn of 1982/1983, many parishes and communities ceased to allow their rooms for activities organized by the dissidents. Steven Pfaff, “The Politics of Peace in the GDR: The independent peace movement, the church and the origins of the East German opposition”, [in:] *Peace & Change* Vol. 26, No. 3, July 2001, p. 290. It is also true that if the relations of a pastor were too close to the opposition circles or his stance was too openly critical vis-à-vis the regime, then such a clergyman would be very often sanctioned by Church authorities. That was the case of Reiner Eppelmann (Goeckel, op. cit., p. 99); the same is true of Christoph Wonneberger, who initially worked in Dresden, but because of his moral support for the independent peace movement, under political pres-

sure he was coerced to give up his community and to take up the job in Leipzig. Cf. Steven Pfaff, *The Politics of Peace...*, op. cit., p. 292.

[183] See: Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., pp. 145, 160, 166; Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Die 101 wichtigsten Fragen...*, op. cit., p. 127.

[184] Cf. Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 166. The difficulties to find a common language between the clergy and dissidents were further exacerbated by the highly authoritarian management style still present within the structures of the Church and the conservatism of certain lower and higher rank Lutheran functionaries. Both these characteristics were irritating, especially for the most revolted and left-oriented dissidents, being an additional factor stimulating the process of relaxation between the Church and human rights activists. Steven Pfaff, *The Politics of Peace in the GDR...* op. cit., pp. 286–287. Those differences serve as examples only. On the more fundamental questions concerning the attitude towards West Germany and potential cooperation with the political circles of the CDU, see: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 249–251.

[185] Rudolf Mau, *Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 178.

[186] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

[187] Clemens Vollnhals, *Nikolai ist Schicksalstelle...*, op. cit., p. 257.

[188] Rudolf Mau, *Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., pp. 163, 180, 184.

[189] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 262.

[190] As Duisberg rightly recalls, cases of forced entry into the diplomatic missions of West Germany and the demands for the issuing of a visa to Bonn did not start in 1989 but much earlier. As early as 1983, the Permanent Mission of West Germany in East Berlin was closed for a few weeks when a group of desperate GDR citizens, having forced their way inside, demanded entry visas. Such cases became more numerous in later years. Claus J. Duisberg, *Das Deutsche Jahr...*, op. cit., pp. 31–32, For the opposition perspective, see an interview with Rev. Stephen Bickhardt, “Wir brauchen die offene Diskussion” (“We Need an Open Discussion”), *Tageszeitung*, 15 August 1989, No. 2884.

[191] The information after Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 3.

[192] Steven Pfaff, *The Politics of Peace...*, op. cit., p. 295.

[193] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 286.

[194] Steven Pfaff, *The Politics of Peace...*, op. cit., p. 294.

[195] Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 5, 10–11.

[196] All figures after <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/chronik/#anchoryear1989> (see: January, February, March 1989, respectively).

[197] *Ibid.* (see 4.04.1989).

[198] Information after <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/chronik/#anchornid171800> (last accessed on 10.03.2020).

[199] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 291–292.

[200] *Sputnik* was a Soviet magazine published in several languages, targeted at Soviet Bloc countries and Western countries. It included journalistic pieces and news published in the Soviet press.

[201] The direct cause for withdrawing *Sputnik* from circulation was its article about the secret additional protocol to the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, publication of which was seen by Honecker as extremely harmful.

[202] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 32. More thoroughly on the topic of the *Sputnik* scandal, see: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 74–81.

[203] See: documents made available on 19 January 1989, Parteikontrollkommission im MfS, *Ergebnisse der Bearbeitung von Schreiben, die von Angehörigen des MfS im Zusammenhang mit der Nichtauslieferung der Zeitschrift „Sputnik“ 10/89 an das ZK der SED gerichtet wurden, 19.1.1989*, (Auszug), BStU, ZA, SED-KL 4581 (Party Control Commission in the MfS, results of the processing of letters that were sent by members of the MfS to the Central Committee of the SED in connection with the failure to deliver the magazine *Sputnik* 10/89, 19.1.1989 (excerpt), BStU, ZA, SED-KL 4581), pp. 29–32, 35–40, available at: [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Februar-1989/Dokumentenseiten/19-Januar/19\\_jan\\_text.html](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Februar-1989/Dokumentenseiten/19-Januar/19_jan_text.html) (last accessed on 22.03.2018).

[204] “*Die Aufgaben der PKK zur Verwirklichung der Beschlüsse der 7. Tagung des ZK der SED*”, o. D. [nach dem 15.2.1989] BStU, ZA, SED-KL 4582, Bl. 11–69, hier 11, 24–34 (“The tasks of the PKK to implement the resolutions of the 7th session of the SED Central Committee”, undated [after 15.2.1989] BStU, ZA, SED-KL 4582, pp. 11–69, here 11, 24–34), available at: [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Februar-1989/Dokumentenseiten/nach15-Februar/nach15\\_feb\\_text.html](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Februar-1989/Dokumentenseiten/nach15-Februar/nach15_feb_text.html) (last accessed on 22.03.2018). This matter is described differently by Jens Gieseke, *Der Mielke – Konzern...*, op. cit., p. 250. He believes that the changes taking place in the USSR were especially depressing for some secret services officers, who, for example, withdrew into private life and, many, into alcoholism.

[205] *Information zur Verwirklichung der Verordnung vom 30. November 1988 über Reisen von Bürgern der DDR nach dem Ausland*, BArch Berlin, DY 30/IV 2/2.039/307, Bl. 20–25 (Bestand Büro Krenz), Urheber nicht benannt, undat.; Datierung nach letzter Datumsangabe in dem Dokument (Information on the implementation of the Ordinance of 30 November 1988 on travel of citizens of the GDR abroad, BArch Berlin, DY 30 / IV 2 / 2.039 / 307, pp. 20–25 (inventory office Krenz), author not named, undated.; Dating after the last date in the document), available at: [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Maerz-1989/Dokumentenseiten/nach27-Januar/nach27\\_jan\\_text.html](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Maerz-1989/Dokumentenseiten/nach27-Januar/nach27_jan_text.html) (last accessed on 22.03.2018).

[206] *Schreiben Mielkes an die Leiter der Dienstseinheiten zur Veränderung der Reiseverordnung vom 14.3.1989*, BStU, ZA, MfS-BdL/Dok 005299 (Letter from Mielke to the heads of the service units to change the travel ordinance dated March 14, 1989, BStU, ZA, MfS-BdL / Dok 005299), available at: [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Maerz-1989/Dokumentenseiten/14-Maerz/14\\_mar\\_text.html](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Maerz-1989/Dokumentenseiten/14-Maerz/14_mar_text.html) (last accessed on 22.03.2018).

[207] Quoted from *Neues Deutschland*, 19 January 1990; see also: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/world-history/fall-of-the-berlin-wall-history-catches-up-with-erich-honecker-the-east-german-leader-who-praised-9826715.html>.

[208] The text of the order suspending, until further notice, the order to shoot at people trying to illegally cross the GDR border is available at: <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/material/180394/aufhebung-des-schiessbefehls-niederschrift-ueber-die-ruecksprache-beim-minister-fuer-nationale-verteidigung-am-3-april-1989-4-april-1989> (last accessed on 22.03.2018).

[209] Data from <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/index.php/de/Chronical/Detail/month/Januar/year/1989> (last accessed on 22.03.2018).

[210] Fragments of discussions in *Alexanderplatz*, conducted on 4 January by reporters of *Guten Morgen* programme for the Deutschlandradio: <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/material/175146/januar> (last accessed on 22 March 2018).

[211] On different electoral strategies of emerging GDR's opposition as well as on the conflicts among them cf. Hans Michael Kloth, *Vom Zettelfalten zum Freien Wählen*, C. H. Links Verlag, Berlin 2000, pp. 233–240. One should not forget that the plethora of attitudes of all those who, for this reason, or another, got angrier and angrier about the communist regime, and GDR's realities were not limited to the simple alternative participation vs. boycott". As the same author observed, the increasing disappointment of the government performance coupled with the incapacity of the opposition to create a common political platform resulted in many different strategies, tactics or opinions, the analysis of which is out of the scope of the present chapter. For more information cf. H. M. Kloth, *Vom Zettelfalten...*, op. cit. pp. 240–280.

[212] "Wahlbetrug 1989 – als die DDR-Regierung ihre Glaubwürdigkeit verlor", 7.05.2019. Document available at: <https://www.bpb.de/politik/hintergrund-aktuell/290562/1989-wahlbetrug-in-der-ddr> (last accessed on 20.02.2020).

[213] H. M. Kloth, *Vom Zettelfalten...*, op. cit., p. 307.

[214] *Ibid.*, p. 308

[215] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 319–330.

[216] It attained the levels of 10642 escapees and 9115 emigrants, respectively.

[217] Rudolf Mau *Der Protestantismus im Osten...* op. cit., p. 193–194.

[218] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 333, 336.

[219] More about the event, cf. Christian Erdei, *The picnic that changed European history* (19.08.2014), the text available at: <https://p.dw.com/p/1dcpu>; see also: <https://www.dw.com/en/the-picnic-that-changed-european-history/a-4580616>; (last accessed on 28.02.2020). On the controversies concerning the course of events during the Picnic and its impact for further developments in the Central and Eastern Europe, see: Volker Wagener, "Secrets of 'Pan-European Picnic' still shrouded in mystery 30 years later", 19.08.2019, text available at: <https://p.dw.com/p/3O2hx>.

[220] The number 150 000 is taken from the notice, which was produced by the MFA GDR after the meeting of the Head of the GDR's diplomacy Oskar Fischer with his Hungarian counterpart – Gyula Horn see *Vermerk über das Gespräch des Ministers für Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten Genossen Oskar Fischer mit dem Minister für Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten der Ungarischen Volksrepublik Genossen Gyula Horn*, am 31 August 1989. (document available at [http://www.argus.bstu.bundesarchiv.de/dy30bkr/mets/dy30bkr\\_304/index.htm#70](http://www.argus.bstu.bundesarchiv.de/dy30bkr/mets/dy30bkr_304/index.htm#70)) (last accessed on 28.02.2020) however, Ilko Sacha Kowalczyk *Endspiel...* p. 350–351 who opines that in 1989 the number of GDR's citizens who went on Holidays to Hungary attended 200 000. cf. *Endspiel...*, op. cit. More on the negotiations between the leadership of the SED, and the Hungarian government, as well on the secret talks held by the latter with the government of the FRG cf following documents *Vermerk des Bundesministers Genscher über das Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Kohl mit Ministerpräsident Németh und Außenminister Horn, Schloss Gymnich, 25.8.1989* (available at: [http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/system/files/dokument\\_pdf/102205\\_1989\\_08\\_25\\_CdM\\_Dok\\_Gespraech\\_Kohl\\_Nemeth\\_Abschrift.pdf](http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/system/files/dokument_pdf/102205_1989_08_25_CdM_Dok_Gespraech_Kohl_Nemeth_Abschrift.pdf), last accessed on 28.02.2020); *Vermerk über das Gespräch des Mitglieds des Politbüros und Sekretärs des ZK der SED, Genossen Günter Mittag, mit dem Minister für Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten der Ungarischen Volksrepublik Genossen Gyula Horn*, am 31 August 1989 (the document available at: [http://www.argus.bstu.bundesarchiv.de/dy30bkr/mets/dy30bkr\\_304/index.htm#67](http://www.argus.bstu.bundesarchiv.de/dy30bkr/mets/dy30bkr_304/index.htm#67)

(visited on 28.02.2020); *Vermerk über das Gespräch des Ministers für Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten Genossen Oskar Fischer mit dem Minister für Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten der Ungarischen Volksrepublik Genossen Gyula Horn*, am 31 August 1989. (document available at [http://www.argus.bstu.bundesarchiv.de/dy30bkr/mets/dy30bkr\\_304/index.htm#69](http://www.argus.bstu.bundesarchiv.de/dy30bkr/mets/dy30bkr_304/index.htm#69)) (last accessed on 28.02.2020) See also: Hans Herman Hertle *Chronik des Mauerfalls* Ch. Links Verlag, Berlin 1999, p. 61–64, 68, 69. In this peculiar context, it is worth pointing out that at this stage of the crisis, the SED leadership, as well as the USSR authorities, were perfectly aware of the grave consequences which it could have had for the mere existence of the GDR. Still, the attempt to rope Gorbachev to take more decisive actions to influence Hungarian authorities and to change their migration policies brought no results: Even if the Soviet Ambassador to the GDR Kochemassov understood very well the potential risk of the migration pressure in the country for East Germany itself and the socialist camp as a whole, still Moscow refrained from intervening directly in the conflict between Budapest and East-Berlin. It seems that the leader of the USSR was afraid that such a step could additionally burden the ongoing negotiations with FRG; (H. H. Hertle, id., p. 69–70). Or to put it in another way: keeping in mind the dramatically worsening political and economic situation of the Soviet Union and the visible signs of its progressing erosion, it could produce the effect, Gorbachev legitimately could be afraid. It seems, therefore, he preferred the “less evil” (the troubles in the GDR) instead of the stalemate in the ongoing negotiations with Bonn, which he expected to bring him financial credits and engagement of German capital to secure the existence of the USSR for next decades.

[221] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 351.

[222] This number grew significantly within the next month. According to the *Stasi's* data on 5 October 1989, there were 8,270 persons who had left the FRG's diplomatic premises for West Germany. See: Summary of information by the GDR Ministry of State Security about the transport to the Federal Republic of East German citizens taking refuge at the West German Embassy, and related events, occurring on the territory of the GDR, especially in Dresden. BStU Berlin, MfS, Arbeitsbereich Neiber, 613, Fols. 22–27; the document accessed via National Security Archive George Washington University; (<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB294/index.htm>, see: document 17 on this site)

[223] CSSR Ambassador to the GDR František Langer to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague. Reports on the decision of the SED leadership to temporarily suspend private travel by GDR citizens to Czechoslovakia, and resolve the situation at the Federal Republic embassy in Prague as was done on September 30”, Foreign Ministry Archive, Prague. Telegrams received, 1989, vol. 35. The document accessed via National Security Archive George Washington University (<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB294/index.htm> see: document 13 on this site). See also: “Zeitweilige Aussetzung des paß – und visafreien Verkehrs zwischen DDR und CSSR“ (“Temporary Suspension of Passport and Visa-free Traffic between the GDR and CSSR”), *Neues Deutschland*, 4.10.1989, document available at: [http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/system/files/dokument\\_pdf/47849\\_cdm-891004-ND-reiseverkehr.pdf](http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/system/files/dokument_pdf/47849_cdm-891004-ND-reiseverkehr.pdf). For more on the negotiations with the Czechoslovak government regarding the solution to the crisis, see: Claus J. Duisberg, *Das deutsche Jahr...*, op. cit., pp. 47–61.

[224] For Honecker's biography and a detailed calendar of events from the GDR leader's life see: <http://meike-wulf.homepage.t-online.de/html/1989.html> (last accessed on 23.03.2018).

[225] More on the circumstances of Honecker's sudden change of mind when he allegedly began to suspect Krenz of being disloyal towards him, cf. Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 381.

[226] Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 9–11.

- [227] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 384–385.
- [228] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 377–378.
- [229] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 382–383.
- [230] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution ...*, op. cit., pp. 93–94.
- [231] The ‘Weimar Letter’ by Martina Huhn, Martin Kirchner, Christie Lieberknecht, and Gottfried Müller severely condemned the situation in the GDR, censorship, and ‘democratic centralism’, and demanded more participation of their party in power; earlier the GDR CDU, like the liberal LDPD and other parties of the Unity Front had played a negligible role. Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution ...*, op. cit., pp. 98–99.
- [232] *Ibid.*, pp. 93–95, 104; Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 197.
- [233] For more on the origins of the idea of Peace Prayers organized by pastor Wonennberger, cf. Steven Pfaff, *The Politics of Peace...*, op. cit., pp. 292–293. See also: Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 202. More on the earlier activities of Wonneberger and Führer, cf. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 307–311.
- [234] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit. p. 113.
- [235] The numbers of protesters after: <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/chronik/#anchoryear1989> (last accessed on 12.04.2019).
- [236] Information after: <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/chronik/#anchoryear1989> (cf. information for 4 October 1989) (last accessed on 12.04.2019).
- [237] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 383–385.
- [238] Peter Boeger, Elise Catrain (eds), *Stasi in Dresden. Die Geheimpolizei im DDR-Bezirk (The Stasi in Dresden. The Secret Police in the GDR District)*, Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin 2016, p. 51.
- [239] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 383–385.
- [240] *Ibid.*, pp. 383–385.
- [241] *Ibid.*, p. 398.
- [242] *Ibid.*, pp. 70–74. See also: Ralph Jessen, “Massenprotest und zivilgesellschaftliche Selbstorganisation in der Bürgerbewegung von 1989/90“ (“Mass Protests and Civil Society Self-organization in the Civil Movement from 1989/90”), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90 ...*, op. cit., p. 172.
- [243] Cf. Kowalczyk’s remarks on the New Forum’s programme: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 362–363.
- [244] The ineptness of the opposition (and thus the minimal chance for any impact on the processes taking place in the GDR) was noticed by, for example, the head of the office of the Permanent Mission of the FRG in the GDR, Franz Bertele. Bertele’s two memos of 19 and 22 September 1989, prepared for the head of the chancellor’s office, Rudolf Seiters, accuse the opposition of, for example, poor logistics, lack of a programme, having an impact limited to a narrow circle of intellectuals, and a lack of rapport with GDR citizens. For instance, during the meeting on 19 September 1989, Bärbel Bohley declared that the New Forum was ready to dissolve as soon as the SED reformed itself and the people present (according to Bertele, fewer than 200) were

evidently disappointed with the course of the meeting. See: “Festschreiben des Staatssekretärs Bertele an den Chef des Bundeskanzlersamtes Berlin (Ost) 20 September, dok. 43, 45” (“Commitment by State Secretary Bertele to the head of the Federal Chancellery Berlin (East) September 20, doc. 43, 45”), [in:] Hanns Jürgen Küsters, Daniel Hofmann, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik. Deutsche Einheit (Documents on German Politics. German Unification)*, R. Oldenbourg Verlag GmbH, Munich 1998, pp. 410 and 415. From the Polish perspective, it is interesting to know that according to the West German diplomat such action could have threatened the regime “if a true political talent like Wałęsa” had emerged; in September 1989, Bertele saw no one of that stature among the East German opposition.

[245] For some key facts on the June 1953 Uprising, see: <https://adst.org/2013/06/the-east-berlin-uprising-june-16-17-1953/> (last accessed on 12.04.2019). More on the uprising, see: Christian Ostermann, “The United States, the East German Uprising of 1953, and the Limits of Rollback”, *Working Paper* No. 11, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Cold War International History Project, Washington, D.C. 1994; available at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ACFB6C.PDF> (last accessed on 12.04.2019).

[246] *Fernschreiben des SED-Generalsekretärs Honecker an die 1. Sekretäre der SED-Bezirksleitungen, von Mielke mit Begleitschreiben weitergeleitet an die Leiter der Stasi-Bezirksverwaltungen*, BStU, MfS, BdL/Dok 006921 (*Telex from the SED general secretary Honecker to the first secretaries of the SED district management, forwarded by Mielke with accompanying letter to the heads of the Stasi district administrations*), available at: [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Okttober-1989/Dokumentenseiten/08-Okttober\\_a/08\\_okt\\_a\\_text.html](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Okttober-1989/Dokumentenseiten/08-Okttober_a/08_okt_a_text.html) (last accessed on 28.03.2018); *Telegrafische Weisung Mielkes an die Leiter der Dienstseinheiten*, BStU, MfS, BdL/Dok 006920 (*Telegraphic instructions from Mielke to the heads of the service units*), available at: [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Okttober-1989/Dokumentenseiten/08-Okttober\\_b/08\\_okt\\_b\\_text.html](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Okttober-1989/Dokumentenseiten/08-Okttober_b/08_okt_b_text.html) (last accessed on 28.03.2018).

[247] *Schilderung der Ereignisse in Dresden zwischen dem 3. und dem 8.10.1989 durch den Leiter der BVfS Dresden*, BöhM, BStU, ASt Dresden, BV Dresden, LBV 10167, Bl. 1–5 (*Description of the events in Dresden between October 3 and 8, 1989 by the head of BVfS Dresden*), available at: [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Okttober-1989/Dokumentenseiten/09-Okttober\\_a/09\\_okt\\_a\\_text.html](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Okttober-1989/Dokumentenseiten/09-Okttober_a/09_okt_a_text.html) (last accessed on 28.03.2018).

[248] More information on this is available at <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/chronik/#anchoryear1989> (last accessed on 28.03.2018).

[249] A separate question, which has never been settled, is the problem, if (and when so, to what an extent) in October 1989, the communist party could still count on the loyalty of the GDR's army. Without seeking to dwell on this highly controversial issue, one should take note of Gareth Dale's remarks who opined that the by the late summer the deterioration of the moods in the society as a whole did not spare the functionaries of security forces and soldiers neither. According to this author, as early as in September some units were at the verge of open mutiny, and soldiers did not seem to be inclined to volunteer in police operations aiming at dispersing peaceful demonstrations with buttons or using against civilians other coercive means entailing a form of physical brutality (see: Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 11).

[250] According to Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, by acting in that way Modrow clearly broke the official instructions issued by the SED in Berlin. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 400.

[251] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution ...*, op. cit., pp. 129–130.

[252] Reiner Eckert, "Der 9 October: Tag der Entscheidung in Leipzig" ("9 October: Decision Day in Leipzig"), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 217. See also: <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/chronik/#anchoryear1989>.

[253] Reiner Eckert, *Der 9 October...*, op. cit., p. 218.

[254] Eckert is not isolated in this opinion; see, for example, Jens Gieseke, "Das Volk in den Stimmungsberichten des Staatssicherheitsdienstes" ("The People in the Mood Reports of the State Security Service"), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 148. In a similar vein, cf. Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit. p. 25–27) who argues that at this stage, the "use of force scenario" – was simply out of the question. There are some other arguments who seem to be in favour of this thesis. As Mau states, on 9 October, the SED functionaries contacted Lutheran Bishop in Leipzig Hempel: they pressured him to cancel the Peace Prayers in the city and the demonstration as well. Bishop definitely refused to comply and argued that the step the officials expected he would take could only exacerbate the existing tensions. (cf. Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 202) It seems rather impossible to imagine that – having regards the previous attitude of the Lutheran Church towards the GDRs authorities – Bishop would have refused to comply with the demands of the SED unless he had been sure that the use of military force is a highly improbable scenario.

[255] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 402.

[256] On hypotheses why Berlin failed to handle this in a clearer and more decisive manner, see: Detlef Pollack, "Wir sind das Volk!"..., op. cit., pp. 195–196.

[257] For more information, see: [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Oktober-1989/Dokumentenseiten/09-Oktober\\_b/09\\_okt\\_b\\_text.html](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Oktober-1989/Dokumentenseiten/09-Oktober_b/09_okt_b_text.html) (last accessed on 28.03.2018). According to Gareth Dale, Krenz's tactic can be characterized as a "wait and see" stance. At this stage, he was deeply engaged in preparing the plot to oust Honecker from power, and definitely, he did not want to take any responsibility for the events, which were taking place in Leipzig. Therefore, he decided to "stall for time" (cf. Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 29–30).

[258] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 136–137. According to Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, finally, Krenz called to Leipzig at 7:15 p.m. and he accepted post facto the manner in which state organs handled the situation. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 403. The same author opines that the question whether on the 9 October the party in Berlin was pondering the use of arms against demonstrating people should be answered by negative, although it is true that such a scenario was considered by most of observers and participants as a plausible one (Ibid., pp. 401–405).

[259] Reiner Eckert, *Der 9 October...*, op. cit. p. 221 – 223; Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 403.

[260] Hannes Bahrmann, Christoph Links, *Chronik der Wende: die Ereignisse in der DDR zwischen 7. Oktober 1989 und 18 März 1990 (Chronicle of the Change: the Events in the GDR between 7 October 1989 and 18 March 1990)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Ch. Links Verlag, Berlin 2009, pp. 26–27.

[261] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 403.

[262] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 423. It seems that, despite the ongoing crisis, at the beginning of October, the balance of power in the Politburo was still disadvantageous for the anti-Honeckerian opposition, which was composed of such persons as Krenz, Schabowski or Lorentz. (cf. Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 18) In this situation, the change of sides by Mielke and Stoph could have played the pivotal role.

[263] It seems very probable that Gorbachev was in contact with the group of Krenz and his allies. It could be that he more or less tacitly approved “the coup,” which took place on the 18 October. It also seems sure that at this stage of developments, any support for hardliners from Soviets (especially the use of Soviet Army stationing on the GDR’s territory) was not taken seriously into account, by neither Gorbachev nor other GDR politicians. See: Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 31, 33.

[264] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 424

[265] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., pp. 406–407.

[266] *Ibid.*, p. 410.

[267] For example, during a conversation of SED Rostock regional first secretary Ernst Timm with Haas from the New Forum it turned out that Timm was unable to explain what “the dictatorship of the proletariat” was supposed to mean. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 161–162.

[268] Walter Süß, *Der Untergang...*, op. cit., p. 288.

[269] *Ibid.*, pp. 201–203. See also: Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., p. 312.

[270] The question of exact numbers of participants is the one where the opinions of German historians vary. See: Andreas Rödder, who opines that on 23 October, the Monday Demonstration in Leipzig was attended by approximately 250,000 persons; Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland ...*, op. cit., p. 102. On the other hand, Neubert limits himself to presenting collective data gathered by the *Stasi* from the week 23–30 October. According to that source, 140 demonstrations took place in which approximately 540,000 people took part (Erhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 165). As far as the number of demonstrators taking part in protests in the second half of October is concerned, (taken altogether), Kowalczyk does not give any precise data on this issue, although he also points out that at least the number of protest was on a constant rise (cf. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 435–437.

[271] Cf. Gerlach’s Interview for *Der Spiegel* “Es ist eine Revolution” (“It is a Revolution”), *Der Spiegel*, 6.11.1989.

[272] Erhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 171.

[273] Erich Mielke, Wolfgang Herger, Friedrich Dickel u. Klaus Sorgenicht, “Vorlage für das Politbüro des ZK der SED Betreff: Maßnahmen zur Verhinderung der weiteren Formierung und zur Zurückdrängung antisozialistischer Sammlungsbewegungen”, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 / JIV 2/2A/3252 (Arbeitsakte der SED-Politbürositzung am 31.10.1989), Bl. 151–162, 173–179 (*Template for the Politburo of the SEC Central Committee Subject: Measures to prevent further formation and to suppress anti-socialist collection movements*), available at: [http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Oktober-1989/Dokumentenseiten/30-Oktober\\_a/30\\_okt\\_a\\_text.html](http://www.bstu.bund.de/DE/Wissen/DDRGeschichte/Revolutionskalender/Oktober-1989/Dokumentenseiten/30-Oktober_a/30_okt_a_text.html) (last accessed on 29.03.2018).

[274] However, see Kowalczyk, who contests this generally accepted number, arguing that on 4 November, there were no more than 200,000 people in the vicinity of *Alexanderplatz*. Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 451–452.

[275] Cf Materials available at <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/chronik/#anchoryear1989> (see 4 October 1989). The speech of Markus Wolf is available at: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xb3lul> (last accessed on 13.04.2019).

[276] The full speech of Stefan Heym available at: <https://www.the-berlin-wall.com/videos/stefan-heymspeaks-on-alexanderplatz-830/> (last accessed on 13.04.2019).

[277] It is worth noting, incidentally, that even for SED reformist circles, Krenz had always been a hardly acceptable person as he had stood too closely to Honecker for them to believe, that he would be able and willing to pursue “a true Perestroika” in the GDR. Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 302.

[278] Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, *Endspiel...*, op. cit., pp. 398–399 (Kowalczyk notes that for the first time the demand for the reunification of Germany was expressed during the demonstration in Plauen, which took place as early as on 7 October 1989).

[279] Marc-Dietrich Ohse, “Wir sind ein Volk’ Die Wende in der Wende” (“We Are One Nation! The Turn in the Change”), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 272. It seems, however, that those data are in open contradictions to other surveys the results of which indicated that as early as by the end of November 1989, c. 50 per cent of GDR citizens were ready to accept a form of reunification. In this vein, cf. Manfred Görtemaker, “Beginn der deutschen Einigung” (“German Unification Begins”), [in:] *Informationen zur politischen Bildung*, Issue 250, “Der Weg zur Einheit”, p. 44, see: infra note 186., available at: <http://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/informationen-zur-politischen-bildung/10267/der-weg-zur-einheit> (last accessed on 31.05.2017).

[280] Dieter Resch, “Wem soll dieses Haus gehören?“ (“Who Should This House Belong To?”), *Berliner Zeitung*, 1 November 1989.

[281] Alexander Osang, “Nennstiels Haus” (“Nennstiel’s House”), *Berliner Zeitung*, 23 October 1999.

[282] It is worth noting that after the revealing of the abuses committed by the high-rank functionaries, the outcry was so immense that some members of communist cells acting within the GDR’s army lodged official protests on behalf of the units in which they served. See: Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 81.

[283] André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan ...*, op. cit., p. 254. See also: André Steiner, *Die DDR Volkswirtschaft...*, op. cit., p. 118.

[284] This is indeed debatable, at least with regard to the perspective of immediate bankruptcy, although there is consensus among scholars that the legacy left by Honecker was dramatic indeed. Ralf Ahrens, *Aussenwirtschaft, in der Schuldenfalle*, op. cit., p. 109. See also: Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., p. 107.

[285] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland ...*, op. cit., pp. 97–98.

[286] Over many years, the historians were not aware of the so-called “Chinese bid” which apparently was submitted through the diplomatic channels by the end of October 1989. It is beyond any doubts that by this proposal Beijing authorities wanted truly to maintain the existing *status quo* in the GDR. Because of many reasons, this proposal could not be accepted by the SED regime. Firstly, the Chinese government proposed to place at the disposal of the SED highly qualified personnel who could replace on the labour market those East Germans who wanted to leave the GDR, but – significantly – the bid did not mention any financial resources. Secondly – and perhaps more importantly – the lack of time to examine the Chinese assistance offer thoroughly, coupled with the very cumbersome and time-consuming work style of the GDR apparatus, made it almost impossible to elaborate the detailed answer containing a proposal of the future cooperation. The resignation of the Stoph’s cabinet, which took place soon thereafter, made the proposal obsolete, keeping in mind the dramatic changes which occurred on 9 November

(for more on this issue cf. Sven Felix Kellerhoff, “So wollte China 1989 in letzter Minute die DDR retten”, *Welt am Sonntag*, 02.11.2019)

[287] See: <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/material/180619/internationale-pressekonferenz- von-guenter-schabowski-in-begleitung-der-zk-mitglieder-h-labs-g-beil-und-m-banaschak-9-november-1989-ton-abschrift> (last accessed on 28.07.2018).

[288] For more on this issue, see: Fritz Streletz, NVA-Generaloberst, zur Befehlslage der NVA am 9. November 1989 (Colonel-General of the NVA, on the orders of the NVA on November 9, 1989) (Quelle: Cineimpuls Film & Video KG/Bild: Volker Langhoff) and SED-Generalsekretär, zu seiner Entscheidungssituation: “Ich habe mich dann dafür entschieden, wir lassen den Dingen freien Lauf.” (“SED general secretary, on his decision-making situation: “I then decided to do it, we let things run free”) (Quelle: Cineimpuls Film & Video KG/Bild: Volker Langhoff). Both testimonies available at <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/chronik/#anchornid171996> (see 9 November 1989 22:00).

[289] All information after the documentary “Schabowskis Zettel”: The material available at: <http://mediathek.daserste.de/Reportage-Dokumentation/Schabowskis-Zettel/Video?bcastId=799280&documentId=8577490> (last accessed on 13.04.2019, see: minutes 38.00–39:50, 40:20 – 41:52).

[290] Testimony of Harald Jäger, in the documentary “Schabowskis Zettel”, op. cit., see: minutes 52:56.

[291] One of the more intriguing questions, about which there is still a dearth of knowledge, in German historiography is why the GDR’s army, seen by the opponents as well trained and well-armed, and unquestionably given to obeying party orders, was in 1989 only a passive observer of events and evidently unwilling to apply ‘the Tiananmen Square solution’. Without doubt, the morale of the army was lower than the staffs of NATO countries suspected. Still, low morale does not explain everything. For relevant hypotheses, see Hans Ehlert, “Von der “Wende” zur Einheit: Ein sicherheitspolitischer Rückblick Auf das Letzte Jahr der Nationalen Volksarmee” (“From the “Change” to Unity: a Security Review of the Last Year of the National People’s Armies”), [in:] Hans Ehlert (ed.), *Armee ohne Zukunft. Das Ende der NVA und die deutsche Einheit Zeitzeugenberichte und die Dokumente (Army with No Future. The End of the NVA and the German Unification. Eyewitness Reports and Documents)*, [in:] Ch. Links, Potsdam 2002, pp. 7–13.

[292] Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., p. 111.

[293] Marc-Dietrich Ohse, “Wir sind ein Volk”..., pp. 270–272.

[294] Ibid., p. 273.

[295] Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 436.

[296] Walter Süß, *Die Untergang...*, p. 299.

[297] Bernhard Quandt’s speech is available at: [http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/chronicle/\\_year1989/\\_month12/?language=en&month=12&moc=1&year=1989&openid=176526&filter=1&dokument=0&audio=0&video=0&foto=0](http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/chronicle/_year1989/_month12/?language=en&month=12&moc=1&year=1989&openid=176526&filter=1&dokument=0&audio=0&video=0&foto=0) (last accessed on 5.04.2018).

[298] Hubertus Knabe, *Honeckers Erben ...*, op. cit., pp. 114–117.

[299] As at 1 October 1989, the SED had DM 6.3 billion in cash only. Despite the work of a special Bundestag commission, the German post-communists never accounted for that money. For more on the subject, see: Hubertus Knabe, *Honeckers Erben ...*, op. cit., pp. 154–179.

[300] André Steiner, *Die DDR Volkswirtschaft...*, op. cit., pp. 173–177.

[301] In fact, in the critical months of the German revolution, the role of the democratic opposition was at best limited. Cf. Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 103–104, 127.

[302] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution ...*, op. cit., pp. 234–236.

[303] This increasing discrepancy between the political aspirations of the dissident movement and the mood of the masses went so far that some of the prominent members of the former did not hesitate to condemn publicly in no uncertain words the attitude of “the mob”. As drastic as it could sound, in the opinion of many former critics of the Honeckers regime, GDR citizens appeared invidious or utterly stupid because instead of supporting the “enlightened idea” to reform the existing state it preferred to meet first of all some basic material needs and to attain this goal they were ready to abandon the GDR or to go to the street and to demonstrate aggressively for the quick unification with the “capitalist” state – the FRG (Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 229).

[304] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland ...*, op. cit., pp. 124–125.

[305] The name ‘Central Round Table’ (ZRT) was supposed to distinguish the Berlin talks from the local round tables, which had been held in the autumn under the auspices of party executives and opposition activists.

[306] Here the activity of Gysi’s group within the SED should be especially stressed. In reality, apart from the change of name (from the SED to the PDS), the new party was to be both the legal successor of the property of the former communist party (the first operations to hide the property began in October 1989), and an ideological one. The line adopted at the December congress continued to apply to Marxism and Leninism, and the figure of Lenin remained an important reference point for the interpretation of PDS policy. For more on this subject, see: Hubertus Knabe, *Honeckers Erben ...*, op. cit., pp. 96–106.

[307] Hans Jürgen Küsters, “Die Bundesregierung und Die Krise der DDR vor dem Mauerfall“ (“The Federal Government and the GDR Crisis Before the Fall of the Wall”), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 367.

[308] *Ibid.*, p. 365.

[309] Some authors mention an additional factor which determined this cautious approach: namely, the potential risk of an overreaction by the GDR’s leadership, which could have qualified the increasing pressure as a direct encroachment in domestic affairs of the GDR, and would react with the “Tiananmen Square solution”. See e.g.: Karl-Rudolf Korte, “Die Deutschlandpolitik der Regierung Kohl seit Herbst 1989” (“The Kohl Government’s Policy on Germany since the Autumn of 1989”), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 424.

[310] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 130–132.

[311] *Ibid.*

[312] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 66.

[313] Neubert notes that in early 1989 it was the social democrats in the GDR who were the best organised in the opposition and were able to express their political objectives, which as such must have crossed the regime (they directly applied to the social democratic traditions, particularly strong in the GDR territory in the 1940s). The very existence of the SPD in the GDR undermined the ‘unification myth’ of both parties in 1946 and indirectly delegitimized the Honecker system. See: Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 77.

[314] *Ibid.*, pp. 206–207.

[315] *Ibid.*, pp. 348–349.

[316] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 138–139. Paradoxically, when in September, in a conversation with the head of the Chancellor's office, US diplomats sounded out Seiters regarding the position on German reunification, he was clearly uninvolved and actually expressed a dissenting opinion or decided to wait.

[317] For more on this subject, see the statement by Schalck-Golodkowski available at: <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/chronicle/#anchoryear1989> (6 November 1989) and the statement by Wolfgang Schäuble (8 November 1989; both last accessed on 28.06.2018).

[318] See Schalck's memo for Egon Krenz of 7 November 1989, available at <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/material/180398/schreiben-von-alexander-schalck-golodkowski-an-sed-generalsekretaer-egon-krenz-7-november-1989> (last accessed on 28.06.2018).

[319] *Bericht der Bundesregierung zur Lage der Nation. Erklärung der Bundesregierung vor dem Bundesrat* (Federal Government Report on the State of the Nation. Federal Government Declaration), available at: <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/material/180399/bericht-der-bundesregierung-zur-lage-der-nation-im-geteilten-deutschland-8-november-1989> (last accessed on 28.06.2018).

[320] *Mündliche Botschaft Michail Gorbatschows an Helmut Kohl, 10. November 1989* (Oral message from Mikhail Gorbachev to Helmut Kohl, 10 November 1989), text of the message transmitted by the Soviet ambassador in Bonn, available at: <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/material/178903/muendliche-botschaft-michail-gorbatschows-an-helmut-kohl-10-november-1989> (last accessed on 28.06.2018).

[321] Information after <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/chronik/#anchornid171998> (cf. November 1989).

[322] It is interesting to note, however, that when Krenz had paid his official visit in Moscow three weeks earlier, he had sought to sound out Moscow's position on the future of the GDR. According to Malycha, the answers he had received from the Soviets were ambiguous – to say the least. Anyway, the Kremlin did not want to confirm any guarantees of security for East Germany, simultaneously indicating that for the USRR the sole partner in negotiations on the future of Germany would be solely the FRG. Thus, it had to become more and more obvious to the leaders of the SED that “the final countdown” for their state had moved forward even before Kohl delivered his famous speech on 28 November. (Andreas Malycha, *Die SED...*, op. cit., p. 412).

[323] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., p. 139.

[324] The transcript of Helmut Kohl's address is available at <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/material/180402/rede-von-bundeskanzler-helmut-kohl-im-bundestag-10-punkte-programm-28-november-1989> (last accessed on 28.06.2018).

[325] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 140–142.

[326] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 170–172. For more on the internal debate within SPD, see: Mike Schmeizner, “Die SPD und die deutsche Frage 1989/90”, [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., pp. 402–419.

[327] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., p. 173.

[328] “Für Unseres Land,” (“For Our Country”), *Neues Deutschland*, 29.11.1989.

[329] Claus J. Duisberg, *Das Deutsche Jahr...*, op. cit., p. 91.

[330] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 260.

[331] The question of possible *Stasi* provocation has never been conclusively resolved, even though the available texts are sceptical about it (see: Jens Gieseke, *Der Mielke-Konzern...*, op. cit., pp. 261–262). Possibly, Neubert, who sees the assaults on *Stasi* headquarters as a logical consequence of showcase trials and detentions of functionaries of Honecker's regime, is right. GDR citizens, shown the magnitude of the racket going on, and unprepared for the news, grew even more embittered and forced entry into the offices of the hated political police. Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 260.

[332] Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 143–144.

[333] “West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl is welcomed enthusiastically by the people during a meeting with prime minister Hans Modrow”, 19 December 1989; “A rally of the SED-PDS is taking place in East Berlin. Speaking at Academy Square, Gregor Gysi calls for the independence of the GDR and speaks out against reunification”, 19 December 1989. <http://www.chroniker-mauer.de/en/chronicle/> (last accessed on 2.07.2018).

[334] In December 1989, the GDR was losing approximately 1,000 people daily because of negative migration and in January 1990 the figure was double that! Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 310 and 329.

[335] Claus J. Duisberg, *Das Deutsche Jahr...*, op. cit., p. 127.

[336] Hans Ehlert, *Von der “Wende”...*, op. cit., pp. 7–9.

[337] For example, the Independent Women's Union (*Unabhängige Frauenverband* – the UVF) with actress Walfriede Schmitt and Dr. Ina Merkel, formed in December 1989, was represented at the Round Table, although it was formally set up only a few days prior to the talks.

[338] Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 186–187.

[339] Claus J. Duisberg, *Das Deutsche Jahr ...*, op. cit., pp. 112–113.

[340] The participants of the ZRT did not manage to establish the mutual trust needed in order to carry out a substantive debate on economic and social problems. The forced entry into the *Stasi* HQ was preceded by the ‘scandal in Treptow’, where unknown perpetrators vandalised a monument to Red Army soldiers, painting Nazi slogans on it. Gysi embraced this opportunity to both accuse fascist republicans from the FGR of damaging the monument and to talk about the alleged restitution of fascism in the GDR if reunification were to take place. At the same time, the PDS leader accused the opposition of favouring fascist attitudes and aired an opinion that only a strong *Stasi* would be able to stop such tendencies, which in his view were intensifying across the country. Given that at the same time PDS propaganda implied that the SPD in the GDR was only a ‘Trojan horse of the counter-revolution’, the opposition realised that Gysi wanted to take the initiative, or possibly to restore the *ancien régime* in new clothes. Mass protests across the country that culminated in the forced entry into the *Stasi* central office in Normanstrasse in Berlin, forestalled that scenario, but poisoned the already bad climate at the Round Table. Erhard Neubert, *Die Friedliche Revolution. Vom Herbst 1989 bis zur Deutschen Einheit*, pp. 59–61; the documentation is available on the website of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung at: [https://www.kas.de/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=e9901089-bb6c-1440-69ac-457f55fcb479&groupId=252038](https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=e9901089-bb6c-1440-69ac-457f55fcb479&groupId=252038) (last accessed on 4.04.2020).

[341] Joachim Scholtyseck, *Die Aussenpolitik ...*, op. cit., pp. 49–52.

[342] The “Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany”, signed on 12 September 1990 by the DDR, FRG, France, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the USSR.

[343] As we now know, the agreement (along with the one on good neighbourly relations and friendly co-operation concluded the following year) opened up another chapter of Polish-German relations, making Germany the most important supporter of Poland's membership in the European Union.

[344] Manfred Görtemaker, *Beginn der deutschen...*, op. cit., p. 44.

[345] Mike Schmeitzner, *Die SPD...*, op. cit., p. 415.

[346] The SPD's electoral programme, adopted at a congress held on 22–25 February 1990, was titled "Ja zur deutschen Einheit – eine Chance für Europa" ("Yes to German Unity – an Opportunity for Europe") and plainly showed that, although the SDP was in principle for the unity of both German states, it decisively ruled out the method of incorporating the GDR into the FRG under Art. 23 of the FRG's constitution and a simple dissolution of the GDR as a country. This prolonged the road to unity, which was so coveted by most citizens. The text of the programme is available in the library of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, at <http://library.fes.de/library/netzquelle/ddr/spd/pdf/parteitag.pdf> (last accessed on 4.07.2018).

[347] Manfred Görtemaker, *Beginn der deutschen...*, op. cit., p. 47.

[348] Claus J. Duisberg, *Das Deutsche Jahr...*, op. cit., p. 110.

[349] Ehrhart Neubert, *Unsere Revolution ...*, op. cit., pp. 349–354.

[350] "Regierungserklärung des Ministerpräsidenten Lothar de Maizière, abgegeben vor der Volkskammer der DDR am 19. April 1990" ("Government statement by Prime Minister Lothar de Maizière, made before the People's Chamber of the GDR on 19 April 1990"), Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, available at <https://www.kas.de/de/statische-inhalte-detail/-/content/regierungserklaerung-des-ministerpraesidenten-lothar-de-maiziere-abgegeben-vor-der-volkskammer-der-ddr-am-19.-april-1990> (last accessed on 5.04.2020).

[351] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 283–284. It was clear for GDR politicians that the incorporation of the eastern Länder to the powerful Bonn Republic would no doubt have serious social consequences. De Maizière's government issued a declaration on 19 April and stressed that although "Unification must occur as soon as possible, yet its criteria must be prepared carefully and meticulously but be feasible in the future, as will be needed."

[352] Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, *Wie westlich sind die Deutschen? Amerikanisierung und Westernisierung in 20 Jahrhundert (How Western are the Germans? Americanization and Westernization in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century)*, Vanderhoeck and Ruprecht, Göttingen 1999, p. 5. De Maizière's famous statement that after reunification Germany would become more eastern and more protestant did not win him friends. The West German government, dominated by Catholics, did not share the 'Protestant' zeal of the GDR prime minister and his positive evaluation of the Prussian legacy was in stark contrast to the expectations of Germany's neighbours and the individualistic ideological climate of the era. For more on this subject, see: "Anwalt der Ostdeutschen" ("Attorney of the East Germans"), an interview with Lothar de Maizière moderated by Gunter Mahler, Deutschlandfunk available at: <http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/zeitzeugen/733560/> (last accessed on 4.07.2018).

[353] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 282–283.

[354] Ibid.

[355] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...* op. cit., pp. 44 and 61.

[356] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 162–163.

- [357] Interview with prime minister Hans Modrow, *Der Spiegel*, 1990, No. 6, p. 29.
- [358] In this vein, see: Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., pp. 61, 64–65.
- [359] Manfred Görtemaker, *Beginn der deutschen...*, op. cit., p.41.
- [360] Uwe Müller, *Supergau Deutsche...*, op. cit., pp. 48–49.
- [361] Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., p. 207.
- [362] Claus J. Duisberg, *Das Deutsche Jahr...*, op. cit., p. 178.
- [363] In this vein: Karl-Rudolf Korte, *Die Deutschlandpolitik der Regierung...*, op. cit., p. 440.
- [364] Heinz-Josef Bontrup, *Volkswirtschaftslehre, Grundlage der Mikro und Makroökonomie (Economics, Basis of Micro – and Macroeconomics)*, Oldenbourg, Munich 2004, pp. 116–118.
- [365] This view is accepted by those authors who – like Gareth Dale – are rather critical about the final outcome of the economic transformation in Germany. If he opines that certain opportunities had not been not grasped by the German Left, he expresses the view that the final outcome of the 1989 would have been the same, even if the dissidents in the GDR adopted a bit different strategy. (cf. Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., p.230).
- [366] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., pp. 176–177.
- [367] Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 189–190.
- [368] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., p. 30.
- [369] *Die Welt*, 25 January 1989.
- [370] Sebastian Richter, “Der Weg zur freien Volkskammerwahl” (“The Path to Free Elections to the People’s Chamber”), [in:] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.). *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 340.
- [371] André Steiner, *Die DDR Volkswirtschaft...*, op. cit., p. 119.
- [372] Claus J. Duisberg, *Das Deutsche Jahr...*, op. cit., p. 133.
- [373] *Ibid.*, pp. 133–134.
- [374] The protesters themselves did not equivocate. The banners displayed in 1990 read *Kommt die D-Mark, bleiben wir, kommt sie nicht, geh'n wir zu ihr!* (“Either the Deutsche mark comes to us, and then we will stay, or else we will come to it!”).
- [375] One could only agree with Gareth Dale when he posits, that at the roots of the collapse of the GDR was a dilemma how to bridge the realities imposed on the economy by the Marxists orthodoxy with the effects of the globalizing world and the technical progress orchestrated and stimulated by the centers localized out of the sphere of the Soviet influence. As this author stated “In the East German case, contradictions arose between its “national-economic” form and globalization, and between its dependence upon Moscow and the economic attractive power of the West. East Germany’s rulers found themselves seduced by the superior technologies commodities and economic structures of the West, not to mention loans and transfers form Bonn. They were torn between ingrained loyalties to orthodox Communism and Moscow and their tacit awareness of the West’s competitive edge.” Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 221.
- [376] On the revolutionary character of the events in Germany at the turn of 1989/1990, cf. Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 226–228 and 229, arguing – convincingly – that

at the end of the 1980s, GDRs citizens wanted not only an Audi instead of a Trabant: they wanted definitely much more, that is, guaranties of civic liberties and the improvement of environmental standards.

[377] *Ibid.*, pp. 228–229.

[378] Against this backdrop, it is worth taking note of Lothar de Maiziere's recently published interview in which he added some interesting details. According to the last GDR's prime minister (whose relations with Kohl were rather difficult), still, at the beginning of 1990, the German Chancellor was inclined to cooperate solely with some new emerging political parties, acting in the GDR. Therefore, in his original calculation, there was simply no room for the role of the former Ost-CDU and its members, let alone its leadership compromised with open collaboration with the communist regime. However, de Maizière managed to change Kohl's mind by using a pragmatic and straightforward argument: the emerging parties had no national or regional network necessary to perform an electoral campaign. Conversely, the Ost-CDU could immediately place the pretty well organized bureaucratic machinery, well anchored in Berlin and outside of the capital, as well at the command of the FRG leadership. Under the force of this logic the FRG Chancellor – albeit reluctantly – conceded. (See Interview with Lothar de Maizière, conducted by Oliver Georgi, *Die Kränkung sitzt bei vielen Ostdeutschen noch tief*, FAZ 7.11.2019.

[379] Claus J. Duisberg, *Das Deutsche Jahr...*, op. cit., p. 187.

[380] Andreas Staab, *National Identity in Eastern Germany: Inner Unification or Continued Separation?*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT/London, 1998, pp. 87–88.

[381] Information after *Politbüroprozess* at: [https://www.chronikderwende.de/lexikon/glossar/glossar\\_jsp/key=prozppolit.html](https://www.chronikderwende.de/lexikon/glossar/glossar_jsp/key=prozppolit.html) (last accessed on 13.04.2019). On the Hans Modrow trial, cf. Stephen Kinzer, “*Ex-East German Leader Convicted of Vote Fraud but Not Punished*”, NYT 28 May 1993.

[382] See: an interview for Deutschlandradio Kultur by Marianne Birthler of 25 April 2006: “*Birthler: Ex-Stasi-Offiziere wollen Tatsachen verdrehen*” (“*Birthler: Ex-Stasi officers want to distort facts*”), available at: [https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/birthler-ex-stasi-offiziere-wollen-tatsachen-verdrehen.945.de.html?dram:article\\_id=132255](https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/birthler-ex-stasi-offiziere-wollen-tatsachen-verdrehen.945.de.html?dram:article_id=132255) (last accessed on 19.01.2020).

[383] For more on this subject, see: Hubertus Knabe, *Die Täter sind unter uns: Über das Schönreden der SED-Diktatur (The Perpetrators Are Among Us: On the Euphemisation of the SED Dictatorship)*, Propyläen, Berlin 2007.

[384] On the issue of dismantling the diplomatic service of the GDR, see the interesting observations of Claus J. Duisberg, who was in charge of the operation. Apart from strictly political reasons (the staff of the ministry of foreign affairs included especially trusted party members), he mentions fundamental differences in civil servants' education between the GDR and the FRG, and the resistance of Hans-Dietrich Genscher himself who was, as a matter of principle, against employing former GDR staff at the federal ministry of foreign affairs. Claus J. Duisberg, *Das Deutsche Jahr...*, op. cit., pp. 328–334.

[385] Hans Ehlert, *Von der 'Wende'...*, op. cit., pp. 53–60.

[386] In 2009, the media revealed that former *Stasi* officers were personal bodyguards of Chancellor Angela Merkel, which begged questions about the efficacy of the activities meant to purge state institutions of such people. Knabe indicated that in many cases the law banning Honecker's security police officers from holding positions in state administration was a dead letter. Hubertus Knabe, *Honeckers Erbe...*, op. cit., pp. 175ff.

[387] Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., p. 343.

[388] *Ibid.*, p. 346.

[389] *Ibid.*, pp. 346–347.

[390] On inadequate legal solutions as to compensation for communist crimes in Polish literature, see Reiner Eckert, “Dekomunisierung und Lustration in der ehemaligen DDR” (“Decomunization and Lustration in the Former GDR”), [in:] Józef Fiszer, Jerzy Holzer (eds), *Przemiany w Polsce i NRD po 1989 (Transformations in Poland and the GDR after 1989)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 1996, pp. 41–42.

[391] Hubertus Knabe, *Honeckers Erben...*, op. cit., pp. 154–175. In a similar vein, see: Gareth Dale, “A Very Orderly Retreat’: Democratic Transition in East Germany, 1989–90”, *Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 14(1), pp. 22–23.

[392] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., p. 68.

[393] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[394] Some experts refer today to a ‘drama of a monetary union’. According to Müller, this scenario of shifting to the market economy cost the new federal states a 40 per cent drop in GDP in the years 1989–1991, which, according to him, has no equivalent in the other post-communist countries in transition. Uwe Müller, *Supergau Deutsche...*, op. cit., pp. 44 and 83.

[395] According to Gerhard A. Ritter, the loss of Soviet market only triggered the loss of nearly 1 million of the workplaces on the territory of the new federal states. Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., p. 110. More on the economic conditions of the collapse of the East German export to the USSR: Ralf Ahrens, *Aussenwirtschaft, in der Schuldenfalle*, op. cit., p. 111–112.

[396] Uwe Müller, *Supergau Deutsche...*, op. cit., p. 40; Andreas Rodder, *Deutschland einig...*, op. cit., pp. 306–307.

[397] The privatisation context had its impact too. Because of the huge debts of the privatised enterprises, the transitional Privatisation Agency (*Treuhandanstalt*) often took part in debt cancellation operations at the expense of the taxpayer. In effect, as Görtemaker points out, for each Deutsche mark transferred to the accounts of the office from the entities purchasing the privatised property there were two or three marks, which the office had to earmark for the repayment of debt in order to find a willing investor. Manfred Görtemaker, *Beginn der deutschen...*, op. cit., p. 67. This general thesis seems to be further confirmed by G. A. Ritter, who points out that the general income obtained by the German state from privatisation of state-owned companies in the former GDR was far below the expected amount; if in October 1990 the potential profits which were to be generated by the privatisation schemes were assessed at 600 billion Deutsche marks, in practice the German Treasury received no more than 230 billion. Gerhard A. Ritter, “Die Kosten der Einheit. Eine Bilanz”, [in] Klaus-Dietmar Henke (ed.), *Revolution und Vereinigung 1989/90...*, op. cit., p. 543.

[398] With regard to the first factor, it is enough to point out that from the beginning of 1993, at the latest, Germany went into a recession, and the weak performance of the contracting economy was not a beneficial factor for a quick recovery either. With regard to the second one, the story is more complex. Today it is rather obvious that at the beginning of the 1990s German public administration was unaware of all of the complications and challenges, which it was facing. In effect, the decision-makers failed to take into account the lack of compatibility between the two systems that were in place in the two German states, and also the social effects of that, i.e. the profound changes in the mentality of those living in the new federal states, which had taken place during the 40 years of the brutal dictatorship. According to Ritter, in 1990 a sizeable

part of the German government was convinced that in fact those problems should not be overestimated and that a second 'economic miracle' (*Wirtschaftswunder*), similar to the one which took place in West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s after the adoption of Erhard's reform package, was still within reach. Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., pp. 12–13.

[399] The topic of demographic development is addressed further below.

[400] According to Müller, the official data is not true to life. Due to early retirement, absence of benefit rights or solely part-time work, in 2005 close to 30 per cent of the citizens of the new federal states were jobless. Müller did not include here nearly 300,000 residents living near the former Bonn republic who commuted to work in the former West Germany. Uwe Müller, *Supergau Deutsche...*, op. cit., p. 101.

[401] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., p. 313.

[402] Uwe Müller, *Supergau Deutsche...*, op. cit., pp. 22, 32–33. See also his comments on the calculation methodology (note 4, p. 281).

[403] Werner Smolny and Matthias Kirbach, "Wage differentials between East and West Germany Are they related to the location or to the people?", available at: [https://www.uni-ulm.de/fileadmin/website\\_uni\\_ulm/mawi.inst.150/research/wd2010.pdf](https://www.uni-ulm.de/fileadmin/website_uni_ulm/mawi.inst.150/research/wd2010.pdf) (last accessed on 13.04.2019). It seems rather unpalatable, that this discrepancy diminished in a radical manner during the last decade: cf. Jan Kluge Michael Weber, "Decomposing the German East-West wage gap", *Ifo Working Paper* No. 205, p. 2, available at: <https://www.cesifo-group.de/DocDL/wp-2015-205-kluge-weber-wage-gap.pdf> (last accessed on 13.04.2019). According to the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt) in 2016 this gap was reduced to 20 per cent (information after *Pressemitteilung Nr. 376 vom 1. Oktober 2018*), available at: [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2018/10/PD18\\_376\\_122.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2018/10/PD18_376_122.html) (last accessed on 13.04.2019).

[404] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., p. 548.

[405] Steffen Kröhnert, Franziska Medicus, Reiner Klingholz, *Die demographische Lage der Nation: Wie zukunftsfähig sind Deutschlands Regionen? Daten, Fakten, Analysen (The Nation's Demographic Situation: How Sustainable are Germany's Regions? Data, Facts, Analyses)*, Berlin-Institut für Bevölkerung und Entwicklung (Berlin Institute for Population and Development), Berlin 2006, pp. 23–25, 44–45. For the summary of the report in English, see: <https://www.berlin-institut.org/?id=729> (last accessed on 19.01.2020).

[406] Incidentally, as early as the beginning of the 1990s, some indicated that these steep labour costs caused most investments (including those from the FRG) to bypass the former GDR and instead they were made in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, frequently Poland. Uwe Müller, *Supergau Deutsche...*, op. cit., pp. 219–223.

[407] Andreas Staab, *National Identity...*, op. cit., pp. 74, 84–85.

[408] *Ibid.*, pp. 161–171.

[409] Claus J. Duisberg, *Das Deutsche Jahr...*, op. cit., pp. 319–320; Andreas Staab, *National Identity...*, op. cit., p. 74.

[410] The studies in the 1990s indicated unequivocally that close to half of the respondents were unable to answer a question regarding their party preferences, and all the major parties in West Germany (the CDU, the SPD, the FDP, and the Green Party) were able to get no more than 44 per cent of the vote. Andreas Staab, *National Identity...*, op. cit., p. 75.

[411] Wojciech Pięciak, *Jak obalono...*, op. cit., pp. 92–96.

[412] *Ibid.*, p. 15. See also: Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit ...*, op. cit., p. 106.

[413] In this context, however, it is harder to understand why after the incorporation of the GDR Kohl managed to win the election as chancellor, twice. It seems that the relative advantage of his party in the Bundestag election was, despite the aforementioned factors, closely connected to the relative satisfaction of citizens of the former GDR (who assessed the state of the country as bad in surveys but believed that their personal situation was good!) and with the dropping curve of the negative migration balance between the 'old' FRG and the former GDR. Therefore, as long as there was a hope of implementing Kohl's electoral pledges, active twenty-year-olds of the 'Berlin generation' were ready to stay and tried to forge their paths in their hometowns, even if sometimes as the unemployed. See: Helmut Fehr, "Aufbau der Zivilen Gesellschaft in Ostdeutschland seit 1989" ("Development of civil society in East Germany since 1989"), [in:] Józef Fiszer, Jerzy Holzer (eds), *Przemiany w Polsce i NRD...*, op. cit., pp. 17–33. See also Ritter's interesting observations on the problems of trade unionists to find new candidate for its members, Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., p. 310.

[414] Neither Angela Merkel, nor Matthias Platzeck (Minister President of Brandenburg from 2002 to 2013, and Chairman of the SPD in 2005–2006) can be described as persons who had been active in the GDR opposition.

[415] Thus was totally ruined the authority of, for example, Robert Havemann. Upon the publication of the contents of his files, it turned out that in the 1950s and 1960s this eminent chemist and at that time an SED Central Committee member had denounced his colleagues and the *Stasi* had followed up on his tips (see e.g. <https://www.havemann-gesellschaft.de/ueber-uns/robert-havemann-namensgeber-und-mehr/biographie-robert-havemann/#1950>). Other people who in the last decade of the Honecker regime took the side of the opposition but had previously been on the lists of secret informants or people connected with the *Stasi* included writers Christa Wolf, Monika Maron, and Heiner Müller. See e.g.: Arno Polzin, *Der Wandel Robert Havemanns vom Inoffiziellen Mitarbeiter zum Dis-sidenten im Spiegel der MfS-Akten* (BF informiert 26/2005), available at: <http://www.nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0292-97839421306774> (see notably pp. 47–48).

[416] For example, Peter Michael Diestel, the Head of the Interior Ministry of the Land Brandenburg stated in 1992, that c. ¼ of higher rank Lutheran clergy served as *Stasi* agents or they were used on other basis as valid sources of information for the MfS. Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p.219. As shocking for the public opinion this statement could have been, still research conducted in later years seems to suggest that these revelations were highly exaggerated (id. p. 221).

[417] That was e.g. the case of Lothar De Maizière, who was allegedly a *Stasi* informant. However even if he stepped down in 1991 from all his functions, further proceedings (completed not earlier than in 2008) came to the conclusion that on the basis of the available archives the answer to the question whether he was an MfS operative or not is simply impossible. Also, the Manfred Stolpe's case was never totally clarified; see: Rudolf Mau *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p. 221, who opines that Stolpe was not an MfS operative, even if his contacts with authorities (and *Stasi*) were – indeed – rather close.

[418] Rudolf Mau, *Der Protestantismus im Osten...*, op. cit., p.223.

[419] Hubertus Knabe, *Honeckers Erben...*, op. cit., pp. 179–237.

[420] Robin Alexander, "Linken-Politiker erklärt seine DDR-Interpretation," ("Left-wing Politician Explains his GDR Interpretation") *Die Welt*, 27.09.2007, available at: <https://www.welt.de/>

politik/article3288289/Linken-Politiker-erklaert-seine-DDR-Interpretation.html (last accessed on 18.07.2018).

[421] Ler/ddp, “Lafontaine schaltet sich in Unrechts-Diskussion ein” (“Lafontaine Intervenes in the Wrongful Discussion”), *Der Spiegel*, 2.03.2007.

[422] See the personal website of Kerstin Kaiser, [http://www.kerstin-kaiser.eu/persoendlich/meine\\_vergangenheit/](http://www.kerstin-kaiser.eu/persoendlich/meine_vergangenheit/) (last accessed on 18.07.2018).

[423] Martin Lutz, “Stasi – verharmlost, verdrängt und vergessen” (“The Stasi – Trivialized, Suppressed and Forgotten”), *Die Welt*, 5.03.2009, available at <https://www.welt.de/politik/article3325454/Stasi-verharmlost-verdraengt-und-vergessen.html> (last accessed on 18.07.2018).

[424] “Jeder Fünfte will die Mauer wieder haben” (“Every Fifth Person Wants the Wall Back”), data after *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17.05.2010, available at: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/umfrage-zur-wiedervereinigung-jeder-fuenfte-will-die-mauer-wieder-haben-1.320918>.

[425] “Für viele Ostdeutsche war DDR kein Unrechtsstaat” (“For Many East Germans, the GDR Was Not a State of Injustice”), *Die Welt*, 16.03.2009, available at: <https://www.welt.de/politik/article3384888/Fuer-viele-Ostdeutsche-war-DDR-kein-Unrechtsstaat.html> (last accessed on 18.07.2018).

[426] Information after: *Jeder Fünfte...*, op. cit.

[427] “Nur jeder dritte Deutsche weiß, wann die Mauer fiel” (“Only Every Third German Knows When the Wall Fell”), *Stern*, 3.12.2008, available at: <http://www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/stern-geschichtstest-nur-jeder-dritte-weiss-wann-die-mauer-fiel-647704.html> (last accessed on 18.07.2018).

[428] Monika Deutz-Schroeder, Klaus Schroeder, *Soziales Paradies oder Stasi-Staat? Das DDR-Bild von Schülern – ein Ost-West-Vergleich (Social Paradise or the Stasi State? The GDR Picture of Students – an East-West Comparison)*, Vögel, Ernst GmbH., Munich 2008.

[429] Monika Deutz-Schroeder and Klaus Schroeder, “In der DDR gab es keinen Anlass zu protestieren” (“There was no reason to protest in the GDR”), *Berliner Morgenpost*, 10.09.2008, available at <https://www.morgenpost.de/politik/article104562902/In-der-DDR-gab-es-keinen-Anlass-zu-protestieren.html> (last accessed on 18.07.2018).

[430] Ibid.

[431] Thus, e.g. Gareth Dale lamented that the final outcome of the Kohl's and other actors involved in the political process of the incorporation was plagued by serious mistakes. The same author opines that – at the end of the day – the transformation brought to inhabitants of the former GDR's the status of second class-citizens (“*Unemployment, neoliberalism and second class citizenship; these were not the goals of 1989, and it's small wonder that disillusionment set in so swiftly*”) (cf. Gareth Dale, *The East German Revolution of 1989...*, op. cit., p. 230). For Dale, the economic outcome of the reforms introduced after 1990 is also unpersuasive. He argues that the economic growth in the 1990s was not particularly impressive, neither in the GDR nor in other former socialist countries. And even if some of them managed to set up some export-oriented companies, those products were rather not technologically advanced (he calls this process “export primitivisation”). Cf. Gareth Dale, *Between State, Capitalism and Globalisation: The Collapse of the East German Economy*, Peter Lang, Bern 2004, pp. 341–342. Even if he accepts that the final effect of the economic transformation has been geographically differentiated, still, his overall assessment of the transformation in Germany is rather poor. Ibid., p. 342.

[432] *Annual Report of the Federal Government on the Status of German Unity in 2016*, Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi), September 2016, p. 7. The report is available at: [https://www.beauftragter-neue-laender.de/BNL/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/Publikationen/Berichte/jahresbericht\\_en\\_2016.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=3](https://www.beauftragter-neue-laender.de/BNL/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/Publikationen/Berichte/jahresbericht_en_2016.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3) (further quoted as *Annual Report 2016*).

[433] *Annual Report of the Federal Government on the Status of German Unity in 2018*, which states clearly that the ultimate goal set out by Chancellor Merkel's government is the full equalisation of the standards of living all across Germany. Cf. *Annual Report of the Federal Government on the Status of German Unity 2018*, Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, Berlin, August 2018, p.10. [https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/jahresbericht-zum-stand-der-deutschen-einheit-2018.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=3](https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/jahresbericht-zum-stand-der-deutschen-einheit-2018.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3) (last accessed on 15.04.2019, hereinafter quoted as *Annual Report 2018*).

[434] *Ibid.*

[435] Manuel Slupina, Susanne Dähler, Lena Reibstein, Julia Amberger, Frederik Sixtus, Jennifer Grunwald, Reiner Klingholz, *Die demografische Lage der Nation. Wie zukunftsfähig Deutschlands Regionen sind (The Nation's Demographic. How Sustainable Are Germany's Regions)*, Berlin-Institut für Bevölkerung und Entwicklung (April 2019), p. 8.

[436] *Annual Report 2018*, op. cit., p. 18.

[437] *Ibid.*, p.9.

[438] All information on Bidenkopf and Kaufmann quoted after: Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 33–34.

[439] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., pp. 13–14, 134. No doubt, external factors such as the progress of globalisation played a role in this process which was not negligible (id. pp. 134 and 352).

[440] *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

[441] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Die Kosten der Einheit*, op. cit., p. 544.

[442] *Ibid.*, p. 131.

[443] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

[444] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., pp. 298, 392, 406 (arguing that the institutional blockade, if prolonged, may bring, in the longer term, a risk of the country losing its international position). This is not to say that Kohl did not want to discuss those problems. But the logic of the political system established in Germany after 1990 prevented him from introducing substantial reforms in this area (id. pp. 352–356). In a similar vein, cf. Andreas Rödder, who correctly observed that the national debt of Germany as a whole more than doubled compared to its level in 1989, up from DM 929 billion to DM 2125 billion in 1996. According to the same author, the way the incorporation of the GDR proceeded in the years 1989–1990 had a disastrous impact for the FRG in the decades to come, as it resulted in halting the key reforms, including those of the social welfare and pension systems, which might have helped the Federal Republic of Germany cope with the challenges of globalization (Andreas Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland...*, op. cit., pp. 360–365).

[445] This view remains true, even if one takes into a due account reforms introduced under Gerhard Schröder era: it is more than noteworthy that although the SPD-Green Party coalition ruling in Germany in the years 1998–2005 carried out some changes, getting rid of the excesses of the welfare state, those were made across the country and did not include transfers to the former

GDR. The same is true of austerity measures policy advocated by Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble: even if one cannot deny that those measures contributed largely the quick recovery of the FRG after the 2008 financial crisis, the answer if, and, when so, to what extent – those measures have efficiently prepared the country for the years to come, remains to be seen. Cf. Marcel Fratzscher, *The Germany Illusion: Between Economic Euphoria and Despair*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY 2018; Oliver Nachtwey, *Germany's Hidden Crisis. Social Decline in the Heart of Europe*, Verso, London 2018; Ashoka Mody, "Germany's Economy Will Be Europe's Problem", 7 December 2018, available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2018-12-07/germany-s-economy-will-be-europe-s-problem> (last accessed on 13.04.2019). See also: Johanna Treeck, "Germans' misplaced faith in economic strength. Structural problems facing the country are a non-issue in this election", available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-election-2017-head-to-the-polls-feeling-too-smug-about-economy/>.

[446] See: supra nota 318. Cf. however, the *Annual Report 2018*, which offers a bit more positive picture of the results achieved during the years of unity, stating inter alia that, In 2017, the economic strength (GDP per capita) reached 73.2% of the level in western Germany, thereby largely remaining at the level for the preceding year. The differences have reduced by 4.2 percentage points over the last ten years. Cf. *Annual Report 2018*, op. cit., pp. 16 and 18.

[447] *Annual Report 2016*..., op. cit., p. 8.

[448] Ibid.

[449] The *Annual Report 2018* id. It should be also noted that the official data seems to be the point of the debate. Thus, according to a recent study commissioned by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, there is no question of the complete equalisation of standards of living between east and west, as a simple comparison of salaries indicates that the average salary in the new federal states is some 25 per cent lower than that paid in the other parts of Germany. "Ostdeutschland lohnt sich noch immer nicht" ("East Germany is still not worth it"), *FAZ*, 19.02.2017, available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/beruf-chance/recht-und-gehalt/gehaelter-ostdeutschland-lohnt-sich-noch-immer-nicht-14884625.html> (last accessed on 18.07.2018).

[450] Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit*..., op. cit., p. 72.

[451] According to recent polls, AfD is credited with c. 12–13 per cent of intentions of votes, if the general elections took place today, *Die Linke* – c. 9 per cent respectively.

[452] Thus, for example, it is more than debatable whether – keeping in mind the pace of the ongoing process of population ageing, and the low fertility rates – the German economy (and German society as well) can totally refrain from accepting immigrant workers arriving from non-EU countries. Still, the strong opposition against foreign migrants, especially articulated by the AfD, coupled with well founded concerns that if the programme of mass migration continues, then one day this party could replace the CDU as the most popular political force in the FRG. These concerns effectively influenced the original political attitude of Chancellor Merkel, and today the Federal Government represents a much more cautious approach to questions of migration. It remains to be seen what will be the real impact of extremist forces on the final outcome of the ongoing discussions on skyrocketing prices of flat rents (when some segments of public opinion demands the expropriations of the actual owners of flats in the biggest cities so that to prevent the rates from further increases), although, to be sure, this idea can find moderate support in the SPD and in the Greens Party as well (cf. Sabine Beikler, "Berliner Linke will Enteignen-Volksentscheid unterstützen" ("Berlin's Left Wants to Support Referendum"), *Tagespiegel*, 12.12.2018.

[453] *Annual Report 2018*, op. cit., p. 18. Notably, it is interesting that even if the year 2018 was the last one, when so called “solidarity surcharge” was collected (specific tax paid by the inhabitants of the former FRG, the income from which was earmarked to meet the cost of the GDR reconstruction), still, according to the same document, this sources was to be replaced by some new more flexible instruments focusing more on regional development (id., p. 11).

[454] *Annual Report 2018*, op. cit., p. 113; quotation after the Working group “Volkswirtschaftliche Gesamtrechnungen der Länder“ (“National Accounts of the *Länder*”); calculations of the Federal Statistical Office as at August 2017/February 2018.

[455] See e.g.: Joachim Ragnitz, “Eine wirtschaftspolitische Agenda für die ostdeutschen Länder, Aktuelle Forschungsergebnisse“ (“An Economic Policy Agenda for the East German *Länder*, Current Research Results”), *ifo Dresden berichtet* 4/2016, p. 20; Karl Brenke, “Eastern Germany Still Playing Economy Catch-Up”, *DIW Economic Bulletin* 11.2014, pp. 6–8. See also: *Annual Report...*, op. cit., p. 14 (regarding the challenge posed for the Eastern regions of Germany by the outflow to the West of the skilled and talented young people).

[456] TSO, “Frauenmangel im Osten“ (“Lack of Women in the East”), *Die Zeit*, 31.05.2007, available at: <http://www.zeit.de/online/2007/22/abwanderung-ostdeutschland> (last accessed on 18.07.2018). See also: “In Ostdeutschland wird der Männerüberschuss zum Problem“ (“The Surplus of Men Becomes a Problem in East Germany”), 11.01.2017 the article available at: [https://www.focus.de/finanzen/news/frustration-und-perspektivlosigkeit-in-ostdeutschland-wird-der-maennerueberschuss-zum-problem\\_id\\_6479564.html](https://www.focus.de/finanzen/news/frustration-und-perspektivlosigkeit-in-ostdeutschland-wird-der-maennerueberschuss-zum-problem_id_6479564.html) (last accessed on 15.04.2019) This is why even if German statistics recorded a slight increase of the fertility rate within the new *Länder* (which according to recent data attained c. 1.6 per woman), still the demographers are of the opinion that this increase will not be able to influence significantly the general trends of population decline, which since the collapse of the GDR have plagued especially rural communities of the eastern Germany. The simple substitution of elder generations on the labour market is excluded mainly because the generation born after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, is less numerous than the generation born during the Honecker era, so it is rather unreasonable to expect that smaller cohorts of the young could radically improve the demographical situation of all the country. Manuel Slupina et. al., *Demografische Lage der Nation...*, op. cit., pp. 10, 14.

[457] The second factor was pointed out by the *Annual Report 2016* (op. cit., pp. 10–11), whose authors also stated that, “The rise in xenophobic and right-wing extremist attacks in recent years poses a threat to this important process and to social peace in eastern Germany. At the same time, the opportunities that migration brings with it might very well be lost in areas that are particularly in need of new people due to demographic developments”, pp. 14 and 65–66. Keeping in mind the recent so-called “Chemnitz protests”, this opinion might not have been totally exaggerated.

[458] *Mezzogiorno* – a traditional term used in Italy to define the less developed South of the country, which has been financially supported by subsidies from the government in Rome. The system, against the expectations of the Christian democrats from the mid-1940s, did not contribute to the development of the regions and additionally proved corruption-prone and, in a way, paved the way for the infamous organised crime organisations such as the *Cosa Nostra* and the *Camorra* to intercept huge amounts of money. Uwe Müller, *Supergau Deutsche...*, op. cit., pp. 17–27.

[459] Uwe Müller, *Supergau Deutsche...*, op. cit., pp. 254–260. This opinion is further corroborated by the recent demographic report in the light of which, most of the regions which in the foreseeable future will be affected with sharp decline of the populations are not the ones in the east,

but – conversely to conventional wisdom – those in the west of the country. Cf. Manuel Slupina et. al., *Demografische Lage der Nation...*, op. cit., p. 9.

[460] In this vein: Ritter drew the attention that until the 1990s, German politics was not interested at all to open any debate on this topic. Gerhard A. Ritter, *Der Preis der deutschen Einheit...*, op. cit., p. 141.

[461] In this context, we should note comments by Müller, who – when comparing statements made by GDR dignitaries against those by Kohl and Schröder – noticed a strange *iunctim* in the terminology used in the description of the GDR's reality before and after 1990. It consisted, first and foremost, in an excessively optimistic account of the current situation (practically all German politicians, when referring to the former GDR, begin their statements by saying 'We have achieved a lot and will do more', that the difficulties are temporary and the problems will surely be sorted out, even though the legal and economic tools used did not facilitate but actually hampered the alignment of the standards of living among the federal states) (Uwe Müller, *Supergau Deutsche...*, op. cit., pp. 31–32).

[462] This view is corroborated by *Annual Report 2018*, op. cit. The objective pursued by the Federal Government is therefore to compensate for the structural disadvantages of individual regions throughout Germany in order to create equal living conditions everywhere (p. 10).



Paweł Ukielski

# Czechoslovakia – The System’s Implosion

## Czechoslovak ‘Normalisation’ 1968–1989

When Gorbachev came to power in the USSR, Czechoslovakia was one of the most dogmatic countries of the Soviet Bloc. The country was governed by a group of ‘normalisers’ who had come to power as a consequence of the military intervention of the countries from the Warsaw Pact which had suppressed the Prague Spring in 1968. The suppression and rejection of all of the reforms from 1968, purges in the party and persecution of the opposition and the church: all of that was the result of the activity of hardliners in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa* – KSČ) headed by its First Secretary, Gustáv Husák. His closest collaborators included such people as the authors of the infamous letter appealing to the Soviets for intervention in August 1968, Vasil’ Biľak and Alois Indra, who were members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the KSČ.

Particularly surprising was the fact that people such as Husák, who had been imprisoned by the communist authorities in the 1950s for his ‘bourgeois nationalist views’, who had been an ardent critic of Antonín Novotný’s government, and a declared supporter of reforms, also belonged to that group. At the time of the Prague Spring, Husák had closely co-operated with Alexander Dubček and even on his return from negotiations in Moscow, he emphasised his loyalty to Dubček: “I will either stand by him or leave”.<sup>[1]</sup> Soon it turned out that those were empty promises. The most important thing for Husák was to gain power, even at the cost of adopting a ‘rationalist’ stand, acknowledging all Soviet expectations, and co-operating with the most adamant of party hardliners. He achieved his goals. On 17 April 1969,

he was elected as the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the KSČ and on 29 May 1975 as the president of Czechoslovakia.

'Normalisation' was introduced gradually; the consolidation of power lasted for two to three years and the 1969 transition year was crucial. At the beginning, even the highest-ranking reformers kept their positions; Josef Smrkovský ceased to be the chairman of the parliament in January 1969, and Dubček was dismissed from his post of the First Secretary of the KSČ in April (for some time he was the chairman of the federal parliament).<sup>[2]</sup> In 1969, society was still full of hope and tried to protest against the Soviet occupation and the gradual withdrawal from the reforms by the authorities. On 16 January, a student named Jan Palach committed suicide by self-immolation in Wenceslas Square (*Václavské náměstí*) in Prague. He was followed by another student, Jan Zajíc, on 25 February, and on 4 April, in Jihlava, a party member and supporter of reforms named Evžen Plocek protested in the same way against the occupation and 'normalisation'. There were several anti-Soviet demonstrations: at the end of March, when the Czech hockey team beat the Soviet Union 4:3 during the World Championship; and on 21 August to commemorate the anniversary of the Warsaw Pact intervention. The demonstrations seen at that time in Prague, Bratislava and many other cities were the last big protests by society until 1988.

However, the situation changed substantially during the year that followed the Warsaw Pact intervention. While in August 1968 the supporters of reforms could count on the support of the police and army, a year later the security apparatus had already been entirely 'consolidated': it fought against protesters and brutally suppressed them.<sup>[3]</sup> That event was a catalyst, which accelerated the introduction of the regime of 'normalisation'.<sup>[4]</sup> As early as 22 August 1969, the Presidium of the Federal Assembly adopted Law-Decree No. 99 and effectively introduced state of emergency in the country. The document was signed by the Chairman of the Parliament (Dubček), President Ludvík Svoboda, and Prime Minister Oldřich Černík. As Dubček himself bitterly concluded, "the obituary of the Prague Spring was signed by three people whose names were most closely connected with it."<sup>[5]</sup>

The Czechoslovak 'normalisation' was called with bitter irony "Stalinism with a human face." Thus, it referred to the famous slogan of the reformers from the time of the Prague Spring, who wanted 'socialism with a human face'.

That slogan was particularly badly received in the Kremlin, as it implied that the system had been 'inhuman' before. The purges begun during the period of 'power consolidation' did not involve only those who held the highest positions in the party and the state, but reached the rank and file of the party as well. In January 1970, an exchange of party membership cards was carried out, which was also supposed to verify the attitudes of their holders, and thus purge from the KSČ all of the 'hostile, revisionist and rightist elements'.<sup>[6]</sup> This operation in practice prevented any faction conflicts within the party and in the 1970s and 1980s no 'reform wing' appeared, unlike in Poland and Hungary. In 1971, the official position of the 'normalised' party was presented in "Lessons of crisis development in party and society" in which an action programme adopted in April 1968 was criticized and 'rightist and anti-socialist' forces were named and condemned.<sup>[7]</sup>

As Mary Heimann puts it: "The policy known as 'Normalization' split KSČ into what was in effect two Communist parties: the official Communist Party, consisting of those members who remained in power and were treated to all the usual rewards for obedience; and a kind of virtual or shadow Communist Party – made up of the purged, outlawed and exiled – whose disappointed, indignant and resentful members formed the core of the only visible dissent, at home or abroad, to protest aloud against the Husák regime."<sup>[8]</sup>

The 'normalisation' was mostly directed against groups of artists and intelligentsia. Many of them emigrated to escape repressions; several hundred thousand people, including eminent artists, left the country during that time. All of those who had supported the course of reform proposed by Dubček, both within and outside the party, were punished for their activity, and stripped of numerous civil rights.

Many academics, scientists, and artists were deprived of the opportunity to carry out normal work and research. Often, in order to earn their living they took up physical work. As Timothy Garton Ash wrote "Philosophers, lawyers, journalists became bricklayers, waiters, clerks. They joined an existing circle of the damned: Christians and non-communists whose degradation began with the Communist coup in 1948. And they are still being joined by others. That window cleaner over there: His thesis was on Wittgenstein. Ask your waiter about Kafka: before his trial he lectured

on *The Trial*. Yes, the night watchman is reading Aristotle. Your coal will be delivered by an ordained priest of the Czech brethren. Kiss the milkman's ring: He is your bishop."<sup>[9]</sup>

The intensified persecution also affected the Church. Stalinist reprisals against the clergy and believers at the start of the 1950s in Czechoslovakia had been some of the most severe in the entire Communist Bloc. Extremely restrictive legislation had been adopted, which subordinated the Church to the state; female and male religious orders had been abolished. Numerous priests and bishops were sentenced to many years in prison and others were deprived of the right to minister; they had to work in industrial enterprises, where they often did manual labour.<sup>[10]</sup> The relief brought by the Prague Spring was short and Husák adopted new methods of fighting the Church: "the party will not tolerate any attempts to mix religion with politics (...) no religious propaganda will be allowed"<sup>[11]</sup> Thus he made it clear that actually all evangelisation activity would be considered to be religious propaganda. Simultaneously, the 'normalisers' tried to break down the unity of the Church by establishing pro-regime organisations, such as the '*Pacem in Terris*' Movement of Catholic Clergy led by Fr. Josef Plojhar. Under the circumstances, most religious initiatives, just like congregations, went underground again to conduct the clandestine activity known as the 'secret church'.<sup>[12]</sup>

On the other hand, opportunists noticed some possibilities for rapid social promotion, i.e. careerists who praised mediocrity as the highest virtue and for whom 'normalisation' was the only chance to climb the career ladder. People who decided to support the regime actively could count on entering the group of the 'privileged', created by the authorities in line with the motto 'divide and rule'. Thus, according to Ash "The Czech nation has been stood on its head [...] The most independent, intelligent and best are at the bottom; the worst, stupidest and most servile, at the top".<sup>[13]</sup>

The majority of society found themselves between the group of the privileged and those deprived of rights. Millions of Czechs and Slovaks, after an initial period of passive resistance against the Soviet occupation, and the transformations in internal policy, had to find themselves a place in the new situation. The way to do that was to escape into privacy, which was actually fostered by 'normalisers'. A peculiar social contract was struck,

according to which “the people were supposed to refrain from political demonstrations. In return, the state would not interfere in private matters, and provide some modest property, including a Škoda automobile, a summer house and a TV set, and holidays on the Black sea.”<sup>[14]</sup>

The difference between Kádár’s Hungary and Husák’s Czechoslovakia was such that the Hungarian First Secretary believed in the rule ‘who is not against us, is with us’, whereas the Czechoslovak leader had another credo: ‘who is not with us, is against us’.<sup>[15]</sup>

Ash described this deal very aptly, dubbing the situation in Czechoslovakia as ‘forgetting’: “Forget 1968. Forget your democratic tradition. Forget you were once citizens with rights and duties. Forget politics. In return we will give you a comfortable, safe life. There’ll be plenty of food in the shops and cheap beer in the pubs. You may afford a car and even a little country – and you won’t have to work competitively. We don’t ask you to believe in us or our fatuous ideology. By all means listen to the Voice of America and watch Austrian television (*sotto voce*: So do we). All we ask is that you will outwardly and publicly conform: join in the ritual ‘elections’, vote the prescribed way in the ‘trade union’ meetings, enroll your children in the ‘socialist’ youth organisation. Keep your mind to yourself.”<sup>[16]</sup>

This Czech version of ‘goulash socialism’ was facilitated by the improvement of living conditions in society. The ‘normalisers’ realised that without a wider social support they could not afford to conduct any activities which would worsen the living conditions. At the end of 1969, the economic commission of the Central Committee of the KSC had already set itself the following goals: increasing supplies in shops; and improving economic stability, standards of living and social welfare. As was emphasised, internal trade was ‘the most politically sensitive issue of the economic development’.<sup>[17]</sup>

Those goals were pursued, despite the abandoning of the reform course, by returning to central planning and administration, accompanied by purges in executive positions. Initially, the above targets were achieved: in the years 1969–1975, salaries increased, as did consumption, and the material situation of pensioners and young married couples improved. However, soon economic reserves ran out and stagnation settled in. Anyway, in comparison to other countries in the Eastern Bloc, Czechoslovakia was in a relatively good economic condition. There was a popular joke in Poland in the late

1970s, when ration books were introduced, about a dog, which crossed the Polish-Czechoslovak border several times during the day. When asked about the reasons for that behaviour, it answered that it went to Czechoslovakia to eat and to Poland to bark.

The 'normalisers' managed to achieve a vital goal. The average inhabitant of Czechoslovakia focused his or her life goals on obtaining a flat in a *Panelak* (a block of flats constructed from pre-fabricated panels), a weekend country house and a Škoda that would drive him to that country house on Friday afternoons, where he could sit quietly in the garden, chat with friends and drink beer or *Kofola*.<sup>[18]</sup>

A characteristic feature of the Czech lifestyle from the period of 'normalisation' were the 'cottage houses', a sociological phenomenon which stemmed from the need to have a place in which one could feel free, and make oneself at home. A house for the weekend was exactly that kind of place: "at a *chata* – as opposed to at work, school, or university – no one would use the term 'comrade' except as a joke."<sup>[19]</sup> The scale of the phenomenon was so large that in 1988, a quarter of Czechoslovak citizens had their own 'cottage houses'.<sup>[20]</sup>

In his essay *The Power of the Powerless* (*Moc bezmocných*), Václav Havel very aptly described the approach of the typical inhabitant of Czechoslovakia in the time of 'normalisation'. He used a parable about the manager of a fruit-and-vegetable shop. The manager put a slogan on the shop window, which read: "Workers of the world, unite!" He did so not to express his views, but because that had been done for years, so if he had not done it, he could have got into trouble, and that slogan would let him live in peace. The slogan is a sign; an encrypted but quite clear message. It could be put in the following way: "I, the greengrocer XY, live here and I know what I must do. I behave in the manner expected of me. I can be depended upon and am beyond reproach. I am obedient and therefore I have the right to be left in peace."<sup>[21]</sup> However, Havel noted that the manager would not be so indifferent if he was asked to place a slogan on the shop window, which would read 'I am afraid and therefore unquestioningly obedient', although that one would really convey the meaning of the appeal to the 'Workers of the World'. In this perception, the ideology gave an alibi; it justified low motives by high ideals.

In the atmosphere of widespread resignation and withdrawal, it was extremely difficult to carry out opposition activities. Such initiatives were

usually undertaken by those who had nothing to lose, as they belonged to the group of the 'underprivileged citizens' anyway. They were intellectuals, artists and other circles not connected with the communist party. On the other hand, they also included the communist reformers who had been removed from the party. Opposition groups were rather small, particularly at the onset of 'normalisation', and had little social impact, which also was a consequence of the strict policy of the authorities against them. During the system consolidation, repressions were most widespread and brutal. That was done deliberately, to intimidate society and break any resistance. The election held in the autumn of 1971 and its calm course, as well as the mass voter turnout, convinced the 'normalisers' that the opposition had very little influence on Czechs and Slovaks.<sup>[22]</sup>

Only the signing of Charter 77 had a bigger social impact. The direct reason for the signing of that document was the imprisonment and trial of the members of the rock group *Plastic People of the Universe*.

However, the action taken by the signatories of Charter 77 should be considered in a wider context. In 1975, the Final Act of the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe was signed, which safeguarded respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. This was shortly after the consolidation of power by Husák (he became president in May 1975, replacing Ludvík Svoboda) and the full implementation of the 'normalisation' process. That gave him enough strength to follow the Soviets and sign the Helsinki Final Act, which was then ratified by Czechoslovakia the following year.<sup>[23]</sup> The signatories of Charter 77, which was dated on 1 January, presented in some western media on 6 January and officially proclaimed in the Voice of America radio station on 7 January 1977,<sup>[24]</sup> appealed to the provisions of that Act. In addition, the setting up of the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR) in Poland in September 1976 had had some impact on the Czech opposition members drawing up the Charter. The first advocates of the Charter included the following: former communist reformer Jiří Hájek, philosopher Jan Patočka (who died shortly afterwards as the result of long and exhausting interrogations by the security services) and playwright Václav Havel.<sup>[25]</sup>

For the last of the three, this initiative turned out to be a breakthrough in his life and public activity. Havel, the author of many 'theatre of the absurd'

plays, finally engaged in the opposition movement in 1975, when he wrote *An Open Letter to the General Secretary of the KSČ*.<sup>[26]</sup> Havel was the main author of Charter 77 (its character as an 'informal civil initiative' was proposed by Zdeněk Mlynář, and its name was suggested by Pavel Kohout), and being its spokesman, he was considered to be the opposition leader. He also became popular abroad. The aforementioned essay *The Power of the Powerless*, published in 1978, became one of the most important demonstrations of the civic movement in Central and Eastern Europe. The author very interestingly and thoroughly analyses the essence of the communist regime and ponders about possibilities of opposition activity, thus explaining the rules underlying the Charter. The subsequent surveillance of Havel by the security services, frequent arrests (he spent a total of five years in prison) and his persecution only strengthened his position, making him the unquestionable opposition leader in the 1980s and finally leading him to the presidency after the 'Velvet Revolution'.

Signing Charter 77 was an immensely difficult decision. The 'normalising' regime was extremely strong and potential signatories were aware of possible sanctions. Actress Vlasta Chramostová described the doubts she and her husband (cinematographer Stanislav Milota) had in connection with signing the document, "We were going to Prysks and we were talking about all possible dangers, about emigration and arrest. The conversation that I had with Stašek that evening in the car was one of those after which the two closest people become even closer. We felt that we were standing at a crossroads in life and we did not have too much time to think about it. We were talking and asking questions about various aspects. We thought that the worst had already happened. Both of us had been deprived of what we loved. In my case it was theatre and for Stašek it was film." Finally, the decision about signing the Charter was made. "In the 1970s and 1980s, every Christmas Eve, before noon, we used to have snails in a wine bar on the *Národní třída* (National Avenue). For years, the company had included such people as the Kohouts<sup>[27]</sup>, Zdeněk Urbánek<sup>[28]</sup>, the Pavličeks<sup>[29]</sup>, the Topols<sup>[30]</sup>, Vašek Havel with Olga, Ivan Havel<sup>[31]</sup> and his boys, the youngest Havels, who were quite small at that time. We used to give one another small gifts and toasted Christmas and New Year. Then, in 1976, we were in a festive mood as usual, but there was something more in our emotions.

We already knew that, although we had not made this decision together, all of us had already signed the Charter. I had signed the copy provided by Pavel Kohout, Stašek had signed Václav Havel's copy. Our friendship only grew stronger due to that."<sup>[32]</sup>

Charter 77 became very popular, both within Czechoslovakia and abroad. That was possible for three reasons. Firstly, it was the first spontaneous attempt to associate various ideological and intellectual trends. It engaged both communist reformers, excluded from the party after 1968, and democratic socialists, social democrats, representatives of Christian movements, as well as creative, artistic, and academic circles. Secondly, its proponents stepped out openly, emphasising the legality of their actions and referring to specific documents, which constituted the elements of the legal system of the communist Czechoslovakia. At the same time, they distanced themselves from any political activity. It was then that the basis of what was later called 'non-political politics' was established. Thirdly, the Charter became even more popular due to the activity of the authorities, who persecuted its proponents and supporters, although that effect was not intended. The decision to begin a broad campaign against the signatories was made parallel to the publication of the Charter 77, on 7 January by the Politburo members.<sup>[33]</sup>

The Charter also received support from exile organisations. The US-based Council of Free Czechoslovakia followed the preparations of the CSCE and welcomed the proclamation of Charter 77. In the following years, together with the Czechoslovak National Council of America, they tried to focus the attention of the US State Department on the situation in Czechoslovakia. On 9 October 1980, the Council supported a document published by Charter 77: "Violations of the Helsinki Accords in Czechoslovakia."<sup>[34]</sup>

The opposition movement was slightly different in the Czech and Slovak Republics. In the Czech part of the country the opposition involving intelligentsia and having a civic background was the strongest (Charter 77, the Club of Engaged Non-Party Members, the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted), whereas in Slovakia the circles gathered around the Catholic Church played the most important role in the opposition. There was also the 'clandestine church', which involved priests who had not received the state's permission to conduct liturgical activity, priests ordained in the underground and believers. This division into

the dissident-intelligentsia opposition in Czech regions and the Christian one in Slovakia actually had very deep roots, with the most important factor being the different traditions and social structures in both nations at the time of the Habsburg Monarchy and the First Republic.

Despite the considerable initial popularity of Charter 77, the role of the then opposition movement should not be overestimated. Until 1989, the Charter had been signed by almost 2,000 people, while what was referred to as the 'anti-charter', i.e. the document condemning it, was signed by several times more people within only two weeks. For two weeks after the Charter's publication *Rudé právo*, the official mouthpiece of the KSČ, published letters from artists who had signed the anti-charter; between 29 January and 12 February 1977 the newspaper published 7,250 names of personalities from culture and the stage, such as singers Karel Gott (who supported the authorities very strongly) and Helena Vondráčková, writer Bohumil Hrabal; screenwriter, writer and publicist Vladimír Mináč, and academic Rudolf Chmel.<sup>[35]</sup> Naturally, one should take into consideration Orwellian 'doublethink', which was very common in society. Many people (inwardly) agreed with the theses put forward in the Charter and the opposition against the communist authority, but officially, they supported the government. However, this 'doublethink' was proof that the policy of 'normalisation' had been successful. Czechs and Slovaks tacitly accepted the rules imposed by Husák's team and withdrew from any public activity.

Not only did the 'carrot', that is to say consumerist socialism, have some influence on such attitudes, but also the 'stick', i.e. the omnipresent political police (*Státní bezpečnost* – StB). Although its activities did not take a similar form as in the period of Stalinism, when it had terrorised society, it was still a very active tool of repression. A dozen-or-so thousand functionaries were supported by dozens of thousands of collaborators, such as agents, residents, owners of secret flats, 'trusted' individuals, or candidates for agents (in the case of the last two categories, it was not always known to what extent such 'collaboration' was even conscious or known to the individuals concerned). The methods applied were similar to those used by similar services in other countries of the region, such as arrests, night searches, overt surveillance, taking people away to forests, orders to frequently report to police stations, or destroying cars. At the time of 'normalisation', it was

mostly mental and emotional abuse; physical coercive measures were used relatively rarely. That does not mean that the most brutal methods were completely put aside: assassination was still used as a tool from time to time. Four priests and one layman died in late 1970s and 1980s in unclear circumstances, and their deaths remain unexplained.<sup>[36]</sup>

Propaganda was another very crucial 'armed wing' of the authorities (albeit not in a literal sense). Quickly no trace remained from the freedom of speech enjoyed during the time of the Prague Spring. Czech television and cinematography experienced a dramatic artistic collapse during the period of 'normalisation'. Purges in the media were extremely rapid and thorough. Since April 1969, the new team had wholly taken over the television channels, and they became a very active ideological means of influencing society.

Live broadcasts of long and tedious sessions of the KSČ or the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and other parties from the Eastern Bloc were a characteristic element of television programmes. Documentaries and news programs were made along one pattern: the events were described from the Marxist-Leninist perspective with the aim of 'presenting the constant growth in importance of the KSČ's leading role'.<sup>[37]</sup>

Television series enjoyed great popularity, attracting the viewing ratings of 80–90 per cent. A great deal of those productions concerned the problems of contemporary life, but with complete obedience to the rules of ideological correctness. The most famous of them included: *The woman behind the counter* (*Žena za pultem*), from 1977, and *Hospital at the End of the City* (*Nemocnice na kraji města*), from 1978 and 1981, which were also very popular in other countries which were 'people's democracies'.

The series *Thirty Cases of Major Zeman* (*30 případů majora Zemana*), running from 1974 to 1979, was the main propaganda tool, in which the protagonist solved 30 criminal puzzles, one each year, to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army.

Film production suffered greatly after the suppression of the Prague Spring. At the end of the 1960s, many famous directors had emigrated (including Miloš Forman, Vojtěch Jasný, and Ivan Passer); others, such as the 1966 Oscar winner Jiří Menzel, and Věra Chytilová, could not produce anything for some time. The 'normalisation' put an end to the interesting and fruitful period of the 'new wave' in Czech cinematography.<sup>[38]</sup>

Trivial crime stories or even funny but very shallow comedies became the mainstream of artistic output. However, animation was at an invariably high level, and cartoon series for children, such as *The Mole (Krtek)*, *Pat&Mat (Pat a Mat ... a je to!)*, *Robber Rumcajs (O loupežníku Rumcajsovi)* and *Fairy Tales from Moss and Ferns (Pohádky z mechu a kapradí)*, were deeply admired, both domestically and abroad, due to their unconventional sense of humour and some elements presenting the regime in a crooked mirror. In addition, films for young people, such as *Arabela*, were very popular also in other countries of the Bloc.

Writers were also affected by the suppression of artistic freedom. Although censorship was not officially reinstated, every publication had to receive permission for printing and many authors self-censored their works. Numerous writers left Czechoslovakia and started publishing abroad (*inter alia* Josef Škvorecký, Ladislav Mňačko, Milan Kundera), some of them even set up their own publishing houses, such as Škvorecký's Sixty-Eight Publishers, printing books by Czech and Slovak authors, both émigrés and those living in the country who were banned from publishing.<sup>[39]</sup>

At the forefront of official Czechoslovak literature were such people as Ladislav Štoll, the main representative of 'Zhdanovism'<sup>[40]</sup> in Czechoslovakia (his name was even used to coin the term 'Štollism', which was a counterpart of its Russian original). Many outstanding writers (such as Havel, Václav Černý, Luboš Dobrovský, Ludvík Vaculík, Milan Uhde, Milan Šimečka and Dominik Tatarka) were not allowed to publish their works. Those were printed exclusively in *samizdat*, often in typewritten copies, which circulated from one reader to another. There was also a group between the two mentioned above, namely the writers whose works appeared in small circulations, after a thorough analysis of their content. This group included such names as Bohumil Hrabal, Vladimír Neff (both of whom signed the anti-charter to be able to write officially), Ota Pavel, and the future Nobel Prize winner Jaroslav Seifert (his literary position was so strong that despite signing Charter 77 he was not banned entirely). This led to an unusual situation in which there were long queues in front of bookshops whenever a valuable book appeared.

Sport, as an area that was extremely useful to channel social emotions, played a crucial role in every 'people's democracy' country. The communist

regime in Czechoslovakia was no different, and also willingly supported sport and basked in its successes, which were abundant in the 1970s and 1980s. In ice hockey, the most popular sport in the country, the Czechoslovak team won the world championships four times (1972, 1976, 1977, and 1985), and twice those victories were made even sweeter by the fact that they beat the USSR in the grand final. The national football team also achieved success, winning the European championship in 1976 and four years later coming third in that championship. In particular, a victory over West Germany in 1976, after a penalty shoot-out and a famous goal by Antonín Panenka, triggered euphoria on the Danube and Vltava. His penalty kick became legendary thanks to the unusual manner of its execution; since then, a gently slashed ball kicked into the middle of a goal after misdirecting the goalkeeper is connected with the name of that Czech footballer.

Czech tennis was also in its prime. The names of Martina Navrátilová, who won eighteen Grand Slam tournaments, and of Ivan Lendl, who won eight, were known to sports lovers all over the world. However, the superstars of the world tennis became a problem for the communist authorities, as they decided to emigrate to the USA (Navrátilová in 1975 and Lendl in 1986), taking American citizenship after six years. Additionally, the communists frowned upon this sport because it was considered 'elitist', or 'aristocratic', so to speak, which was at odds with the official ideology of the regime. Athletics events seemed much closer in terms of class; Czech athletes, as in other countries of the Bloc (although not so commonly as in the GDR), were stuffed with illegal stimulants. The 1980s was the golden decade for 'dopers'. In Czechoslovakia, the most famous case was Jarmila Kratochvílová, a mid-distance runner whose world record from 1983 in the 800 metres remains unbroken (1.53.28). Her atypical musculature and look together with extremely fast times still raise doubts; however, illegal drug use was never proven.

'Normalisation' was not without influence on the relations between the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The Constitutional Act on establishing the federal Czechoslovakia adopted on 27 October 1968 was the main reason for tensions between the two nations. It was the only reform prepared during the time of the Prague Spring, which was introduced after the Soviet intervention. This issue was, from the point of view of the Kremlin, the least

controversial of those prepared by Dubček's team and, as such, could be implemented. According to its provisions, from 1 January 1969 Czechoslovakia consisted of two national states (the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic) forming a federation. In formal terms, this act vested a significant amount of power in the hands of the authorities of the republics and the representatives of both nations in the federal parliament could block policies and actions, which were unfavourable for their respective republics. However, the prerogatives of the republican authorities were seriously limited in December 1970.<sup>[41]</sup>

In reality, the federation was only a façade because all competence (at the federal level and that of the republics) rested with the highest party authorities, who were obedient to Moscow and implemented 'Brezhnev's neo-Stalinism'. Neither the Czechs nor the Slovaks were happy with this. The Czechs often identified federalisation with 'normalisation', particularly because the Slovak Husák was one of its most fervent advocates during the Prague Spring (and in later years, he presented it as one of his biggest achievements, actually dipped in nationalist Slovak slogans). In Czech society, there was an additional stereotype, namely the conviction that in an emergency Slovaks would make the situation worse instead of improving it, as had allegedly been the case when Hitler's army entered Czechoslovakia and when Brezhnev's troops came with the Soviet intervention.<sup>[42]</sup> On the other hand, Slovaks claimed that even federalisation did not bring any crucial changes to their internal situation in Czechoslovakia, but they often overlooked the fact that the later Prague-centrism did not stem from the Czechoslovak ideology but from the essence of the communist regime, which aimed at centralisation of power. As Stanislav Kirschbaum aptly put it in one sentence, "What the Czechs and Slovaks had created was a system that was federal in form and centralist in substance."<sup>[43]</sup>

The divergent course of 'normalisation' in both republics also had a negative influence on the national relations in Czechoslovakia. In Slovakia, it was relatively less strict; there were no purges on such a widespread scale as in the Czech Republic and the wave of emigration was much smaller.

The consequences of expulsion from the party were often different in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia. In Prague, 'verified' communists often

had no other option but to take up physical work only, while in Bratislava they most often stayed in their professions, but were demoted.<sup>[44]</sup>

It is hard to explain these differences conclusively, but certainly it was important that the leading 'normalisers' (Husák and Biľak) were Slovaks and they did not hesitate to play the nationalist card in their political activity. The Slovak communists explained the different path of 'normalisation' in Slovakia by a lower level of 'revisionism', which was supposed to affect the Slovak party, and the Czech side accepted that interpretation.

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union and proclaimed glasnost and perestroika, the Czechoslovak authorities were not significantly affected by these developments. Initially, Husák's team efficiently opposed introducing any real reforms, although economic reforms were widely discussed. Furthermore, as far as freedom of speech was concerned, it was hard to observe any serious changes. As Karl Peter Schwarz noted, after the proclamation of glasnost, Czech and Slovak television viewers were more interested in the Soviet news broadcast for the Soviet occupation units stationed in Czechoslovakia than in the programmes broadcast from Prague or Bratislava.<sup>[45]</sup>

In the latter half of the 1980s, economic problems became increasingly evident in Czechoslovakia. Maintaining a relatively high production levels and standard of living was still feasible, but mainly as a result of exploiting what are referred to as the simple reserves, i.e. using up the existing resources and limiting investments. A long-term result of the extensive economic policy conducted by Husák's team was the destruction of the natural environment (Czechoslovakia was one of the three European countries with the most severe environmental damage) and the poor health of society.

Additionally, the Czechoslovak economy was affected by a problem typical of all of the countries of the Eastern Bloc (although in comparison to the majority of them, here its course was quite mild): the 'economy of deficit'. This consisted of a lack of goods that could be purchased with the financial resources at consumers' disposal. Even if an average Czech or Slovak had money, they were not able to buy what they wanted. Moreover, the available goods were of low quality and in a narrow product range. Such an economy was bound to be vulnerable to corruption, which in the late 1980s compromised practically all branches of trade.<sup>[46]</sup>

Various pay-offs were an indispensable way of 'obtaining goods', efficient shopping required the giving of 'gifts', which often made it possible to obtain a product from 'under the counter'. The problems with supplies were not as serious as in Poland or Romania, but the situation was definitely worse than in the neighbouring Hungary. In Budapest, Czechs and Slovaks could buy some goods that were unavailable on their domestic market. As a resident of Bratislava recalled his first trip to the Hungarian capital in the 1980s, Budapest was a place where one could feel the breath of the West, and the shops were supplied with almost everything, "they even had jeans."

In 1987, the party underwent some changes, albeit ones which did not aim at any liberalisation of the system, but rather at a further strengthening of the hardliners. In December, Husák was forced to leave the post of the first secretary of the Central Committee of the KSČ and was replaced by Miloš Jakeš, the candidacy proposed by representatives of the most dogmatic wing of the party. Jakeš was appointed to this position at a time that was very difficult for the communist mono-authority.

The economic stagnation was becoming more and more evident; social dissatisfaction was mounting and the political system was increasingly weaker. Jakeš tried to maintain the strong position of the party and ensure social obedience by introducing some superficial and partial economic reforms and making short-term political concessions. However, those had no real influence on the situation in the country. There was a lot of discussion about the Czechoslovak version of perestroika, but despite having its own name (*přestavba*), it did not have any real substance.<sup>[47]</sup>

In October 1988, Lubomir Štrougal, a supporter of deeper changes (he had tried to present himself as the Czech Gorbachev), resigned from the post of prime minister and was replaced by Ladislav Adamec. Against expectations, the personnel changes did not bring about any essential liberalisation of the policies of the authorities, although some concessions were made. The most symbolic one was re-establishing of a public holiday on 28 October as the day commemorating the foundation of Czechoslovakia in 1918. The parliament adopted the relevant regulations on 21 September 1988.<sup>[48]</sup>

The security services prepared for the anticipated changes a little better, as, due to their operations, they had a much better knowledge of the situation

than the party leadership. On 24 June 1987, project 'KLIN' was prepared, which was a campaign aimed at hindering the process of the opposition uniting, gaining some influence among its members and, finally, taking control of it. The isolating of 'radical opposition groups' and the promoting of former communist reformers to be the main representatives of the opposition were supposed to serve this purpose. Simultaneously, the necessity to 'sacrifice' former party activists was assumed, which was indirectly accepted by Moscow.<sup>[49]</sup> Such actions continued until the Velvet Revolution, but they were banned in late November and early December of 1989.<sup>[50]</sup>

The opposition milieu gradually became more and more active under the influence of Soviet perestroika. From the end of 1987 onwards, demonstrations took place more and more frequently, numerous petitions were drawn up and announced, and new opposition organisations started to appear which demanded that civil rights and religious freedom be respected, and that political prisoners be released. On 25 March 1988, a 'candle demonstration' took place in Bratislava, which was organised by circles connected with the 'clandestine church'. It drew several thousand believers to *Hviezdoslavovo námestie* (Hviezdoslav Square). Holding burning candles in their hands, the demonstrators prayed for the respecting of religious freedom and human rights and for bishops to be appointed to vacant positions. Numerous militia troops were sent against the protesters in order to disperse them and two water cannons were used. Violent militia intervention also ended two demonstrations in Prague organised to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Soviet occupation (21 August) and the 70th anniversary of the establishment of Czechoslovakia (28 October), which also drew crowds of a dozen-or-so thousand people.

The changes in the way of thinking also involved the Church. Although Karol Wojtyła's election as Pope had not evoked such euphoria as it had in Poland, the pontiff's words "Do not be afraid!" affected believers in Czechoslovakia as well. In 1985, on the 1100th anniversary of St. Methodius' death, 200,000 people went on a pilgrimage to Velehrad, where the main celebrations took place, although the authorities did do a lot to prevent people from taking part. This was when the taboo of silence was broken for the first time; the pilgrims felt their power and did not hesitate to express their protest by loud whistling and shouting during the speeches of communist activists

and the representatives of the ‘*Pacem in Terris*’ pro-regime church organisation. On the other hand, the papal legate, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, and the Archbishop of Prague, Cardinal František Tomášek, were very warmly welcomed.<sup>[51]</sup> Traditionally Catholic Slovakia received another moral boost when Bishop Jozef Tomko was elevated to the rank of cardinal, the first Slovak cardinal in modern times. He was also nominated to be the head of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.<sup>[52]</sup>

Many other pilgrimages took place that year, the biggest traditionally visiting Levoča in Spiš, which attracted 150,000 believers. At the end of 1987, a group of Moravian Catholics led by Augustin Navrátil commenced a campaign to collect signatures on a petition demanding a real separation between the state and the Church, which would prevent the interference of the authorities in the Church affairs. More than 500,000 people signed the document: 300,000 in Slovakia and 200,000 in the Czech Republic. The ‘candle demonstration’ mentioned above was a part of that activity.<sup>[53]</sup>

The second pillar of the Slovak opposition movement was built on environmental issues. The destruction of the natural environment mentioned earlier, combined with the Chernobyl disaster, which took place relatively close to Slovakia, resulted in a growing environmental movement.<sup>[54]</sup> In 1987, after a meeting of the Slovak Union of Nature and Landscape Protectors (SZOPK), a document called *Bratislava nahlas* (Bratislava Out Loud) was published. It received a significant response: a total number of 3000 copies are estimated to have been multiplied to 60 thousand by different means and media.<sup>[55]</sup>

The international situation was also changing. In December 1988, French President François Mitterrand visited Czechoslovakia and, as the first Western politician, requested to meet officially members of the opposition movement. He invited them to breakfast at the French Embassy. Thus, on the morning of 9 December Václav Havel, Rudolf Battěk, Petr Uhl, Karel Šrp, Jiří Dienstbier, Ladislav Lis, Miloš Hájek and Václav Malý visited the embassy. Mitterrand greeted them, saying, “I am very happy to meet the outstanding personalities of the future.” Those were prophetic words: two years later Mitterrand and Havel talked over breakfast as the heads of two independent states. The breakfast meeting on 9 December 1988 ran beyond the scheduled 45 minutes to last for several hours, which ruined

the day's agenda and forced Husák to wait for his guest from Paris for a long time, as they were to fly together to Bratislava.<sup>[56]</sup>

## 1989 and the Velvet Revolution

In Prague and Bratislava, 1989 began differently than it did in Warsaw and Budapest. The communists hardened their position and sharply attacked the opposition. On 15 January, there was a demonstration in Prague commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jan Palach's death by self-immolation. It was 'pacified' by the security services. Legal punishments for those who participated in demonstrations were sharpened. Havel was imprisoned again, which he described in the following way, it was "absurd arrest and sentencing just for having watched someone lay a bouquet of violets somewhere."<sup>[57]</sup> Havel, who was merely an observer of events taking place in *Václavské náměstí* (Wenceslas Square), was arrested on his way home and sentenced to nine months in prison (the sentence was reduced to eight months in March), from which he was finally released in May. The protests that followed his detention astonished the authorities, who were unprepared for such mass protests, including by numerous 'official' artists. It went so far that the chairman of the Committee for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, Zdeněk Dienstbier, dared to suggest that Husák should consider using a political solution, due to the response of society to the sentence. Dienstbier wrote: "Please forgive my boldness, but I would like to ask you, Comrade President, to kindly consider the possibility of acting upon your statutory right to grant a pardon."<sup>[58]</sup>

The events of the following months explicitly confirmed that social sentiments in Czechoslovakia were changing. It was clear that although people had not fully shaken off the apathy connected with 'normalisation', they had gradually started to get rid of it. Undoubtedly, a generation change played a crucial role in this process. Those on the threshold of adulthood at that time did not remember the Prague Spring, which had had a huge social impact. Nor had they experienced the trauma related to the military intervention by the Warsaw Pact allies. Additionally, they did not feel emotion-

ally attached to the ideas propagated in 1968. Those three elements made the young generation less fearful, and more expectant.

In June, when a group of opposition activists (including Havel, Alexander Vondra and Jiří Křížan) issued *A Few Sentences* petition (*Několik vět*), which contained many demands concerning political, social and economic issues, 40,000 people signed it within the coming months. The authorities managed to persuade only a few artists to criticize the petition. Slow changes in sentiments were palpable and were manifested not only in the growing number of opposition groups (before 1987, the authorities counted five such groups, in 1987 there were four more, in 1988 14 more appeared, and in August 1989 there were 39 of them), but also in the content of the demands directed to the authorities. In the summer of 1989, the secret services aptly concluded that the majority of society supported the opposition.<sup>[59]</sup>

In the latter half of 1989, more and more slogans concerned strictly political issues: the resignation of the discredited representatives of the regime, the summoning of a Round Table or the calling of free elections. Two mass demonstrations were held then, attracting thousands of people, the first one on the 21st anniversary of the Warsaw Pact's military intervention (on 21 August) and the other on the 71st anniversary of the forming of independent Czechoslovakia (28 October). In both cases, the demonstrators were attacked by the security services and many people were arrested. However, the substantial increase in the number of participants as compared to earlier events and the emphasis placed on new issues in their demands, as well as the participation of numerous foreigners (including those from Poland and Hungary, where the process of democratic changes had already become very advanced), indicated growing social activity and politicisation of public life. It was quite significant, especially during the August event when some of the opposition movements (most notably Charter 77 and Havel himself) appealed to people not to be provoked and warned them against the authorities, who were to be getting ready for the 'final confrontation'.

Some opposition activists considered such an approach to be too cautious, but they noticed a slow awakening in the society. As Jan Ruml wrote at the beginning of November in the *samizdat* publication *Lidové noviny*, one could be afraid that "Czechoslovakia will become free without any involvement on the part of its citizens."<sup>[60]</sup>

Ruml's opinion stemmed from awareness that the earlier events in the region were very important for Czechoslovakia. The transformations in Poland and in Hungary, the official abolition of the Brezhnev doctrine (which assumed the possibility of Soviet intervention) and the mass exodus of Germans from the GDR to Western Germany clearly indicated the direction of the changes in the Eastern Bloc. Days before the anniversary of the 1968 intervention, the parliaments of Hungary and Poland condemned that 'brotherly assistance', stating in special resolutions that the intervention had infringed national self-determination. The government of Czechoslovakia reacted quite nervously and oddly: it announced that the resolutions of both parliaments were interference in the internal affairs of the country.<sup>[61]</sup>

Such a response by the communist authorities clearly demonstrated the condition of the regime in Czechoslovakia in 1989. The 'normalisers' were completely unprepared for possible reforms, talks with the opposition or even a permanent mitigation of their policy. They were also not aware of the significance of the changes in other countries of the Bloc, which entailed the inevitable collapse of communism in the entire region. Single instances of criticism or calls for a real debate inside the party, voiced by the youth and party intelligentsia, were ignored, though the people who made such calls were not held to account for their 'heresies' anymore. The higher and midlevel functionaries (such as regional party secretaries) still had the most significant influence on the KSČ's decisions. Since many local 'comrades' had risen from rags to riches thanks to 'normalisation', their defence of that line of policy was a matter of priority.

On 12 November, Pope John Paul II canonised the blessed Agnes of Bohemia, the daughter of the King of Bohemia, Ottokar I, and Queen Constance, the daughter of the King of Hungary. Agnes was a nun and a founder of the convent of the Poor Clares in Prague and had devoted her life to charity and taking care of the sick and the poor. Some 10,000 pilgrims from across Czechoslovakia participated in her canonisation in Rome, which was an unprecedented phenomenon at that time. Those who went invited the Pope to visit Czechoslovakia, shouting and chanting "Come to Prague, come to Prague; the Holy Father must come to Prague." These events took

place only a few days before the Velvet Revolution and therefore St. Agnes is considered its patron saint.

The direct spark which triggered the process of the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia was ignited neither by the activities of the traditional opposition nor the communist authorities, but by students. On 16 November, in Bratislava, students of the faculty of philosophy of the Comenius University organised a peaceful demonstration, during which they appealed to the minister of education to start a dialogue about problems in education and science.<sup>[62]</sup> On 17 November, approximately 25,000 people gathered in Prague to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of student Jan Opletal<sup>[63]</sup>, killed by the Nazis during protests against the German occupation. The demonstration was organised by students who managed to reach a compromise with the authorities (they agreed to change the planned route of the demonstration and not to go through the town centre, particularly not through *Václavské náměstí*) and to receive permission for their demonstration. The communists, the opposition, and even the students themselves did not expect that the planned demonstration would be the key event leading to the overthrow of the regime.<sup>[64]</sup>

For the student movement it was the first action organised on such a large scale; the opposition practically did not participate in its preparation and the highest representatives of the authorities left Prague to go away for the weekend.

The demonstration started at about 4 p.m. and initially proceeded as planned, although the atmosphere and attendance were completely different from the social events, which had taken place before. The participants chanted slogans such as “Long live Havel!”, “We don’t want [Miroslav] Štěpán!” (the first secretary of the city committee of the KSČ in Prague), “Do away with the army and the People’s Militia”, “We want free elections!” and “Do away with the KSČ’s monopoly!”, and carried banners and national flags. After an hour, they formed a large crowd, which marched to the Vishehrad castle, as had been agreed, where at about 6 p.m. the demonstration ended. However, the crowd of several thousand people did not disperse but instead carried on in the direction of *Václavské náměstí*. The demonstration had turned into an action directed against the Jakeš and Husák regime and ceased to be the legal event, which it had been until then. Initially, law

enforcement units tried to prevent the crowd from getting to the centre by forming blockades that were supposed to disperse the crowd. However, those actions did not bring the desired effect. At about 7.30 p.m., militia forces stopped the crowds approaching *Václavské náměstí*, while other militia troops cut off the way back. This way about 10,000 people were trapped in *Národní třída*; some of them escaped into a side street called *Mikulandská*, but after a while, that street was also cut off. The demonstrators, surrounded by the security forces, sat in the street, went up to officers to place flowers behind their shields, lit candles and sang songs. However, the appeals not to use force were to no avail: at 8.25 p.m., the order came to disperse the rally using force. The troops surrounding the demonstration started to push forwards so that people gathered in the street found themselves at a risk of being trampled to death. Soon narrow paths were created between the functionaries so that people could get out of the trap, but when they were passing through the line of the militia they were brutally beaten, clubbed, and kicked. More than five hundred demonstrators were injured, some of them seriously, and rumours spread (false, as it turned out later) that a student of mathematics named Martin Šmíd had been killed. By soon after 9 p.m., the demonstration was dispersed.<sup>[65]</sup>

The accounts of the participants in the events do not leave any doubt that the action of the militia had been particularly violent. According to a recollection of Petr Náhlík “That boy was dragged by his hair and hands. Then me. I fell down on my left side and tried to protect the back of my head. They were kicking my spine and when I tried to stand up, they beat me even more violently. They rushed me to a bus and while I was sitting at the door, my wife shouted that she was all right. They had wanted to drag her out of the crowd, but the people were squeezed tightly so that she was able to escape.”<sup>[66]</sup> Another participant, Jan Švéd, described the events in the following way: “Suddenly we were trapped; it was about an hour after we had come to that place. Farther ahead, bigger groups of people approached the security services with their hands up. They wanted to go home. I could not believe my own eyes: the security services pushed them back, apparently they were forbidden to let us go. They were squeezing us from both sides, we were between a rock and a hard place... You could hear dogs barking,

some people were shouting desperately ‘We don’t want violence! We don’t want China<sup>[67]</sup>! We don’t want the Gestapo! We don’t want blood!’<sup>[68]</sup>

The exceptionally violent reaction of the security services to the protesters, far exceeding the ‘standard’ level of aggression against demonstrations in the latter half of the 1980s, raises many questions and suspicions as to whether the whole situation had not been orchestrated by the security services themselves. This hypothesis seems to be supported by the ‘case of Martin Šmíd’, whose death was announced by Radio Free Europe, which enflamed social sentiments. As it turned out later, the message passed on to the West by Petr Uhl had been untrue. The case had been orchestrated by functionaries and collaborators of the StB. The role of the allegedly dead Šmíd had been played by Ludvík Zifčák, alias ‘Růžička’, a collaborator of the security services, and the whole event had been described in a credible and convincing manner to Petr Uhl and Anna Šabatová by an alleged StB agent named Drahomira Dražská.<sup>[69]</sup> The person in charge of the whole scam was never identified. Neither was the purpose of this operation, although the files of the case contain the name of the then minister of the interior, František Kincl, his deputy Alojz Lorenc, and aforementioned Miroslav Štěpán.<sup>[70]</sup>

Those involved claimed that they had given clear orders, which banned the use of force against the demonstrators. Therefore, the intention to provoke a kickback from society might have served a purpose of some internal party struggles at the highest level. Zifčák himself spoke about it very enigmatically, “The purpose was to discredit and remove some leading activists,”<sup>[71]</sup> but the events that followed went far beyond such a scheme.

The meaning of the ‘Šmíd case’ remains unresolved. However, being aware of the premises of the ‘KLIN’ operation and later statements about this case, one might assume that it was to be crucial in the process of ousting the ‘normalisers’ and starting the authorised talks with a selected group of the opposition activists about their possible participation in governing the country.

Naturally, such an operation could not have taken place without the knowledge and approval, or perhaps even inspiration, of the Kremlin. However, further events showed that those plans failed completely. One could find several reasons for such a turn of events, but two of them are of a major importance. First, after the ‘normalisation’ purges, the KSČ had not been able to function properly because it lacked dynamic and flexible elements.

Secondly, the Velvet Revolution was mainly carried out by students, so a generation without any emotional attachment to the Prague Spring, which made it impossible for the communist reformers such as Dubček and Zdeněk Mlynář to take power.

The representatives of the regime disregarded the events of 17 November, treating it as just another demonstration, which they had managed to pacify. The first press release issued by the Czech Press Agency (ČTK) read as follows, “It was an operation orchestrated from abroad. This can be confirmed by the fact that after the official gathering finished a group of people who are known for their anti-social gatherings tried to provoke the security services. The appeals for dispersing repeated every hour were responded to with calls for the abolishing of the party monopoly on power and the physical extermination of the communists.”<sup>[72]</sup>

The violent intervention of the militia caused a spontaneous social response, which was at first led by students. On 18 November, they put forward the following demands: identifying those responsible for the militia’s action, legalisation of free press, the release of political prisoners, the granting of the right to assemble and the commencement of talks with “all groups of society with no exceptions.” A strike of students was announced until those demands were met, and a general strike was called for, to begin on 27 November. The declaration voicing these demands was signed by “students from tertiary-level schools in Prague.”<sup>[73]</sup> Immediately, all of the theatres in Prague and Bratislava also ceased their activity to show their full support for students’ protests.

Initially, the opposition movement did not realise the importance of the demonstrations on 17 November. Only two days later, the representatives of many dissident organisations opposing the communist regime gathered in a Prague theatre called the ‘Drama Club’. The meeting was called at Havel’s initiative, and at about ten o’clock in the evening they established the Civic Forum (*Občanské fórum* – OF), which “was supposed to represent the part of Czechoslovak society which was increasingly critical towards the politics of the current Czechoslovak authorities and was those days deeply outraged by the brutal attack on the peacefully manifesting students.”<sup>[74]</sup>

In its first document, the Civic Forum put forward four demands. The first demand called for the dismissal of the members of the Central Committee

of the KSČ who were directly involved in the preparing of the intervention of the Warsaw Pact in 1968 (the following names were mentioned in this context: Husák, Jakeš, Jan Fojtík, Miroslav Zavadil, Karel Hofmann, and Alois Indra). Secondly, the OF demanded the dismissal of the first secretary of the City Committee of the KSČ in Prague, Miroslav Štěpán, and federal minister of the interior, František Kincl, as the persons responsible for the suppressing of peaceful demonstrations. The third demand called for the establishment of a commission, which would clarify the events related to the 17 November demonstration; the identification and punishment of the persons responsible for using force (the commission was to include representatives of the OF). Finally, the OF demanded the release of all prisoners of conscience.<sup>[75]</sup> The text of the statement adopted by the OF was written in the same spirit as Charter 77 had been, as its main author was Havel.

At about the same time, in Bratislava, several hundred Slovak intellectuals gathered in the building of the Artistic Society and at about six o'clock in the evening established an organisation, which was several hours later named the Public Against Violence (*Verejnost' proti násiliu* – VPN). The first document declaring the foundation of the VPN is dated November 20, but it had been drawn up a day earlier (it had been prepared in two versions: a milder one and a harsher one, in case the rumours about the death of one of the demonstrators in Prague on 17 November turned out to be true).<sup>[76]</sup> The VPN went a bit further than the OF when putting forward their demands. Referring to the changes that had taken place in neighbouring countries, the VPN saw “a real chance to develop democracy and enter the path to a decent life.” The document ended with an appeal to citizens “to take matters in their own hands.”<sup>[77]</sup>

It seems necessary to discuss in greater detail these two organisations, which were established *ad hoc* only two days after the students' demonstration. Significantly, two different organisations were formed: a Czech one and a Slovak one. That was undoubtedly the first sign of the later differences between the two republics, which in the longer perspective led to the establishing of two separate political stages, and, consequently, the division of the federation. Moreover, the separate actions of the intellectual milieu of Prague and Bratislava indirectly indicate the efficiency

of the 'normalisation' team, which over the course of time had managed to isolate the two groups.

Both the OF and the VPN were organised as 'mass movements'. Both attracted people of very different views who knew why they protested against the Husák regime, but it was very difficult for them to create a common vision of the future. Both movements involved representatives of various contrasting ideas: from Christian conservatives (such as Ján Čarnogurský and František Mikloško in Slovakia and Václav Benda in the Czech Republic), through liberal conservatives (including Václav Klaus, Daniel Kroupa and Pavel Bratinka), liberals (such as Fedor Gál), and the 'greens' (including Ján Budaj), to the communist reformers from the 'Obroda' club (of which Dubček was the most famous). In addition to the leaders, who had clear political views, the OF and the VPN included people who did not have any defined outlooks. What is more, the OF assumed that groups could also belong to it, so various parties, groups and political movements could become its members and separate from it after the parliamentary election.<sup>[78]</sup>

Therefore, the events of 17 November were the spark, which triggered the swift process of the ousting of the communists from power in Czechoslovakia. When on 19 November the intellectuals met in Prague and Bratislava, convinced that it was necessary to take firm action, none of them supposed that only over a month later one of them, Havel, would become the President of Czechoslovakia. It is also hardly likely that the top officials of the regime, including Husák, had made such predictions when, after the 'hot' weekend, on Monday 20 November they issued a declaration condemning the 'provocation'.<sup>[79]</sup>

The dynamic development of the situation astonished the KSČ's leadership. The highest party organs were not able to respond to the fast-changing events. The only response from the Central Committee of the KSČ was to replace the plain Jakeš with a completely anonymous activist from the second row, Karel Urbánek, who had neither the skills nor the political backup to consolidate the KSČ. Jakeš himself confirmed the inability of the party to take any action, "On critical days some helplessness was revealed in the debates within the Presidium of the Central Committee of the KSČ, a reluctance to engage personally which bordered on resignation."<sup>[80]</sup> The only politician who openly tried to impose a 'settlement by force'

was Štěpán, who demanded that order should be restored both in the city and in the country, which in his opinion was a pre-condition for starting any talks. The party secretary from Prague did not have enough strength to force through his idea.

Prime Minister Adamec tried to take advantage of the inner party stagnation and to transfer the weight of the decision-making process from the Politburo to the government. The opposition also decided that Adamec was a partner for the negotiations, not Jakeš or Urbánek. However, that did not mean an easy start for negotiations: Adamec was certainly not an activist who could be a representative of 'the reform wing' in the Hungarian or Polish way. During the first probing meeting with the opposition representatives on 19 November he said, "In the GDR the situation is different. In our country, fifteen or twenty thousand people will take to the streets: that is not many. In Leipzig, 200 – or even 300,000 people may protest. We are not the GDR, which is a divided country, or Poland, where people are starving. Do you know when everything will be sorted out? At the assembly of the united agriculture co-operatives (*Jednotné zemědělské družstvo* – JZD) at the beginning of December, that is when you will hear something. In the countryside, everyone has a house and a car and some have a field near their house. There they perceive Prague as clowns."<sup>[81]</sup> He declared explicitly, "I will never betray the party. The party will never give up its leading role in society. Perhaps we will have to change our structures... perhaps we will have to change the name."<sup>[82]</sup> Moreover, he point-blank refused to meet Havel.

However, the social opposition had a very important argument: they were able to lead tens of thousands of demonstrators onto the streets and they had the mass support of the people. Demonstrations took place every day; on 20 November in Prague, the magic number of 100,000 participants was exceeded and successive factories and enterprises decided to participate in the general strike declared for 27 November. The protesters carried banners with increasingly bolder slogans, such as "Down with the KSČ", "We want a coalition government", "Free elections", "The end of democratisation, the beginning of democracy!" Realising the power of the street forces, representatives of the Forum took part in organising rallies. From 21 November, there was a system of microphones and loudspeakers on *Václavské*

*náměstí* and opposition leaders could speak to the crowds from the balcony of the Melantrich publishing house. That day Havel addressed the crowds gathered in the square for the first time and he presented the programme drawn up by the OF. Similar demonstrations took place on a daily basis in Bratislava (more than 50,000 people gathered every day in the *Námestie Slovenského národného povstania* (SNP Square) and representatives of the VPN such as Kňažko, Budaj and Dubček spoke to them) and in other cities (for example in Brno the number of demonstrators reached 40,000). From the beginning of the Velvet Revolution, the changes were strongly supported by artists, who came to demonstrations in large numbers and spoke along with the representatives of the opposition. On 22 November, Marta Kubišová appeared publicly in Prague for the first time in 20 years. She had been the most popular Czech singer in the 1960s and had been banned from artistic activity for the support she had given to the reforms of the Prague Spring.

The participants of the demonstrations recall the euphoric atmosphere of that time. The demonstrations organised all over the country were a sort of recovery from 20 years of apathy, stagnation and a lack of any form of public life. People dropped the masks behind which they had hidden their emotions and views, and spontaneously stopped being afraid.

Banners under which the protests were organised can best illustrate the sentiments of the street. The banners carried such slogans as “Long live Havel!”, “We demand human rights!” or “No leading role [of the KSČ]!”, which were the usual ones, and the more sophisticated and sometimes witty: “Get realistic, demand the impossible!”, “Let’s get it over with, 15,251 days is enough!”, “The USSR is our role model at last” or “The Folk Ensemble no longer wants to dance as they are told!”<sup>[83]</sup>

The approach of media representatives was also important, as they opposed any manipulation in the news, announced that they were going to join the strike, and started to inform people objectively about the events in the country. On 23 November, Czech television for the first time transmitted a live broadcast from *Václavské náměstí*, which made it possible to show to Czechs and Slovaks that the demonstrations were not only some kind of brawl organised by students and a handful of anti-communists but that they actually attracted hundreds of thousands of people.<sup>[84]</sup>

The negotiations between the Adamec government and representatives of the OF led by Havel began on 26 November. The first talks did not bring any results, because the prime minister did not have any authority to take any decisions and often made excuses such as his inability to trespass on the competences of the Federation Assembly.

Within two days, the situation changed to the disadvantage of the regime. In the evening of the day of the first negotiations, a huge demonstration took place in Prague on *Letenská pláň* (Letná Plain) which drew more than half a million people. At Havel's invitation, Adamec also attended the demonstration. The 'main player' on the part of the authorities lost all of his support from society after speaking for a few minutes in front of the crowd. He was quite warmly welcomed to the rostrum and his credibility was further strengthened by Havel, who announced his speech quite enthusiastically: "and now may I present the one and only representative of the state who has the time of day for us-Prime Minister... Ladislav... ADAMEC!"<sup>[85]</sup> Yet Adamec started calling for the lifting of the general strike and emphasised his lack of authority when it came to taking strategic decisions, as those were still in the hands of the party authorities. His words met with decisive protests from the crowds and whistles. Although when he was leaving, he tried to console himself with the observation that "Kohl's speeches are also whistled at," he had undoubtedly missed the moment when he could have become a charismatic leader and until the end, he remained just a plain apparatchik.

The success of the general strike on 27 November was a definite blow to the regime. The mass attendance of a significant majority of the society was considered by the OF and the VPN to be an unequivocal result in an informal referendum regarding the 'leading role of the communist party'. The strike was organised under common banners of abolishing the party's monopoly on power and demanding free elections. Its success gave the opposition movement huge social legitimacy, so, after ending the action, they announced the end of daily demonstrations and the beginning of political dialogue with the communist side.<sup>[86]</sup>

The effects of the ten days of the Velvet Revolution had exceeded the expectations of its organisers, the students. On 28 November, Václav Bartuška, a member of the national student strike committee, described

their sentiments after the general strike “We are to decide what to do with the strike, the significance of which long ago passed our understanding. We just wanted the dismissal of the discredited individuals and the whole Politburo collapsed. We wanted a dialogue between the authorities and the citizens and the prime minister shook hands with the former arch-enemy. We did not want to stand alone, and suddenly the majority of our nation joined yesterday’s general strike.”<sup>[87]</sup>

On 28 November, the next round of talks was held between representatives of the government and the OF and the VPN (both social movements formed one representation, which was led by Václav Havel). The delegation from the opposition presented Adamec with the following demands: the immediate dismissal of the federal government and the formation of a government of professionals; the abolishment of the constitutional provisions regarding the leading role of the communist party, as well as those regarding the National Front and Marxism-Leninism as the fundamental ideology of the state; the resignation of president Husák by 10 December; the release of political prisoners; the legalisation of the OF; and the assigning to the OF both buildings for its headquarters and offices, and media airtime. Adamec promised to satisfy most of the demands on the condition that the new government should be formed on 3 December and he remained the prime minister.<sup>[88]</sup>

Despite spectacular failures and no real political backup (he could hardly count on any support from the completely passive party), the prime minister was still an active participant in the negotiations and he tried to force through solutions which would have ended up with the largest possible amount of power remaining in the hands of the communist apparatus. The opposition, particularly the circles close to Havel, still seemed surprised by the turn of events and did not intend to take any kind of power. Representatives of the OF and the VPN, despite Adamec’s insistence, refused to give any names of potential ministers, leaving the decisions to the prime minister. Havel himself claimed that when the OF was established it was supposed to be a movement which, according to the demands of society, would say aloud that ‘the king is naked!’, but it was not going to say ‘I want to be the king myself’. Later, the dynamics of the events meant, “History, you might say, was rushing forward so quickly that we could barely keep pace with it.”<sup>[89]</sup>

Adamec decided to take advantage of the opposition's hesitation but, as it turned out later, he definitely went too far. On 3 December, he presented the new government, in which the communists held 15 of the 20 ministries. A balance of power in the cabinet which gave such an advantage to the KSČ caused many protests from society and objections from the OF and the VPN, which called on Adamec to carry out a more thorough restructuring of the government by 10 December. Particularly interesting and symbolic was the demonstration organised in *Václavské náměstí*, which ended with singing the national anthem by Karel Kryl and Karel Gott, symbols of two completely different approaches at the time of 'normalisation'. Kryl had epitomised the rebellion against the regime, and was the bard of the opposition, while Gott had lent credence to the Husák system and felt very comfortable there.

The citizens' side started to take a firmer stance in further talks, as if they had begun to realise what power they had. They decided to put forward names of candidates for ministerial posts: Jiří Dienstbier as the minister of foreign affairs, Václav Klaus as the minister of finance, and Petr Miller to take charge of the ministry of labour and social policy.

These proposals took Adamec by surprise and he reacted very emotionally, submitting his resignation and exclaiming, "The government is neither a union of volunteers nor a discussion club! The government must manage the national economy, my dear gentlemen!"<sup>[90]</sup> Despite resigning from his position as the head of the government, Adamec had a back-up plan: he decided that this was an excellent moment to fight for the presidency. In order to do that, he proposed as his successor Marián Čalfa, the only Slovak who could be realistically considered for the post. One should note that the regulations of the federal system in Czechoslovakia required that in order for a Czech to be the president, the prime minister had to be a Slovak. Although the opposition firmly rejected the candidacy of Adamec for president, several days later they accepted the proposal that Čalfa should become prime minister. Thus, the project that was supposed to open the road to the Prague Castle for Adamec did not work as intended and practically closed this road for the Slovak, Alexander Dubček.

The decision to prevent Adamec from running for president was taken during a session of the emergency panel of the OF Co-ordination Centre

in the evening on 5 December. After a stormy discussion, the representatives of the Forum, who had earlier taken part in talks with Adamec, gave an account of the negotiations, and expressed their astonishment at the backup plan of the government. Then the gathered participants considered various options of the personal configurations for the posts of president and prime minister.

Zděněk Jičinský, reformed communist of 1968 and one of the signatories of Charter 77, severely criticised the plan presented by Adamec. He asserted that it was impossible to support the candidacy of a man whose name had had been put behind the regime for 20 years. After expressing his critical remarks regarding Adamec, Jičinský put forward Dubček as a candidate for president. However, objections were quickly voiced to that proposal. The representative of the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (*Československá strana socialistická* – ČSS), Jan Škoda, emphasised Dubček's connections with the communist regime, saying that “the man became a symbol, not a perpetrator... He was dragged to become a symbol. And when he was to bear the consequences of his deeds – as it was his duty to foresee what would happen – he could not do anything else but cry.”<sup>[91]</sup>

After a further stormy discussion, finally Ladislav Lis remarked that the prime minister did not have to be a Czech, and if that post was given to a Slovak, it would be possible to introduce the candidate for president who was expected by society, “I will say it aloud! After all, the whole country shouts: Havel! Havel!”<sup>[92]</sup>

As no representatives of the VPN had taken part in the quickly developing session, they were invited to Prague at the beginning of the OF's meeting. At 1:30 a.m. on 6 December the following persons joined the meeting: Ján Budaj, Milan Kňažko, Ján Čarnogurský, and Miroslav Kusý. When asked to present their candidates for president, the Slovaks put forward three names: Kusý, Dubček and Kňažko. It should be emphasised that Dubček's candidacy was not obvious for the VPN and it was not considered the only option. Slovaks were even outraged that only the name of Dubček kept coming up repeatedly. Apart from fears that he might want to introduce ‘socialism with a human face’, the Slovak side was not convinced whether or not Dubček wanted to serve as president for an entire five-year term, rather than only until the first free elections. In the end, the representatives

of the VPN agreed that Havel could become the common candidate for president representing both groups.<sup>[93]</sup>

When, on the following day, the civic delegation told Adamec about their resolutions regarding the composition of the new government and emphasised the lack of consent for his candidacy for president, he realised his defeat. On 7 December, he finally submitted his resignation and the OF and the VPN accepted Marian Čalfa as his successor in charge of the government, provided that the government appointments expectations of the social opposition were accepted.<sup>[94]</sup>

Probably hardly anyone expected that thereby a new serious partner on the party's side had joined the game and taken over the initiative from Adamec. At the same time, it became clear that the opposition was much stronger than the authorities were, and it was able to impose the rules of the game.

Simultaneously the internal disintegration of the KSČ was deepening. On 29 November, the Federal Assembly had adopted the Constitutional Act No. 135/1989, which amended the 1960 constitution. The Act removed from the constitution the provisions regarding the leading role of the KSČ in society, abolished the National Front<sup>[95]</sup>, and deleted the mention of Marxism and Leninism as the official state ideology. At the beginning of December, rank-and-file party members started to demand many actions from the party leadership, such as the removal of discredited functionaries, the convening of an extraordinary congress, a decision as to whether Husák should remain president, intensification of the propaganda activities conducted by the *Rudé Právo* daily, and providing a clear definition of the term 'socialism'.

Additional unrest started in the Communist Party of Slovakia (*Komunistická strana Slovenska* – KSS). The Central Committee dismissed both its Presidium and Secretariat, replacing them with a working committee, which distanced itself from the former leadership of the Slovak party and in a letter addressed to Karel Urbánek demanded a greater degree of independence of the KSS within the KSČ.<sup>[96]</sup>

Representatives of 'satellite parties' announced they would no longer co-operate with the communists; these were smaller groups which belonged to the National Fronts, both the Czech one (such as the ČSS and

the Czechoslovak People's Party<sup>[97]</sup> and the Slovak one (including the Party of Slovak Revival<sup>[98]</sup> and the Freedom Party).

The leaders and activists of these parties tried to make their image more credible in the eyes of society and break with their role of being fig leaves for the KSČ. The People's Party decided to change its leadership as early as 28 November, so Josef Bartončík became the new chairman and Richard Sacher the new secretary. This party started to co-operate closely with the OF and decided to address their programme to voters who held Christian-democratic views.

Three days later, the leadership of the SSO also decided to make a radical change and they returned to the traditional name of the party, the Democratic Party (*Demokratická strana* – the DS), the name under which they had won the election in Slovakia in 1946. Martin Kvetko returned from exile to become the new chairman of the DS. The two other parties of the National Front did not go through such radical changes.<sup>[99]</sup>

On 7 December, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the KSČ expelled Jakeš and Štěpán from the party. Under the circumstances, the days of the main 'normaliser' Husák as the head of state were numbered. On 8 December, Urbánek and Ivan Knotek informed him that the party leadership had decided that he should be dismissed from the presidency. He accepted the news calmly and said, "I am prepared for that, I intended to resign some time ago, but I expected that the situation could have been at least partly reversed."<sup>[100]</sup> He submitted his resignation two days later, just moments after having sworn in Čalfa and his government.

Husák's words marked a symbolic ending of the epoch: "Personally, since my youngest years I have believed in socialist ideals. When some mistakes were made, they were the mistakes of people, not mistakes of the basic concepts of socialism. Today I also do not see any better ideas and foundations. Therefore, I remain faithful to them."<sup>[101]</sup>

The representatives of the VPN, which organised on 10 December an event presenting the return of the Czecho-Slovak nations to Europe, realised the symbolism of Husák's resignation. More than 100,000 people crossed the border between Czechoslovakia and Austria (which had been opened for Czechoslovak citizens only a week earlier) to walk to Hainburg. One of the VPN's leaders, Ján Budaj, explicitly emphasised the importance

of the moment, “My friends, we met on the day which ends the era started by the former president’s statement that the borders are not a boulevard. We have gathered here to take a walk to Austria and we have made a symbolic step towards Europe on behalf of all Czechs and Slovaks. Hello, Europe!”<sup>[102]</sup>

Čalfa, entrusted with the mission of forming the new government, was much more flexible than Adamec about the negotiations with the representatives of society. As a result of the negotiations conducted on 9 December with the ČSS, the ČSL, Obroda, the OF and the VPN, a decision was taken to create a government of ‘national understanding’ in which the communists were supposed to hold nine ministries, the socialists and the peasant party two each, and the independents (connected with the OF and the VPN) seven. Čarnogurský, who had been released from prison only two weeks before, became deputy prime minister, Jiří Dienstbier was the minister of foreign affairs and Václav Klaus the minister of finance. Also part of the agreement was the government’s commitment to a limited term of office, until the free elections were held in the first half of 1990. The cabinet formed according to those rules was sworn in on 10 December.

On the same day, in Václavské náměstí, both the OF and the VPN proposed that Havel should become president. However, Dubček did not intend to give up. That same day, he issued a statement in which he declared that he intended to run for president, referring to his talks with the Central Committee of the National Front of the Slovak Socialist Republic. In the short text, he mentioned his activity in 1968 and announced that he was going to devote all of his efforts and abilities to “the development of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.”<sup>[103]</sup>

Many Slovak party and state institutions (such as the KSS, the National Front, the Presidium of the Slovak National Council, the DS, and the Freedom Party) presently supported Dubček’s candidacy. The situation was aggravated by an article, which appeared in *Pravda* on 12 December 1989. Its author claimed that the VPN was against putting forward the candidacy of Dubček for president.<sup>[104]</sup> That claim was not far from the truth: the VPN was actually reluctant towards him, because they appreciated Havel more highly, as he did not have any connections to the communist regime, independently of his nationality. However, the VPN could not present such a stance as an official position, as the former leader of the Prague

Spring enjoyed wide popularity. The national context was becoming more and more significant, and it was not a contest between Havel and Dubček, but rather a Czech versus a Slovak.

The communists tried to take as much advantage as possible of the conflict, which had emerged within the opposition. They decided that it was an opportunity to put forward the candidacy of Adamec for president. On 12 December, the Chairman of the Chamber of the Nations of the Federal Assembly, Anton Blažej, submitted a proposal for the conducting of the direct presidential election. The communists counted on the social popularity of Adamec, who in their opinion would have some chance of winning such an election. For the OF and the VPN such a solution was unacceptable. Moreover, it could have had disastrous effects for Czechoslovakia, as it would lead to the aggravation of Czech-Slovak relations, signals of which had already appeared during the Slovak debate on Dubček's candidacy. Adopting the election option involving the whole country, where the decision was to be made by the majority of votes, was bound to lead to the victory of the Czech candidate; while adopting the option of separate elections conducted in both republics would mean the impossibility of electing one head of state.

In such a deadlock, when the KSČ still had an absolute majority in the parliament and tried to force through their own vision for the election, Čalfa took the initiative and used his 'five minutes' much better than Adamec. On 15 December, he met with Havel in private and offered to help him push through his candidacy. Then he promised to put an end to any discussions regarding a direct presidential election and to put forward Havel's candidacy in the parliament with a recommendation that Havel should be chosen in the same very year. He also promised to reconstruct the Federal Assembly in such a way that Dubček would become the chairman of the parliament.<sup>[105]</sup>

Čalfa did not demand anything in return for his help (other than 'more support from the OF for his cabinet'), and his offer of a solution came at an ideal time for the OF and the VPN. Neither of them knew how to conduct the election of a non-communist president and they thought that that would be possible only at the end of January. Representatives of the opposition feared such a far-off term for various reasons, such as the tiredness of society, a possible communist counter-offensive, the putting forward

of Dubček as a candidate and the national conflicts related to it. Čalfa's proposal removed all of those perils and showed that he was a politician who had excellently analysed the situation and the balance of power in December 1989.

The prime minister's plan was implemented incredibly precisely. The day after the meeting, Havel appeared on television to declare his will to run for president, but under three conditions. Firstly, his term of office was to be only temporary (i.e. until a free election), so that the parliament chosen in a free election could appoint a new head of state. Secondly, his election would be legitimised by the participation of at least some of the non-communist representatives; and thirdly, that Dubček would participate in holding power.

Havel addressed his rival with kind words, "After Milan Rastislav Štefánik, this is probably the most outstanding man that Slovakia has given to our country and the world. I will not let any dark forces drive a wedge between him and me, and furthermore between our nations."<sup>[106]</sup> Those words appeased public opinion in Slovakia, particularly as Havel also announced: "federalised totalitarianism would be replaced by a genuine federation."<sup>[107]</sup>

Simultaneously, by 19 December Čalfa was busy convincing MPs to abandon the idea of a direct presidential election and to accept Havel's candidacy for president. In his efforts, he was supported by minority parties that until then had been in a coalition with the KSČ within the National Front: the ČSL and the ČSS. After four days of talks behind the scenes, the prime minister decided that the situation was under complete control and during a speech to the Federal Assembly, he officially declared Havel as a candidate for president. He stated, "The government is making extraordinary efforts to overcome the political and constitutional crisis, intending that all precautions will be taken which will prevent the return of the previous governing methods and social processes. Therefore, I would like to appeal to the Federal Assembly to join the efforts by electing a president this year. (Applause) According to the opinion of the government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, at present there is no other alternative for the choice of president than to elect Václav Havel, if the declared goals are to be achieved (applause)."<sup>[108]</sup> The MPs supported the motion unanimously.

In order to appease the sentiments around the presidential election, it was also necessary to convince Dubček, who was very attached to the idea of becoming president, to give up. Talks with the Slovak politician lasted almost two weeks, as Dubček did not want to come to terms with the state of affairs.

The last meeting of Havel and Dubček took place after 23 December and then the Slovak had no other option but to accept the situation, as Havel's presidency had already been decided. Havel himself, who had declared that he had never aimed for power (although some of his colleagues from that time are of a different opinion), claimed that the mission of convincing Dubček to withdraw from the race was for him excruciatingly unpleasant. The absurdity of the situation lay in the fact that he, who did not want to become president himself, had to convince someone who really aspired to the post to abandon his plans. However, Havel emphasised that after several meetings he became convinced that his interlocutor was a weak person who would not have been able to handle a situation of being the head of state in a crisis situation, as had happened during the Prague Spring.<sup>[109]</sup>

By that time, communists were already in retreat. On 20–21 December, an extraordinary party congress was held, sooner than scheduled. The incumbent leader, Urbánek, was replaced by Adamec. The KSČ's actions were late by a month and did not bring any results. Although at the end of November Adamec had still been an important player in Czechoslovak politics, at the end of December he was merely a 'gambler' who had lost his game.

The party could not be rescued by far-reaching internal changes either; not by the removal of the activists who were responsible for the policy of 'normalisation' (including Husák) and not by the abolishing of the People's Militia.

In December, some changes regarding symbols also took place, which emphasised the deep and irreversible character of the transformation in the country. On 14 December, Tomáš Baťa visited Czechoslovakia after 50 years of absence. He was a legendary entrepreneur, the son of the famous founder of a shoe-making company, which in the period between the world wars had won European markets with products of exquisite quality,<sup>[110]</sup> it had been one of the first enterprises to be nationalised in 1945. Baťa was welcome with respect and joy and the next day his hometown, which since 1 February 1949 had been called Gottwaldov to commemorate the communist leader of the country, went back to its original name: Zlín.

The return of Pavel Tigrid to the country was also symbolic. This politician, writer, and publisher had stayed in the West in February 1948, where he had become one of the most significant figures of the Czech émigré community, and its political and ideological spokesman. In the 1950s, he had been in charge of the Czechoslovak section of Radio Free Europe, and then he had founded and published a periodical titled *Svědectví* (*Testimony*) in the United States and in France. To the communist authorities he had been one of their most dangerous enemies and he had tinged his criticism of the regime with a peculiar sarcasm and irony. On 27 December, he returned to Czechoslovakia, where he immediately started public activity, co-operating with Havel.

In the last days of December, the issue of non-communist deputies joining the Federal Assembly remained unresolved. That was necessary so that the assembly electing Havel would have at least partial social legitimacy. Twenty-three seats were vacant due to the resignation of the most discredited deputies from the communist party (such as Indra, Biřák and Jakeš). However, conducting by-elections would have been troublesome and time-consuming. In order to avoid a complicated procedure, an unprecedented solution was adopted: members of both houses of parliament were to elect new members of the Federal Assembly in consultation with the OF and the VPN. On 28 December, the relevant votes took place and 23 new deputies joined the assembly. Alexander Dubček (who had just been co-opted) became the new chairman of the Assembly, and Stanislav Kukrál (who was the former chairman), Jozef Stank, Zdeněk Jičínský (a newly sworn deputy) and Jaroslav Jenerál became his deputies.<sup>[111]</sup>

The following day, when the parliament gathered to elect the new president of the federation, Havel had a deep feeling of the absurdity of the situation. His candidacy was recommended to deputies on behalf of almost all institutions and organisations, “from the Union of Women to the Czechoslovak People’s Army”<sup>[112]</sup> and the Federal Assembly, 90 per cent of which had been appointed in 1986, at a time of advanced ‘normalisation’, voted for him.

The choice was unanimous, nobody voted against and nobody abstained. The new president did not have to take an oath of allegiance to socialist ideals (the relevant passage of the oath had been removed during the session the day before), but he still had to take an oath to be faithful to the Czechoslovak

Socialist Republic. This unpleasant experience was probably the reason why the first legislative initiative put forward by Havel was a proposal to change the name and symbols of the country. The president submitted this proposal to the parliament in January 1990, which led to a stormy discussion along Czech and Slovak lines.<sup>[113]</sup>

Havel becoming president could be treated as the symbolic end of the 'Velvet Revolution'. Naturally, there were still many challenges facing the Czechs and the Slovaks, the final result of which was to be the abolishing of any remnants of communism. In June 1990, a free election took place and the political stage started to form. Some problems in Czech-Slovak relations began to emerge; in the international arena, the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact were abolished; also, the troops of the Soviet army left the territory of Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, it was Havel's election as president that turned out to be the breakthrough; certain processes finished and so did the unique atmosphere of the last days of November and December 1989. The symbolic end of the revolutionary sentiments was marked by the end of the students' strike.

Several hours after the assembly voted, a representative of the national Strike Co-ordination Committee, Martin Mejstřík, declared on television, "The election of Václav Havel as president is for us a sufficient guarantee that the changes in Czechoslovakia are irreversible. His and Dubček's election to the highest positions in the country is the climax of the process of revival which began in November. The agreement reached during the last session of our Strike Committee was to appear in the evening news and, if Havel was elected the president, to finish the strike. Tertiary-level schools will remain in strike readiness and the structure and connections of strike committees will be preserved."<sup>[114]</sup> The same people, who started it, successfully ended the Velvet Revolution.

## Economic transition

The Czechoslovak economy in 1989 was, in comparison to other countries of the Soviet Bloc, in relatively good shape. Foreign debt was not too high, the inflation rate was low, and state finances were stable. However, it needed deep systemic changes to turn it into a free market economy.

From the very beginning, two concepts for the reform were clashing. Valtr Komárek, a former communist reformist from the Prague Spring times, represented the first idea. He promoted evolutionary, gradual changes, the slow reconstruction of the economy, similar to that led by József Antall in Hungary. The second, put forward by Václav Klaus, was far more radical. He pushed for rapid and mass privatisation and market liberalisation. He assumed complete rejection of the previous model without any “third way,” with goals reached in the quickest possible manner, which was to minimise social costs.<sup>[115]</sup> Eventually, Klaus’s concept was adopted and Komárek left the public life.

Radical reforms, which always result in social costs and unrest, in the Czechoslovak case also played an important role in the Czech-Slovak clash. Its roots were as deep as in the very beginnings of the Czechoslovak First Republic (1918–1938), when two economically different parts were put together in one state. Slovakia was always the weaker partner, even though after WWII communists were “evening the levels” of both parts of the country. As an effect, in the period between 1948 and 1989 GDP per capita calculated in Slovakia grew from 61 per cent to 88 per cent of the Czech level and personal income per capita rose from 71 per cent of that of Czechs to 91 per cent.<sup>[116]</sup> However, as a whole, Czechoslovakia suffered a huge economic decline under communist rule: taking GDP per capita into consideration it fell from the top ten in the interwar period to be ranked in the forties in late 1980s.<sup>[117]</sup> Still, the attitudes of both nations were different: the Czechs perceived communism in the economy unequivocally negatively, while the Slovaks had a much more ambiguous view of it. Therefore, the debates about the forms of economic transition were affected by discourse on the very idea of a common state.

Preparations for the introduction of the reforms took all of 1990. In September, the newly elected Federal Assembly began to make amendments to the old laws and to adopt new ones, which would make economic transition possible. Complex reform was introduced on 1 January 1991 and caused deep shock in Czechoslovak society. It brought price liberalisation, devaluation of the Czech crown, combined with its internal convertibility, and privatisation, which also led to the bankruptcy of unprofitable companies. The results affected the Slovak Republic much more, mostly

in terms of unemployment: while in the Czech Republic, the unemployment rate was only 4.1 per cent in 1991, in Slovakia it peaked at 11.8 per cent in the same period. Other indicators were quite similar for both republics, although always slightly worse for Slovakia (e.g. the inflation rate was 55.7 per cent in the Czech Republic and 60.8 per cent in the Slovak Republic; in the Czech Republic GDP fell by 14.5 per cent and in the Slovak Republic it fell by 16.4 per cent).<sup>[118]</sup>

Those differences had a fundamental influence on public mood in Slovakia. It caused still further demands expressed by Slovak politicians for differentiation of the reform between both republics. Václav Klaus strongly opposed this, claiming that the reform needed to be the same for the entire common economic space; otherwise, it could suffer from fragmentation and deformation of the transition, which would scare potential investors.<sup>[119]</sup> This showed the different social attitudes of both nations towards the market economy and socialist central planning: in 1991, almost 90 per cent of Czechs had a “definitely positive” or a “rather positive” opinion about the free market, while in Slovakia it was less than 70 per cent.<sup>[120]</sup> Slovaks were also sceptical about future developments: 43 per cent believed that the reforms would harm Slovak national interest and 57 per cent expected that the distance between Czech and Slovak economies would grow.<sup>[121]</sup>

The most important part of the reform, which had fundamental significance for the concept of the transition to a market economy, was privatisation. As in other countries in the region, the biggest problem was the lack of domestic capital, which could be invested in large companies. Three main forms of privatisation were used: small privatisation (mostly in services and trade), restitution, and large-scale privatisation (of medium-sized and large companies). The latter proved to be the most difficult and to arouse the emotions of society. In addition to the usual methods (such as public tenders and offers), the Czechoslovak authorities decided to use one innovative method: voucher privatisation. Its idea was to distribute shares in state-owned companies among the citizens of Czechoslovakia. Every adult citizen was entitled to participate in two waves of this kind of privatisation. They took place between 1992 and 1995 and distributed large numbers of shares in state-owned companies, as the vast majority of society took part in the programme. However, it also had negative consequences. The biggest

problem that appeared in following years was excessive dispersal of property among minor shareholders.<sup>[122]</sup> In many cases the state, although after the privatisation it was a minority shareholder, retained a decisive role in the enterprises. Another problem was the lack of capital that the voucher-privatised companies had, which made them less competitive in comparison to those that had been bought by the ready to invest foreign capital.<sup>[123]</sup>

The dissolution of Czechoslovakia did not cause any major turbulence for the economies of either republic. It went much more smoothly than had been predicted, especially with regard to Slovakia. Fears that Slovakia would be too weak to survive as an independent country did not prove to be reasonable to any extent. Negotiations concerning the division of property between the two newly emerging states were much easier than political disputes, and a number of agreements (e.g. about a monetary union and a customs union) were signed.<sup>[124]</sup> On 1 January 1993, two new states with their own economies and economic policies emerged. The monetary union did not survive for long: it ceased to exist in February 1993.

After the dissolution of the federation, both countries choose different paths for economic development. The Czech Republic continued Klaus's reforms, which seemed to be a real remedy for all of the problems of the Czech economy. In the years 1994 to 1996, GDP grew dynamically, with its peak growth in 1995 (at 5.9 per cent). The main incentive for this development was private domestic consumption combined with public sector expenditures. However, as a result it brought a growing deficit in the trade balance, which led to problems with the entire economy that began in late 1996.<sup>[125]</sup> A recession affected Czechs in years 1997 to 1999, when GDP fell (by 0.8 per cent in 1997, 1.2 per cent in 1998 and 0.4 per cent in 1999) and unemployment grew to 5.2 per cent in 1997, 7.5 per cent in 1998 and 9.4 per cent in 1999.<sup>[126]</sup>

The new social-democratic government established in 1998 changed the economic policies significantly: it retreated from strict fiscal and monetary policies and tried to boost demand and investments. In 2000, the Czech economy managed to climb out of recession and GDP then grew until the world economic crisis in 2008. The privatisation process proceeded and several giants were sold in following years (e.g. in the banking, telecommunications and energy sectors).<sup>[127]</sup>

As already stated, given that Klaus's 'shock therapy' was one of the factors that influenced the division of Czechoslovakia, it should not be a surprise that independent Slovakia did not continue with the same model of transition. The Slovak authorities decided to slow down the pace of reforms, especially with regard to privatisation. Between 1994 and 1998, Vladimír Mečiar's government stopped a second wave of voucher-privatisation and reversed privatisation decisions taken by the previous government of Jozef Moravčík. The new strategy was to prevent foreign investors from taking over Slovak companies, which were distributed mostly among local entrepreneurs closely connected with ruling parties. The decision-making process was transferred to the National Property Fund, fully controlled by the ruling coalition, which distributed until the end of 1997 more than 40 per cent of state-owned property in an unclear, and often very under-priced, way.<sup>[128]</sup>

After a year of falling GDP and increases in inflation in 1993 (which could be attributed to the dissolution of the federation), Slovakia began to develop, and the years 1994 and 1995 can be viewed as a period of macroeconomic stability. However, further steps by the Slovak government (which involved more emphasis placed on the role of the state in economy and social attitudes) caused a growing gap between the rate of increase of domestic demand and GDP, which resulted in a growing deficit in the trade balance. Another problem was the lack of investment capital, which was very much connected with the form of privatisation mentioned above. Still, this did not bring Slovakia into recession, but after the replacement of Mečiar's government in 1998 the need to re-orientate the principles into more liberal ones was recognized and subsequently introduced by prime minister Mikulaš Dzurinda during the next two terms (1998 to 2006).<sup>[129]</sup>

After short-term stabilisation of the Slovak economy, Dzurinda's cabinet decided to reformulate the methods of privatisation. The main idea was to make the rules clear (some of the most unclear transactions from the previous period were annulled) and to bring foreign capital to Slovakia. In Dzurinda's second term as prime minister (2002 to 2006), more fundamental liberalising reforms were introduced, with a keystone project being flat tax. Slovakia became a small, open, and liberal economy, friendly to investors (sometimes criticized for being "too friendly," giving foreign investors too favourable conditions). Fico's governments that followed did

not change the fundamentals of the system (although during the election campaign his party, as a “leftist” party, had called for major changes), which could be perceived as pragmatism and the result of close connections with business (e.g. Fico’s first cabinet included the highest number of persons from the business world in Slovak history).<sup>[130]</sup>

Both Slovakia and the Czech Republic have overcome crises and their economies have developed, they managed to transform themselves into market economies after 1989 and joined the European Union in 2004. Slovakia adopted the euro in 2009. However, not everything went perfectly in the transition process. The intertwining of politics and business and clientelism caused huge problems for both countries. The unclear ways in which the post-communist elites made their fortunes, combined with malpractices in the privatisation process, led to many deformations of the system. It is not a coincidence that the Czech and Slovak languages saw the appearance of a special word “tunneling” (*tunelování*), which describes the process of a specific kind of financial fraud: the transfer of assets and profits out of firms for the benefit of those who control them. All of those shortcomings go side by side with corruption: the Czech Republic and Slovakia lag behind in the Corruption Perception Index (in 2016, they were in places 47 and 54, respectively).<sup>[131]</sup>

## Post-communists after the Velvet Revolution

When the Velvet Revolution ended, a new political stage started to emerge in Czechoslovakia. In fact, there were two such stages. Establishing two independent social movements, i.e. the OF and the VPN, indicated that two parallel and separate political platforms had been formed in both republics, which were run by different entities.

This situation also affected the KSČ, which had to deal with a huge qualitative change and ceased to be the only political force in Czechoslovakia. In the new conditions, the paths of the Czech and Slovak communists very quickly separated, not only formally but also in terms of the direction of further activity. On 31 March 1990, a confederation of two parties was

created, namely the KSS and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy* – KSČM).

The Slovak communists adopted the path of democratisation; they chose a new party leader, Peter Weiss, a politician from the younger generation, who set himself the goal of transforming the KSS into a modern social democracy patterned on the West. The Czech communists did not go through such a transformation, as they did not radically break with their legacy, despite removing the most discredited members from their ranks.

These changes also involved the symbolic sphere. The Slovaks decided to remove the reference to communism from their party's name in 1991, renaming it the Party of the Democratic Left (*Strana demokratickej ľavice* – SDL), therefore leaving the confederation with the KSČM. However, during a referendum conducted within the Czech party in 1992, more than 75 per cent of the members rejected the idea of doing away with the adjective 'communist'.<sup>[132]</sup>

The reasons why two parties which had been one body for so many years went their separate ways are quite complex. Certainly, the purges carried out after the suppression of the Prague Spring had played an important role in that process. They had not been so deep and structural in Slovakia, so there the party had more young and dynamic members, although it is difficult to speak about any internal dissent faction. Such a thesis is best illustrated by Weiss's appointment as the chairman. That young activist had been a member of an informal group of employees of the Institute of Marxism and Leninism of the Central Committee of the KSS, where he organised seminars in which opposition intellectuals took part. At the same time, the Czech communists were led by Adamec, who was more preoccupied by the defeat in his encounter with Havel than with activities for the benefit of the party. The reasons why the two groups were so different also stemmed from the fact that the communist movement was not so well rooted in Slovakia. Consequently, in the 1950s and 1960s, the Slovak party had been joined by members whose main goal was to elevate their social status rather than to pursue any ideology.<sup>[133]</sup>

After the Velvet Revolution, the communist parties had to fight for support from the electorate and run in elections. In elections conducted before the division of the federation, they achieved similar results: in 1990, slightly above 13 per cent in both republics, and in 1992 over 14 per cent.

Therefore, even if the political paths of the two organisations split right after the Velvet Revolution, they actually developed differently only after the division of Czechoslovakia.

The KSČM did not undergo any modernisation or reform processes. In the autumn of 1990, the leader of the party, Ladislav Adamec, was replaced by a quite moderate film director, Jiří Svoboda, and in 1993, and for the following 12 years, the chair's position was taken by Miroslav Grebeníček, who opposed any changes. Until that time, it was still not quite clear in which direction the whole organisation would aim, but it became evident that the party was becoming more and more resistant to any attempts at 'liberalisation'. Consequently, less orthodox activists gradually left the party, with the last wave departing when Grebeníček was elected party leader. The decent election result obtained in 1992 assured the communists that their adopted political line (which involved defending the accomplishments of real socialism, a critical approach towards the transformation process and settling of accounts with the past, as well as relying on their hard-line electorate) was a successful strategy.<sup>[134]</sup> The next chairman of the KSČM, Vojtech Filip, who was appointed in 2005, did not change the line, which can be symbolized by a letter sent after Kim Jong-Il's death. Czech communists stated their appreciation for the Korean dictator's selfless work for the prosperity of his nation and the re-unification of the Korean peninsula.<sup>[135]</sup>

The isolationism of the communist party coincided with a certain ostracism of it. Other groups on the Czech political stage followed a tacit agreement not to cooperate with the KSČM. For the following years, until 2017, communists won over 10 per cent of the vote in parliamentary election (in the parliamentary election in 1996 10.3 per cent, in 1998 11 per cent, in 2002 18.5 per cent, in 2006 12.8 per cent, in 2010 11.3 per cent, in 2013 14.9 per cent, and in 2017 7.8 per cent), but they had an insignificant influence on Czech politics. After the election in 2002, the situation changed slightly. Due to their record-breaking support, the communists were able to fill the position of deputy chairman of the parliament and then actively participated in the process leading to the presidential election. Their voices were decisive in the electing of Václav Klaus in 2003. However, the partial emergence from isolation did not bring them a real participation in wielding power. Despite rumours, the communists did not start any lasting coalition co-operation with social democrats.

The current situation of the KSČM on the Czech political stage does not look promising. By closing themselves in a 'besieged stronghold', the communists did not manage to take control over the left, but instead were pushed to its leftward margin, with the role of the constructive left being taken by the Czech Social Democratic Party (*Česká strana sociálně demokratická* – ČSSD). The founding of the ČSSD and then reaching a significant political position in the Czech system is a phenomenon within the region. It is the only social democratic party in Central Europe, which does not have a communist origin, but instead refers to its democratic traditions from before the communist take-over and emigration. Additionally, the Czech communists were worried about their party getting smaller and its membership aging. The KSČM was losing six to seven per cent of its members annually without attracting even one per cent. It was calculated that every day the party had been losing 16 members and the average age of the comrades was higher than 70 (more than two-thirds of the party were retirees). It is no wonder that the party, which in 1992 had 350,000 members, had only barely over 37,000 in 2017.<sup>[136]</sup> After two decades of stable position, the 2017 parliamentary elections brought significant decrease of popularity of communists, which was a result both decreasing party membership and appearance of new, dynamic, anti-establishment, populist movements, who took over part of the electorate.

The Slovak communists took a different path, as they decided to make serious changes and transform the party into one of European social democrats. Thanks to breaking with their Marxist ideology and communist origin, they became a viable political partner in Slovakia. As Peter Weiss said in 1991, "It is not about the revival of an old party but rather about the establishing of a new one based on a new program which does not promote the postulates of Marxism and Leninism but the development of a pluralist parliamentary democracy."<sup>[137]</sup>

After the successful election in 1992, the party was the second-largest force in the Slovak parliament, but it decided to support the dissolution of that parliament in 1994 and an early election, counting on strengthening of their position, which was what opinion polls indicated would happen. However, the election in 1994 was a huge disappointment for the post-communists. Despite entering into a coalition with three smaller leftist groups, they won only 10.4 per cent of the vote, barely crossing the election threshold (for coalitions consisting of four parties or more, the threshold

was 10 per cent). That failure and the returning to power of Vladimír Mečiar led to a change in the leadership of the SDL, with Weiss being replaced by Jozef Migaš, a former ambassador of Slovakia to Ukraine.

The post-communists approached the next elections with the goal of ousting Mečiar, whose government led to a substantial worsening of the image of Slovakia internationally and some limitations on civil liberties in the country. The SDL managed to win 14.7 per cent of the vote and after the elections it joined a wide anti-Mečiar coalition which consisted of such parties as the centre-right Slovak Democratic Coalition (*Slovenská demokratická koalícia* – SDK), the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (*Strana maďarskej koalície* – *Magyar Koalíció Pártja* – SMK-MKP) and the centre-left wing Party of Civic Understanding (*Strana občianskeho porozumenia* – SOP).<sup>[138]</sup>

This was quite an exotic assortment, whose only 'binding agent' was the fear that Mečiar could return to power. The left-wing parties had a much weaker position in this coalition; however, that does not change the fact that SDL achieved the greatest success in its history by winning such an impressive result in the election, and gaining six ministerial posts (including the post of deputy prime minister) and the position of chairman of the parliament.

Paradoxically, the party's biggest success became the reason of its later failure. The post-communists supported the actions of Mikuláš Dzurinda when they were in the government even though those were contradictory to their programme and the expectations of its electorate. These conditions overlapped with internal frictions. In 1999, Robert Fico left the party, as he was displeased with his position in it, and at the beginning of 2002, a group of activists connected with Peter Weiss (including minister of finance Brigita Schmögnerová and minister of education Milan Ftáčnik, among others) followed suit. Fico's departure was particularly painful for the party because he was a young and very ambitious politician, and a canny technocrat who combined populist skills with social support. Fico, unhappy that he had been overlooked in ministerial appointments, decided to set up a new party, called *Smer* (Direction). Weiss and his group established the Social Democratic Alternative (*Sociálnodemokratická alternatíva* – SDA).<sup>[139]</sup>

The 2002 elections were a failure for the SDL and the SDA, which did not even win 2 per cent of the vote and did not get into the parliament. *Smer* achieved moderate success, although it had counted on attracting more

support than the 13.5 per cent it received. Unexpectedly, the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) won 6.3 per cent of the vote.<sup>[140]</sup>

The return of the KSS to mainstream politics after years of absence was a huge surprise; the party had been established in 1991, immediately after the SDL had broken with communist ideology, and in the next election, it hurdled high above the election threshold. The communists owed their success to two factors: on the one hand, the leftist electorate was disappointed with the SDL's attitude and on the other, Smer's approach was also not clear, as they defined themselves as 'a party of the third road', a technocratic organisation distancing itself from any ideology.

The following years brought a winning streak for Smer, whose leaders were able to draw conclusions from the unsatisfactory election result and defined themselves unambiguously as a left-wing organisation. In 2004, a candidate supported by Fico's party, Ivan Gašparovič, won the presidential election and at the end of that same year, the organisation absorbed smaller left-wing parties: the SDL, the SDA, and the Social Democratic Party of Slovakia (*Sociálnodemokratická strana Slovenska* – the SDSS). The name of the party was changed by adding another part: Smer-SD (*Smer-sociálna demokracia*).

Taking over the SDL was particularly beneficial for Smer, due to the considerable amount of property brought in by the main left-wing group.<sup>[141]</sup> Thus, the left side of the political stage in Slovakia became clear and a four-year term in the opposition was favourable for Smer, whose popularity among voters increased constantly. In 2006, the party won the parliamentary election by a comfortable margin, taking 50 seats of the 150 in the Slovak parliament. After forming a coalition with national populist organisations such as the Slovak National Party (*Slovenská národná strana* – SNS), led by Ján Slota and Anna Belousovová and with the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (*Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko* – HZDS), led by Vladimír Mečiar, Fico became the prime minister and his party held 11 of the 16 ministries. However, after the election in 2010, Fico's party was forced to join the opposition after a centre-right coalition was formed. That coalition turned out very weak and was riven by internal conflicts, finally collapsing in 2012, which led to an early election. Then Smer achieved an incredible success in the context of independent Slovakia and became the first party that was able to govern alone, after winning almost 45 per cent of the votes and 83

of the 150 seats in the parliament.<sup>[142]</sup> However, the triumphant Fico had to swallow a bitter pill when in 2014 he lost, ignominiously (the share of votes was almost 60:40), the presidential election to Andrej Kiska. The election for the head of state clearly showed that the electorate viewed Smer's leader distinctly negatively. This did not prevent Fico from winning another victory in the parliamentary elections in 2016, although this time, it was not so spectacular a victory. Smer won less than 30 per cent of votes and faced the necessity of establishing a coalition (quite an exotic one) with two smaller parties: the nationalist SNS and the Slovak-Hungarian MOST-HÍD.

## Lustration/De-communisation

One of the fundamental problems that a free Czechoslovakia had to face was the issue of the activity of the secret service, the StB. This body was formally dissolved on 1 February 1990 and the activity of the secret political police became one of the main topics in the political life of the country. That was mostly due to the work of the commission investigating the role of the StB in the events, which took place during the demonstration of 17 November.

Lustration in Czechoslovakia started relatively quickly. Before the first free election planned for 1990, the government adopted a special resolution that set out the rules for the lustration of the candidates for the parliament. Pursuant to this regulation, the archives of the ministry of the interior could issue lustration certificates to party authorities, but only with the consent of individual candidates. All political groups running in the election, except for the communists, exercised the right to obtain such certificates. It is hard to estimate the outcome of those procedures, but it is considered that in many cases they were effective as an element deterring former security service collaborators, a tool that helped parties make some adjustments to the planned electoral lists.<sup>[143]</sup>

The election in 1990 was connected with a serious lustration scandal involving the leader of the ČSL, Josef Bartončík. His case had been discussed long before the election. In a conversation with President Havel, he allegedly promised to withdraw from running for parliament, but he 'resorted to an illness' and 'did not manage to' withdraw his candidacy 'on time'.

Under the circumstances, a former member of the opposition, Jan Ruml, an MP representing the OF and the deputy-minister of internal affairs, publicly declared that Bartončík should not be a candidate in the election because he was a dishonest man. The following day the press explained that this regarded the connections of the ČSL leader with the security forces.<sup>[144]</sup> In the end, Bartončík ran for parliament and won a seat, but that affair ended his political career. In September 1990, he lost the party leadership to Josef Lux, and two years later, he left the party.

On 4 October 1991, the Federal Assembly adopted lustration and de-communisation laws, which were signed by President Havel three days later. They covered three categories of people: functionaries and collaborators of the StB; persons who had studied in the KGB academy in Moscow and similar Soviet institutions, and party activists at the level of county committee and above. Those who were 'positively verified' do not have a right to apply for executive positions in the state administration, the army, the counterintelligence services, the police; in the chancelleries of the president, the government, and the parliament; in the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Tribunal, the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences, public media, and in organisations, enterprises and companies in which the state has a majority stake.<sup>[145]</sup> Initially, the law was to be binding until the end of 1996, but in 2000, after two amendments, its effectiveness was extended in the Czech Republic for an indefinite period.

In Slovakia, things were different. After the division of the federation, the Slovak authorities did not continue the process of lustration and the law lost its effect at the end of 1996, as set forth in its original provisions.

The 1991 law did not address the issue of the publishing of the list of names of collaborators with the security service, which made illegal any attempts to publish it. However, a former opposition member, Petr Cibulka, in a biweekly titled *Rude Kravo* in 1992, published such a list. The register known as 'Cibulka's list' contained 220,000 names and led to numerous conflicts and lawsuits as it also revealed the names of people who could not have known about being registered by the security service (the 'trusted' and the 'candidates').

The possibility of lawfully publishing lists of StB collaborators appeared in 2002, when legislators ordered that public access to the whole register should be made available. Pursuant to this regulation, in 2003 the Czech

Ministry of Interior published on the Internet and in a form of a booklet a list of 75,000 names (in comparison with 'Cibulka's list', it did not contain names of the 'trusted' and the 'candidates' or any citizens of Slovakia).<sup>[146]</sup>

The Czech Republic quickly adopted statutory regulations regarding lustration and de-communisation, but it hesitated for quite a long time before setting up an institution to deal with storing, examining and making public the files created by the security service. Only in 2005 did a group of 19 senators submit a draft law regarding the Nation's Remembrance Institute. Finally, despite the objections raised by the communists and social democrats, the parliament voted to set up such an institution under the name the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (*Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů* – ÚSTR), which started its activity on 1 August 2007. It is headed by a Council consisting of seven members, which appoints the Institute's director (the first director of the Institute was historian Pavel Žáček). The Institute deals with matters regarding both totalitarian regimes, namely the Nazi occupation from 1938 to 1945 and the communist rule from 1948 to 1989.<sup>[147]</sup>

Establishing the Czech Institute caused many controversies similar to those in other countries. The project was criticised by the left wing, both those of communist origins and social democrats who did not come from the former regime. At the end of 2007, a group of MPs from both of those groups submitted a motion to the Constitutional Tribunal to abolish the Institute on the grounds that it was an institution, which politicised historical debate and limited the freedom of research. An additional argument against it was the name of the Institute, which according to Zdeněk Jičínský, the author of the motion, did not take into consideration the circumstances that the communist regime was not totalitarian for the whole time. The Tribunal did not share the reservations expressed by the left wing and rejected the motion. However, the leader of social democrats, Jiří Paroubek, announced further attempts to abolish the Institute, if not by a court order, then by way of a political decision made after winning the next election.<sup>[148]</sup>

The activity of the Institute in the following years was further complicated by other disruptions of a political and personal kind. Between 2008 and 2015, six new directors were appointed and new changes took place in a quite stormy atmosphere, with numerous accusations being made of political purges. The atmosphere around the Institute became particularly tense after

the dismissal of director Daniel Herman in 2013, which led to an intense political debate, and even the president and the prime minister expressed their opinions on the subject. This indirectly caused one of the most spectacular failures of the Institute in the international arena. First, its membership rights were suspended by the leadership of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience, and in response the Institute withdrew from this organisation, even though the ÚSTR had been its initiator and a founding member (the leadership of the Platform discussed the ÚSTR at a special meeting with prime minister Bohuslav Sobotka ). Since then the Institute has not regained its former position.

The Platform of European Memory and Conscience is an international organisation with its seat in Prague. Its aim is to settle communist crimes and to increase public awareness about criminal totalitarian regimes.<sup>[149]</sup> It was established in October 2011 at the Visegrad Prime Ministers summit; at the end of 2017 it had 57 member organisations from 13 EU countries, Albania, Moldova, Ukraine, Iceland, Canada and the United States. The main goal it focuses on today is the creation of an international tribunal that could judge the perpetrators of communist crimes. To achieve this, the Platform launched the project “Justice 2.0”. Among the cases investigated, there are the killings at the Iron Curtain’s borders and anti-Turkish actions in Bulgaria.<sup>[150]</sup> In March 2016, the Platform, together with partner organisations, filed a criminal complaint against the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia with the police and the state prosecutor’s office.<sup>[151]</sup>

The settling of accounts with the past in the Czech Republic was connected with many widely debated and controversial cases. One of those was the case of Jan Kavan, a returned emigrant from the period of the Prague Spring, who became the minister of foreign affairs in the social-democratic government of Miloš Zeman (1998–2002) and the President of the UN General Assembly (2002–2003).

Kavan was a supporter of the lustration regulations, but at the beginning of the 1990s some information appeared in the press that he had reported on his colleagues and provided information to the Czechoslovak intelligence resident in London. The accused maintained that he had no idea about any connections of the embassy employee with the intelligence services, and the files contained no documentation signed by him. In 1996, the court

acquitted him of these charges. In the eyes of the public he remains a mysterious figure, it is still not completely clear whether he was merely a chat-terbox or a conscious informant.<sup>[152]</sup>

A decade later, the cases of two ministers from the government of national understanding established in the time of the Velvet Revolution gained high-profile notoriety: minister of national defence Miroslav Vacek and minister of the interior Richard Sacher. In spring 2007, it transpired that they had both co-operated with the communist counterintelligence and the documents revealing that activity had been miraculously saved from being destroyed. In the case of Vacek, a communist and a general in the people's army, this information was not unusual, but the co-operation of Sacher, affiliated with the Christian Democrats – People's Party, who had been a co-initiator of the 'wild lustration' in March and April 1990, was quite shocking and sensational.<sup>[153]</sup> Sacher, as the minister of the interior, had had access to the archives and thus the role he played in discrediting his party colleague Bartončík caused a controversy from the start.

A bigger scandal related to the publishing of information from the StB's archives involved the eminent Czech writer Milan Kundera. On 13 October 2008, the *Respekt* weekly magazine printed extensive material in which the head of the oral history section of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, Adam Hradilek, accused Kundera of denouncing a young pilot named Miroslav Dvořáček to the authorities, which led to Dvořáček being sentenced in 1950 to 22 years in a labour camp, where he had spent over 13 years.<sup>[154]</sup> Kundera himself emphatically rejected the accusation and demanded an apology. He also found many supporters, who stressed that the accusation was based on scant evidence and criticised the manner of its publication. *Respekt* refused to publish an apology, claiming that the accused had not explained his involvement in the denunciation and that the documents unambiguously indicated that he had played a role in it.

The heated debate around the Kundera case confirmed that Czechs still did not have any impression that the accounts with the communist past had been settled in their country. Almost 40 per cent of them are in favour of lustration laws (about 30 per cent think the opposite), and only 16 per cent of Czechs feel that StB collaborators have already been held responsible for their past deeds (54 per cent of the respondents are of the opposite

opinion).<sup>[155]</sup> However, in the last decade, the number of those, who believe that it should still be in force is decreasing (about 25 per cent in 2014), with increasing number of Czechs believing that the laws were necessary in the past but are not anymore (40 per cent in 2014).<sup>[156]</sup>

Slovak settlements with the communism took a different course to Czech ones. When the lustration laws inherited from the federation expired, Slovakia never adopted any similar solutions. Being a former StB collaborator does not have any legal consequences and does not limit access to any offices in the state administration (unlike in the Czech Republic). Even concealing that fact does not involve any negative consequences (unlike in Poland). One of the most glaring examples of the Slovak attitude towards the issue of punishing functionaries of the communist regime is the case of Alojz Lorenc, the deputy minister of the interior responsible for the security services in the late 1980s. In 1992, he was sentenced to four years in prison by a court in Prague, but he did not serve his sentence, as after the division of the federation, being a citizen of Slovakia, he refused to do so. In Slovakia, the case was dismissed in 1998; then in 2002, Lorenc received a three-year sentence, suspended for five years. Until December 2010, he was an advisor in the Penta fund (the owners of which are graduates of MGIMO in Moscow<sup>[157]</sup>).

After several years of legal vacuum regarding the publication of secret service files, finally some legal solutions were adopted which ensured an extensive disclosure of the archives. This demand is supposed to be guarded by the Nation's Memory Institute (*Ústav pamäti národa* – the ÚPN), established by an act of 19 August 2002 and active since 2003. The act also regulates the issue of making available the files of security services from 1939–1989. Pursuant to its provisions, every citizen has the right to address to the Institute an inquiry as to whether the StB had any files on him; in the case of an affirmative answer, he/she should have an opportunity to inspect those files. This act also imposed an obligation on all institutions with access to security service materials to make those available to the ÚPN free of charge. The founder and first director of the Institute was Ján Langoš, an opposition member for many years, a former Czechoslovak interior minister (1990–1992), and the co-author of the lustration procedure in Czechoslovakia.

Pursuant to the act on the ÚPN, he published on the internet a list of persons who were in the Slovak register of the StB. This register was divided into three categories: people who were checked upon, people who were enemies of the system, and collaborators (in total 81,000 names). Simultaneously, the website of the Institute published the list of StB employees. These materials were the subject of much controversy and many conflicts, and led to lawsuits filed against the Institute. The most heated debates have surrounded the names connected with the Church.

Christian circles had provided the strongest support for the opposition movements in Slovakia and therefore the communist services had tried to infiltrate them in the deepest manner. The list of names published on the internet contained such people as Archbishop of Trnava Ján Sokol and General Bishop of the Evangelic Church Julius Filo.<sup>[158]</sup> Both of them flatly rejected the accusations. In a special statement, Abp. Sokol wrote, "I declare once again and confirm that I never intentionally collaborated with the StB, and I never consciously passed any information to StB that would harm the Catholic Church or any of my compatriots."<sup>[159]</sup> However, in May 2009 new ambiguities appeared concerning Sokol: according to the information acquired by the ÚPN, in 1998 he had allegedly given half a billion Slovak crowns to former StB agent Štefan Náhlik.<sup>[160]</sup>

Although in the years 2002–2006, when the right-wing coalition was in power, there was a political consensus regarding the ÚPN, the situation of this institution got much worse after the 2006 election, when the leftist-nationalist coalition was established. The change of the government coincided with the death of the charismatic and popular Langoš, which further weakened the ÚPN. As a result of the decisions taken by the coalition, the SNS was supposed to propose a candidate to succeed Langoš and after much hesitation (some potential candidates refused to accept the post), it put forward the candidacy of a young historian, Ivan Petránský, who was officially appointed to this post by parliament on 1 February 2007. It soon turned out that director Petránský was too 'independent' and the Institute was attacked by the coalition, particularly the SNS, which in April 2008 submitted a motion for the dissolving of the ÚPN (which was connected with the fact that the Institute published the name of Jan Slota, the leader of the SNS, in a criminal context). This wave of harassment of the ÚPN by

the coalition was also evident when in January 2007 the Ministry of Justice terminated the lease agreement for the building occupied by the Institute and it had to move to another seat. Although the Institute survived, the atmosphere around the ÚPN created by the governing parties was very tense. On the other hand, liberal circles accused the Institute managed by Petranský of excessively extolling the Slovak Republic in the years 1939–1945 and rehabilitating the Ludák regime and Father Josef Tiso.

The appointment of the new head of the ÚPN in 2012 and 2013 was connected with more trouble. In the end, Ondrej Krajňák became the new director<sup>[161]</sup> and he had to face a huge challenge right at the beginning of his term: a court dispute with Andrej Babiš, a powerful Czech oligarch and politician. An examination of the archives kept in the Institute revealed that he had co-operated with the StB, and Babiš reacted by filing a lawsuit against the Institute. In June 2014, the court in Bratislava ruled that he was right, because his name had been placed in the security files with no legal grounds; ÚPN filed an appeal.<sup>[162]</sup> It has been successful, as in October 2017, the Constitutional Court issued a verdict that former StB officers are *a priori* untrustworthy while testifying about their collaborators. This verdict caused return of the case to the Regional Court in Bratislava, where Babiš's lawsuit against his StB registration has been dismissed.<sup>[163]</sup>

The case of Andrej Babiš is one of the most spectacular and significant for several problems both the Czech Republic and Slovakia face. The matters involving this Czech entrepreneur, oligarch and politician of Slovak descent trouble both states, as the documents concerning his contacts with communist secret services are in the Slovak archives. His case personifies the problems of both countries with lustration and communist pasts. In addition, Babiš also symbolizes questionable ties between politics and business – between 2014 and 2017, he was deputy prime minister and minister of finance of the Czech Republic and in 2017 he became the prime minister, but also is a billionaire, owner of large holding Agrofert composed of many entities including the biggest media concern (e.g. publisher of two main dailies *Lidové noviny* and *Mladá fronta Dnes*).<sup>[164]</sup> His alleged fraud of the EU-subsidies was a subject of an investigation by both the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and the Czech police. Charges against him were dropped by the prosecutors but in a later turn of events, the prosecutor-general

ordered the prosecution to reopen the case.<sup>[165]</sup> A European Commission audit report, still under finalisation and not publicly available at the time of the final drafting of this chapter, reportedly points to the prime minister's conflict of interest related to his business activities.<sup>[166]</sup>

## Changes in the Symbolism and Collective Memory

Together with the fall of communism, it was necessary to introduce thorough changes regarding symbols, which would abolish the ideological remnants of the former regime in the names, celebrations, and state holidays. President Havel started the whole process when, in January 1990, he submitted to the parliament a motion to change the name of the country and state symbols. In his opinion, removing the adjective 'socialist' from the name of the country should not cause any controversy, but it actually led to a serious Czech-Slovak conflict.

For Slovaks, it was not the matter of removing one adjective, but it meant returning to the name of the country from the time of the First Republic (1918–1938), when Czechoslovakia had been a unitary state with 'Czechoslovakism' (i.e. the existence of one Czechoslovak nation) as state ideology. Bratislava could not possibly accept that. The Slovaks argued that since 1969, the country had been a federation and the new name should take that into account. On the other hand, the Czechs did not want to accept the country's name being written with a hyphen (Czecho-Slovakia), as such a name had appeared after the announcing of Slovak autonomy in 1938, which was connected with the trauma of the Munich Agreement<sup>[167]</sup> (known to Czechs and Slovaks as the Munich Diktat, or the Munich Betrayal). In the end, after a three-month debate, a compromise was reached: the full country name was to be the Czech and Slovak Federation Republic and the abbreviated version of the name (Czechoslovakia or Czecho-Slovakia) would be written in Czech as one word and in Slovak with a hyphen.<sup>[168]</sup> Foreign countries had the biggest problems with this name, as some unambiguous explanation was often lacking.

In communist Czechoslovakia, 9 May was a state holiday (*státní svátek*): Liberation Day. Other public holidays (*dny pracovního klidu*) on which people did not work were as follows: New Year's Day, Easter Monday, 1 May (Labour Day), 28 October (the Day of the Establishing of Czechoslovakia), and the two days of Christmas. Important days (*významné dny*) were 25 February (the anniversary of the communist coup d'état in Czechoslovakia in 1948), 29 August (the Slovak National Uprising) and 7 November (the Great October Revolution). The national commemoration days (*památné dny*) were 5 and 6 July (the Day of Saints Cyril and Methodius and the Jan Hus Day, commemorating his burning at the stake in 1415).<sup>[169]</sup> The last two categories of holidays were working days.

In 1975, the act was amended: 28 October lost the status of a non-working day and was moved to the category of 'important days' (where it remained until 1988, when it was designated as the second state holiday).

After the Velvet Revolution, many significant changes were made to the hierarchy of state holidays and public holidays. Independence Day (28 October) and Liberation Day remained state holidays (although in 1991 the date of Liberation Day was moved from 9 to 8 May and in 2004 in the Czech Republic its official name was changed to Victory Day). In 1990, 5 July (the Day of Saints Cyril and Methodius) and 6 July (the Jan Hus Day) also became state holidays.

The anniversary of the Great October Revolution and the Czechoslovak communist coup d'état in 1948 were removed from the list of important days.

After the 1992 'Velvet Divorce', i.e. the creation, as of 1 January 1993, of two independent countries: the Czech Republic and Slovakia, each country added various dates to the list of state or public holidays.

In the Czech Republic, in 2000, a new act on holidays was passed which replaced the binding one that had been in force (although with many changes) since its adoption in 1951. The new act increased the number of state holidays to include St. Wenceslas Day (the first King of Bohemia) and 17 November as the Day of Struggle for Freedom and Democracy (the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution). Other public holidays have included the New Year's Day, Easter Monday, 1 May, Christmas Eve and the two days of Christmas. The designated important days include the following dates: 27 January, the Day Commemorating the Victims of Holocaust and the Day for Preventing Crimes against Humanity; 8 March, Women's Day; 12 March, the Day

of Joining NATO; 5 May, Prague Uprising Day (known as the May Uprising of the Czech People); 27 June, the Day Commemorating the Victims of the Communist Regime, and 11 November, the Day of War Veterans.<sup>[170]</sup>

Shortly after gaining independence, Slovakia also took care of statutory regulations regarding the list of state holidays, public holidays, and commemoration days. In October 1993, a relevant act was passed which replaced all former regulations adopted during the federation era.<sup>[171]</sup> Pursuant to the new act, the following days became state holidays: 1 January, the Day of the Establishment of the Slovak Republic; 5 July, the Day of Saints Cyril and Methodius; 29 August, the Anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising; and 1 September, the Day of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. A later amendment adopted in 2001 added to the list a day commemorating the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution (17 November), which became the Day of the Struggle for Freedom and Democracy. The public holidays are as follows: 6 January, Epiphany; Good Friday; Easter Monday; 1 May, Labour Day; 15 September, the Day of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, the Patron Saint of Slovakia; 1 November, All Saints' Day; and also Christmas Eve and the two days of Christmas. In 1996, 8 May was also added to this list, as the Day of the Victory over Fascism.

The Slovak list of commemoration days, which are working days, is very long. It includes the following: 25 March (the anniversary of the Candle Demonstration) as the Day of the Struggle for Human Rights; 13 April (the anniversary of the dissolving of male monasteries in Czechoslovakia) as the Day of the Unfairly Persecuted; 4 May, the Anniversary of the Death of Milan Rastislav Štefánik; 7 June, the Anniversary of the Memorandum of the Slovak Nation; 5 July, the Day of Slovaks Living Abroad; 17 July, the Anniversary of the Declaration of the Independence of the Slovak Republic; 4 August, the Day of Matica Slovenská;<sup>[172]</sup> 9 September, the Day of the Victims of Holocaust and of Racial Violence (the anniversary of the introduction in WWII Slovakia of what is referred to as the Jewish Code); 19 September, the Day of the Establishment of the Slovak National Council; 6 October, the Day of Dukla Pass Victims (on the anniversary of the battle of Dukla pass in the Carpathians in 1944); 27 October, Černová Tragedy Day (the symbol of Slovak oppression in the Habsburg times); 28 October, the Day of the Establishment of an independent Czecho-Slovak State; 29 October, the Day

of the Birth of Ludovít Štúr; 30 October, the Anniversary of the Declaration of the Slovak Nation; 31 October, Reformation Day, and 30 December, the Day of the Declaration of Slovakia as an Independent Ecclesiastic Province.

The fall of communism required a wide-ranging operation of changing the names of streets, schools and other institutions. The biggest and most symbolic change was the above-mentioned return of Gottwaldov to the historic name Zlín. Numerous streets named after communist leaders were renamed. In particular, the names of the following patrons were replaced: Klement Gottwald, Antonín Zápotocký and Ludvík Svoboda; as were communist war heroes such as Jan Šverma and Julius Fučík, and all the street names related to the Soviet Union (e.g. the Red Army or the Great October Revolution) and the international communist movement (Marx, Engels, and Lenin). They were replaced and numerous squares, harbours, bridges and streets were named after eminent historic figures of the First Republic, such as Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Edvard Beneš and Alois Rašín, and those from earlier times (for example Jan Hus).

Some changes had extremely symbolic meaning. For instance, the Red Army Square in the old town of Prague was renamed Jan Palach Square, after the man who had lost his life protesting against the invasion by the Soviet Army. In Bratislava, one of the first changes was Gottwald Square, which in 1989 became Freedom Square. In order to understand the scale of the action, it is important to note that in Brno, the largest city in Moravia, more than 200 of the 1,600 existing streets had their names changed in the period of 1990–1996.<sup>[173]</sup>

The process went on for years to come, although on a much smaller scale. In February 2009, Havelkova Street in Žižkov (in Prague) was renamed. Its former patron was the secretary of the communist Red Labour Union (*Rudé odbory*) and the new one was Ryszard Siwiec, a Pole who committed self-immolation in September 1968, in protest against the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The change was even more symbolic if we consider that this street is the location of the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, the institution that analyses crimes of communism.

The change of symbols also involved banknotes, albeit in a limited scope. The first banknote which was withdrawn from the circulation was the one-hundred crown note bearing the image of Klement Gottwald, which had

actually only been issued in October 1989 and became invalid in December of that year. Its short life was marked with many 'wounds' because people who did not want to accept it often damaged it or scribbled on it. Under the circumstances, another note returned to circulation, the one that had been in use in 1961 and did not have such clear ideological connotations; it survived until the end of Czechoslovakia.<sup>[174]</sup>

Changes in the sphere of symbols found their reflection in the collective memory of Czechs and Slovaks. A survey conducted by Czech television, aimed at finding the most outstanding representative of the Czech nation revealed that Charles IV of Luxembourg took the first place; Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk took the second place, and Havel took the third place,<sup>[175]</sup> by contrast, Klement Gottwald was considered the greatest villain.<sup>[176]</sup>

This largely corresponds with the tradition that Czech authorities tried to set after the Velvet Revolution. The memory of the First Republic actually does not raise any controversies and is a reason of pride. Havel frequently emphasised the role of Masaryk, a president-philosopher and the founder of Czechoslovakia. Havel was also commonly perceived as the ideological successor of Masaryk. Also the main antagonist of Havel, Vaclav Klaus, did not decide to change the historical policy in any significant way, although he placed the emphasis on different moments, for example he gave great attention to the role played by Edvard Beneš.<sup>[177]</sup>

Together with overcoming the process of "normalisation" memory loss", Czech disputes about history have become increasingly heated. In the last dozen years or so, the biggest controversy built up around the issue of the Mašin brothers and their military group, which was active in the years 1950–1953 in Czechoslovakia. In that time they carried out several actions in which they killed three StB and militia functionaries and later, when they were forcing their way through the GDR to the West, three East German militia officers. These actions are still the subject of dispute. The majority of Czech society considers them murderers rather than heroes and President Klaus refused to honour them with the Order of the White Lion. However, the Mašin brothers have some supporters who consider their struggle to be a fight against the totalitarian system. In 2008, Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek decided to award them the newly established Medal of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic. The honouring of representatives of the armed resistance movement

by the head of the Czech government triggered another wave of polemics in the press and television and very significantly contributed to an increase in interest in historical debate. Topolanek's actions were part of a wider strategy of promoting new or forgotten heroes. The head of the government perceived as particularly significant many historical figures who had fought against communism (although not necessarily as the Mašins had done with weapons in their hands). The list includes such names as: one of the founders of the First Republic, Alois Rašín; Josef Šoupal, an economist and the first minister of finance, who was shot dead by a communist, and František Kriegel, who, being a communist himself, took an active part in the reforms of the Prague Spring. Kriegel was the only one among the kidnapped and transported to Moscow representatives of the Czechoslovak authorities, who refused to sign the capitulation act, the so-called Moscow Protocol.<sup>[178]</sup>

Another event related to the trend of settling accounts with the communist past was not merely symbolic. It was a trial, which ended with a six-year prison sentence for prosecutor Ludmila Brožová-Polednová, who was found guilty of participating in show trials. In the Stalinist times, she had conducted many political trials and had prosecuted Milada Horáková, the accused in one of the most infamous cases, which ended with a death sentence. However, this case is unique, as many judges and prosecutors active in Stalinist times remained unpunished.

In Slovakia, the reconstruction of the collective memory has taken a different course. The communist period has not been an essential element of the public debate, because the main dispute goes on between the supporters of the traditions of the Slovak Republic from the period of World War II and the supporters of the Slovak National Uprising. This dispute continues to be particularly stormy and regards the most fundamental ideological underpinnings of Slovak statehood. The issue of the fall of communism, or even the creation of independent Slovakia in 1993, remains rather peripheral in this context. The issue of the pantheon of national heroes evokes particularly heated debates, but it does not include any names from the years 1945–1989; Dubček is an exception to this rule.<sup>[179]</sup>

This distinctness of Slovak discourse has many reasons, the most important of which seems to be the fact that Slovakia is at a different stage of the debate regarding national identity. The Slovak nation was established

quite recently, in the mid-1800s. What is more, it was shaped as a non-historic nation, as Slovaks had never been able to have a completely free public debate focused on their national identity. In the 19th century, Hungary made that impossible, as Slovakia was a part of it. After World War I, Czechoslovakism, i.e. the idea of one Czechoslovak nation, was to blame, and after World War II, the communist regime was the obstacle.

In addition, the short period of the existence of a formally independent Slovak Republic (1939–1945) did not facilitate any free debate, because it was an undemocratic entity. Due to all that, only after 1989 could Slovaks for the first time ‘immerse’ themselves in historical deliberations and they began with the most vital issues for them.

The reason for this state of affairs is also different from the Czechs’ perception of the period of the communist rule. Slovaks perceive much more positive aspects in the times when the country went through the period of dynamic industrialisation and almost caught up with the Czech Republic in terms of economic development; whereas as far as the state and legal matters are concerned, a federal model was created and the notion of Czechoslovakism was finally abandoned. Moreover, after the suppression of the Prague Spring, Slovakia was not affected by such level of repressions as the Czech Republic, and even the Soviet invasion was not so traumatic in comparison.

In Slovakia, nobody is astonished by monuments commemorating the Red Army and its role in liberating Czechoslovakia, which stand in main squares in the very centres of cities. In Banská Bystrica, a glistening star tops a monumental statue with a spire, while in Košice the memorial to the liberators is decorated with many images of the hammer and sickle.

In opinion polls conducted in 2003–2005 in Slovakia respondents said that the period of ‘normalisation’ had been the best time for the country in terms of economy, living conditions, education, and culture, which indicates a clear success of the Husák version of ‘goulash socialism’. As far as the persons who influenced the history of Slovakia in the most positive way, the respondents put the names in the following order: Alexander Dubček, Milan Rastislav Štefánik, Vladimír Mečiar, Ľudovít Štúr, Gustáv Husák, and Tomáš Masaryk. The presence of Husák on this list and the fact that he was selected by as many as 11.4 per cent of the respondents (slightly fewer than Štúr, who was considered the person who had ‘woken up’ the Slovak nation

in the 19th century) might be particularly surprising. The list of ‘villains’ included the following names: Mečiar, Josef Tiso, Mikuláš Dzurinda, Biľak, Hitler, Husák, and Masaryk.<sup>[180]</sup>

Both lists include many names that overlap, which demonstrates how far Slovakia is from any consensus with regard to its national heroes.

In 2001, Martin M. Šimečka, a Slovak journalist and a long-standing editor-in-chief of *SME* daily wrote an essay in which he summed up the Slovak nostalgia for ‘real socialism’. In the essay, he observed that his compatriots have a peculiar approach towards the past; he also suggested that probably Rudolf Schuster, who was a former communist activist and the country’s president at that time, would have become the head of state even if the Velvet Revolution had not taken place. In the same text, he remarks that politicians unwillingly comment on the events from 17 November, usually uttering a cliché such as “it was an important day in our history”. He thought it significant that, ten years after those events, a politician appeared who when asked what he had been doing that day gave an unusual answer: “Perhaps it sounds terrible, but I do not remember, I had other things to do then”. Those were the words of Robert Fico, who by then had already become the most popular politician in Slovakia.<sup>[181]</sup>

After several years, these extremely clever and accurate observations can be only summed up by stating that the politician mentioned above became the Slovak prime minister and he did not change his attitude to history. Anyone who has even for a moment thought about his career could conclude that it would be easy to imagine that he could have achieved a similar position in communist Czechoslovakia.

## Communism in Pop-culture

The communist period is still very vivid in the memory of Czechs and Slovaks and, additionally, it is often associated with the time of common statehood. For millions of people who are now middle aged or older the communist regime, particularly its ‘normalisation’ version, is connected with pleasant memories of old times when they were young; negative memories have already been wiped out by the passing of time. No wonder that (just like

in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe), in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia, one can find some nostalgia for the past.

This phenomenon usually manifests itself by a positive attitude towards goods from the 1970s and 1980s, which have often gained the status of 'iconic' products. Naturally, this also refers to the products of communist mass culture, which have experienced a renaissance. Television stations in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia have revived popular series from the previous era (such as *Nemocnice na kraji města*, *Žena za pultem* and *Okres na severu*; the last of those three was aired at the beginning of 2009 by Slovak television station TV JOJ and is about work of a functionary in a county national council) and films, which are often sold as DVDs with newspapers. Cartoons also enjoy everlasting popularity, not only the most famous ones, such as *Krtek* and *Rumcajs*, but also the lesser known, such as *O makové panence*.

Pop music, particularly from the 1980s, draws great interest. The position of Karel Gott is unquestionable; he planned to end his career at the beginning of the 1990s, but after the triumph of his 'farewell tour', he changed his mind and made a very successful comeback.

The career of another Czechoslovak star, Helena Vondráčková, took a different course: her fame faded a little in the 1990s, but in 2000, she came back triumphantly with an album titled *Vodopád*. Singer and songwriter Michal David, who had been very popular in the 1980s, made a huge contribution to her success. He was the writer of the hit single *Dlouhá noc*, which was in the style of 1980s disco music. David took advantage of the revival of the fashion for disco hits from twenty years before and regained considerable popularity in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The Slovak pop-rock group *Elán* is still at the top, although they enjoyed the peak of popularity more than 30 years ago after releasing many hits. Their position on the Slovak and Czech stage remained very strong: in 2003, about 80,000 fans attended the group's concert in Letná, and in 2007, the group had a concert at the prestigious Carnegie Hall in New York, which drew a full house. In 2014, *Elán* released the album *Živých nás nedostanú* (*They Will Not Get Us Alive*), which gave the title to their 2016 tour and which has had additional three releases, the last one in 2017 in the form of an LP.

Everyday objects, decorative arts and crafts, and luxury goods from the past era are also remembered with emotional attachment. This

particularly refers to legendary Škoda vehicles, such as the popular Škoda 1000 MB, launched on the market in the mid-1960s, and the model 120 (and its less powerful version, the model 105) produced from 1976 to 1990. Those cars were of high quality and were the object of dreams, including in other countries of the communist Bloc. Many of them can still be seen on Czech and Slovak roads.

To this day two of the most popular cigarette brands are *Petra* and *Sparta*, instant cocoa is still associated with the household name *Granko*, and factory workers use hand washing liquid by *Solvina*. The popularity of numerous sweets and drinks survived after the Velvet Revolution. The legendary *Kofola*, which beats world giants into the ground in Prague and Bratislava, has already been mentioned, but equally popular are *Lentilky*, chocolate candies in a colourful sugar coating which are incredibly popular abroad. In Slovakia, fudge called *Krovky* is still very popular and often bought, one can purchase it by weight at street stalls.

The fondness for products from the 1970s and 80s has attracted the attention of the creators of exhibitions. In 2007, the Prague Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design organised an exhibition called *Husákovo 3+1*, showing a typical interior decoration of a flat in a *Panelák* (panel building) in the times of 'normalisation'. Its creators tried to convey the spirit of the era in a faithful way, showing what the life of an average family with two children looked like in a 70 m<sup>2</sup> flat. In the living room, there was an immortal shelving unit with a black and white *Tesla* television set and the walls were decorated with wallpaper from the GDR. In the children's room next to a bunk bed, there were some popular toys from the era, such as a set of *Merkur* building blocks, and the children's book *Honzíkova cesta*; in the kitchen there was household equipment produced by the-then monopolist *Eta* and some foodstuffs packaging.<sup>[182]</sup>

At the same time, an exhibition opened in Bratislava entitled *Stratený čas?* (*The Lost Time? Slovakia 1969–1989 in documentary photography*), which showed Slovakia at the time of 'normalisation' in over a thousand of documentary photographs. The aim of the creators of the exhibition, as they themselves underlined, was to show those twenty years without 'cheap sentimentalism' but in its multifaceted character, unlike the exhibition in Prague.<sup>[183]</sup>

The internet is, of course, a mine of memories. Many websites have sprung up which appeal to the nostalgia for products from communist times. Similar bookmarks are also found on the websites of the most widely read newspapers and journals. *Sme* in Bratislava conducted a survey on the most popular symbols of socialism, both films (a work condemning 'the imperialist operation of dropping potato bugs on the country's crops' won) and photographs. The five most popular images of communism included the following: a box of Christmas chocolates, a television appearance by Gustáv Husák, a five hundred Czechoslovak koruna banknote, a bar of *Green Apple* soap, and *Pedro* chewing gum.<sup>[184]</sup>

The Czech *Mlada Fronta DNES* developed an even more sophisticated service. Its website posted a virtual communist department store, where numerous sections could be visited (groceries, drugstore, clothing, furniture, etc.), in which visitors could find pictures of many products from that time.<sup>[185]</sup>

In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the communist era has also become the groundwork for contemporary pop-culture, but to a much lesser extent. However, in both countries several interesting films have been produced, which referred to various periods of the communist regime. This topic was particularly interesting for Czech director Jan Hřebejk, who in his two productions portrayed the Czechoslovak reality of the 1960s and 1980s. The first one, a 1999 tragicomedy titled *Pelíšky* (*Cosy Dens*) shows Czechoslovakia in the time of the Prague Spring, not through great politics and increasing liberty but by focusing on two conflicted families living under one roof, namely the family of a communist named Šebek and an anti-communist named Kraus. Despite much antagonism, the neighbours have a lot in common: Šebek's son is in love with Kraus' daughter, and after the death of his wife, Kraus himself falls in love with and marries the sister-in-law of his antagonist.

Both families are portrayed in an amusing way. Šebek's childish faith in the accomplishments of communism (such as unbreakable glasses, which his son breaks shortly after they are bought, or the plastic tea spoons from the GDR, which melt after being immersed in hot coffee) and the character of the temperamental Kraus awaiting the fall of communism cause the viewer to take the main figures with a pinch of salt. However, the ending, i.e. the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies, destroys this

picture. It is a terrible trauma for everyone; it destroys hope, and takes away any faith. Šebek unsuccessfully attempts suicide and Kraus emigrates. The external intervention means the end of the world, both for the ideological communist and for the fervent anti-communist.

Another film directed by Hřebejk, *Pupendo* (2003), presents Czechoslovakia in the 1980s, during the stagnation period of the late 'normalisation'. Again the country's fate is shown in the background of the everyday life of two families: a sculptor named Mára, who lives in poverty because he refuses to blend into the mimicry of Husák's universe and must earn his keep by selling piggy banks he produces himself; and comrade Břečka, a school director who has mastered the art of going with the flow, or so it would seem (as he describes it himself, "I just do not say what I think"). Despite different political views, Břečka wants to help Mára and gives him a job in the school, which he runs. Eventually, the artist agrees even to create a monument to a Soviet marshal.

The adventures of the main characters, particularly the problems that they encounter after their names appear in a broadcast by the Voice of America, exquisitely portray the tense atmosphere in Czechoslovakia. It is best summed up by Alena, the sculptor's wife, during a fervent discussion after the said broadcast, "Look at yourselves and look what they have done to us. Nothing has even happened to anyone yet, and we are already shitting ourselves with fear. That is how they wanted to finish us off."

In his work, Hřebejk also addressed the issue of people entangled in co-operation with the security service and the trauma of that being revealed after the collapse of communism. This problem appears in the 2009 film *Kawasakiho růže* (*Kawasaki Rose*), which tells the complicated life stories of three main characters: two men who made advances towards the same woman in the previous era. It is the story of: Pavel, who decided to co-operate with the security services when he was young in order to get rid of his rival; his wife Jana, who decided to marry Pavel despite knowing about it and for the rest of her life has helped him to maintain the image of a steadfast moral authority; and Borek, who had to leave the country as a result of the denunciation. The past catches up with the characters after many years and facing it is not easy for any of them.

## The Actors in the Velvet Revolution: The Years After

Shortly after Havel's election as president, Marián Čalfa left the KSČ and in January 1990 became a member of the VPN. He was the head of the 'government of national understanding', which functioned until the first free election in June 1990, but afterwards Čalfa was again appointed prime minister. He was in charge of the government of the OF-VPN coalition, with the support of the Christian Democratic Movement (*Křesťanskodemokratické hnutie – KDH*) for a two-year term of office, carrying out many fundamental reforms, which transformed Czechoslovakia into a democratic country with a market economy. Čalfa was an avowed supporter of maintaining the Czech-Slovak Federation, but he was not able to find any solutions that would satisfy both sides. After the division of the country, he took Czech citizenship and settled down in Prague. After the VPN split in April 1991, he became a member of the liberal Civil Democratic Union (*Občianská demokratická únia – ODÚ*), which suffered a complete defeat in the election in June 1992, failing to get into parliament. After this failure, Čalfa withdrew from political life and devoted himself to the legal practice, setting up a law firm named 'Čalfa, Bartosik a partneři', which has operated successfully to this day.

At the end of the Velvet Revolution, Ladislav Adamec was chosen as chairman of the KSČ, but he was not able to carry out any internal reforms and in September 1990, he was dismissed from that position. He had been one of the key figures of the Velvet Revolution, but during the Revolution, he suffered a huge political defeat from which he was not able to recover. In 1990, he was elected as a member of the Federation Assembly but he did not play any role in there and after his term ended, he withdrew from politics. His attempt at a comeback in the 1996 senate election ended in an abysmal failure: Adamec did not even make it to the second round in traditionally left-oriented Ostrava. He remained closed and reserved until the end of his life and consistently refused to talk with journalists and historians, instead digesting the bitter 1989 failure alone. He died in 2007.

As per the relevant agreements, Václav Havel remained president of the country until the first free election, but he decided to run for president

after the formation of the new parliament. During his two-year term of office, he focused his efforts on resolving the Czech-Slovak conflict, but he did not manage to prevent the division of the federation. When the independent Czech Republic was established, he continued as president for two consecutive terms of office and finally withdrew from active politics in 2003. Being president for ten years, he strongly influenced Czech domestic and foreign policy due to his unquestionable authority. As an independent, he often criticised politicians, particularly Václav Klaus, the economist, whom he had involved in politics himself during the Velvet Revolution. After his second term of office, he still actively participated in public life, engaged in many international projects and lectured. He also returned to his primary passion: playwriting. In 2007, Havel finished his first play in eighteen years: *Odcházení (Departures)*, which was clearly autobiographical. It premiered in spring 2008 at the Archa Theatre in Prague receiving favourable reviews. Havel died on 18 December 2011.

Rock musician Michael Kocáb, a close colleague and friend of Havel and a participant in the first probing talk with Adamec, became a member of the Federal Assembly in 1989. He won great popularity by establishing and chairing the committee that supervised the withdrawal of the Soviet army from Czechoslovakia. After that successfully accomplished mission, he resigned from being an MP (as per his declaration that he ‘would depart from politics together with the departure of the last Soviet soldier’) and he withdrew from politics, going back to making music. The departure of the Soviet Army was celebrated by a concert tour of Kocáb’s group, the legendary *Pražský výběr*, titled *Adieu C.A.*, during which Frank Zappa appeared as a guest. The band is still active today, although after a conflict between Kocáb (the vocalist and the keyboard player) and Michal Pavlíček (the guitar player), the latter left and the band changed its name to *Pražský výběr II*. The band was re-formed in 2012. However, Kocáb himself did not give up politics entirely. From 1993 to 2003, he was an advisor to President Havel and from 2009 to 2010, he was the minister for human rights and ethnic minorities (having been nominated by the Green Party).

Father Václav Maly was a spokesman for the Forum during the Velvet Revolution and he had moderated most of the meetings in *Václavské náměstí*. After the revolution ended, he returned to ministerial service as the parish

priest at St. Gabriel's parish in Smichov in Prague and later at St. Anthony's parish in Holešovice (also in Prague). In 1997, he was ordained as a bishop and took the position of auxiliary bishop in the Prague archdiocese. He implements the motto he has adopted, 'Humbleness and truth', in everyday life as he fights for human rights, working for the 'Iustitia et pax' council at the Episcopal Conference of the Czech Republic. He supports political prisoners of undemocratic regimes all over the world; he visits their families and writes petitions to dictators and authoritarian rulers. During his service, he has visited countries such as Belarus, Chechnya, China, Cuba, and Iran. In 2012, he became the first laureate of the Arnošt Lustig Award.

Zdeněk Mlynář, one of the main reformers of the Prague Spring, returned from emigration in Austria in 1989 and tried to become involved in the political life of the country. Being in favour of the democratic left wing, he supported the Leftist Bloc, a small party that did not manage to get into the parliament. After failure in the election of 1996, he resigned from the position of honourable chairman of that organisation due to his deteriorating health. He died in 1997.

After the Velvet Revolution Alexandr Vondra, a spokesman for Charter 77 and a co-founder of the OF, started a career in politics and diplomacy. From 1990 to 1992, he was Havel's advisor for international affairs and later deputy minister of foreign affairs and the ambassador of the Czech Republic to the USA. As one of few active opposition members he was connected with the Czech right wing, the Civic Democratic Party (*Občanská demokratická strana* – ODS), and at the nomination of that party he became the minister of foreign affairs from 2006 and then the deputy prime minister for European affairs. In that latter function, he was one of the main negotiators of the Lisbon Treaty. Vondra also supervised the preparations for the Czech presidency of the EU in the first half of 2009. In the years 2010–2012, he was the minister of defence in the Czech Republic government.

After his unsuccessful attempt to run for president, Alexander Dubček ceased to play a key role in politics. Although after the election in 1990 he became the chairman of the parliament again, he did not have any real power or political support. After the split of the VPN, he tried to establish a position in Slovakia based on the small Social Democratic Party, which he set up at the beginning of 1992 and which he chaired. He entered

the Federal Assembly in the next election as a representative of that party. Dubček was a firm opponent of the division of Czechoslovakia. As a Slovak, he was worried about Slovakia's fate outside of the federation. He did not live to see the division of the country, however, as he was seriously injured in a car accident at the beginning of September 1992 and died that November. His death has caused a lot of controversy to this day and raised questions about the possibility of third-party involvement (i.e. persons related to the former KGB) in causing the crash.

Fedor Gál, a co-founder of the VPN, was for the first two years after the Velvet Revolution one of the key actors on the Slovak political stage. In 1990, he became the leader of the VPN's co-ordination centre and actually one of the most influential figures in the movement and an advocate of its liberal wing. When the conflict between the Czech Republic and Slovakia intensified, the conflict within the movement also grew. The prime minister of the Slovak government, Vladimír Mečiar, started to promote, increasingly strongly, the nationalist wing of the movement. Inner frictions led to the disintegration of the VPN in spring of 1991 and to the creation of the liberal ODÚ and the national-populist HZDS. Gal decided not to enter party politics and became an independent advisor to prime minister Čalfa. After the election in 1992 and the division of the federation, he abandoned politics, but he did not withdraw from public life, instead becoming a co-founder of a new television station named Nova. He also took part in the activities of numerous non-governmental organisations (such as the Milan Šimečka Foundation) and with his son established the 'G plus G' publishing house, which they run to this day. He says that writing is still his biggest passion: essay writing and political commentary, as well as professional texts and academic writings for general public.

Another co-founder of the VPN, Ján Budaj, who originated from the environmental protection milieu, became the president of the Slovak Council of the VPN in January 1990, and then joined the Slovak parliament. In March, he suffered the first serious defeat, which was the consequence of wrongly planned course of action, and as a result, he was not selected as the chairman of the parliament (he lost to a communist MP named Rudolf Schuster, and instead became Schuster's deputy). Shortly after the election, which had been very successful for the VPN, he experienced a much worse

failure: he was forced to resign from his seat in the parliament because the lustration procedure revealed that he had been recorded in the files of security service as a collaborator. In autumn of 1990, he left politics and took to journalism, but that break did not last long. When Slovakia became an independent state, he returned to public activity but without any great success. In the elections in 2016, he became a member of the parliament for a party named Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (*Obyčajní Ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti, OĽaNO*).

Milan Kňažko, a Slovak actor who had taken an active part in the Velvet Revolution, had co-founded the VPN and had commanded crowds during demonstrations in Bratislava in November, did not withdraw from politics as quickly as many of his colleagues. During the conflict within the VPN in 1991, he supported Mečiar and became the deputy chairman of the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) established by the latter. After the federation fell apart, he became Slovakia's first minister of foreign affairs, but he quickly fell into conflict with Mečiar and left the Movement, along with some MPs. From being a close colleague, he turned into a fierce critic of the Slovak prime minister and his authoritarian tendencies. In 1998, he co-founded the broad anti-Mečiar Slovak Democratic Coalition, at the nomination of which he was the minister of culture from 1998 to 2002. After finishing his term of office, he withdrew from active politics and became the general director of a private television station, TV JOJ. After a 15-year-break, he returned to acting. In 2007, he appeared in the sequel to the controversial American horror *Hostel*. In March 2014, he ran for president of Slovakia, coming fourth, with 12.9 per cent of the vote, and in November 2014, he ran for mayor of Bratislava, again without success.

Milan Šimečka, a philosopher and essayist, and one of the few signatories of Charter 77 in Slovakia, was present among the founders and main ideological leaders of the VPN in 1989. After the Velvet Revolution, he refused to take any posts in higher education or in politics. Only after a personal request from Václav Havel in 1990, did he agree to become the head of the team of presidential advisors. He died prematurely in 1990. His son, Martin M. Šimečka, is one of the most well respected Slovak journalists, and in the past 30 years, he has headed many prestigious periodicals. In 1990, he established the 'Archa' publishing house, where he was the editor-in-chief

for six years; he subsequently had similar positions at the opinion-forming *Domino fórum* weekly magazine and the *SME* daily (1999–2006). After leaving the *SME*, he took over the leadership of the Prague-based *Respekt* weekly magazine, where he held the post of editor-in-chief between 2006 and 2008. He has remained affiliated with *Respekt* magazine in the role of an editor and contributor till 2016. Since then he has been editor in *Denník N*.

Miroslav Štěpán was the highest-ranking representative of the regime who was brought to justice. He was arrested on 22 December 1989 and then sentenced to four years in prison for abuse of power. The sentence was shortened to two years and six months in a penitentiary institution. Štěpán was eventually released in 1991 with time off for good behaviour. Soon he returned to politics, although he remained on the margins. In 1995 he became the chairman of the Party of Czechoslovak Communists (*Strana československých komunistů*), an extreme left-wing organisation which accused the KSČM of abandoning the ideals of Marxism and Leninism, and which aimed at establishing a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’. Soon afterwards the party was joined by another villain from the Velvet Revolution, Ludvík Zifčák a.k.a. Milan Růžička a.k.a. Martin Šmíd, the StB agent who had pretended to be a victim of the police brutality in *Národní třída*. In 1999, the organisation adopted a historical name: the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa – KSČ*). The party split in 2001, as Zifčák accused Štěpán of being un-principled, and, opportunistic. Soon both parties disappeared from public life. In 2010 and 2014, Zifčák successfully ran in local elections in Karlová Studánka. Both men decidedly rejected any accusations of the sins of communism.<sup>[186]</sup> Štěpán died, unrepentant, on 23 March 2014.

[1] Alexander Dubček, *Nadzieja umrze ostatnia (Hope Dies Last)*, compiled and edited by Jiří Hochman, transl. Piotr Godlewski, Czytelnik, Warsaw 1995, p. 269.

[2] At the very beginning, Dubček seemed to believe that the ‘normalisation’ process would be carried out under his leadership, as on 17 November 1968 the Central Committee of the KSČ issued a resolution which evaluated the events since January in a quite critical way. See Tomáš Ferenčák, *Dubček – kontroverzná osobnosť (Dubček – A Controversial Person)*, Kalligram, Bratislava 2011, p. 115.

- [3] Jan Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. Století (Czechs and Slovaks in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century)*, Vol. 2: *Česko-slovenské vztahy 1945–1992 (Czech-Slovak Relations 1945–1992)*, Academic Electronic Press and Ústav T.G. Masaryka, Bratislava-Prague 1998, p. 279.
- [4] Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: The Struggle for Survival*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2005, p. 245.
- [5] Alexander Dubček, *Nadzieja...*, op. cit., p. 301.
- [6] Milan Otáhal, *Opozice, moc, společnost 1969–1989 (Opposition, Power, Society 1969–1989)*, Maxdorf, Prague 1994, p. 19.
- [7] Tomáš Ferenčák, *Dubček...*, op. cit., p. 115.
- [8] Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: the State that Failed*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 2009, p. 278. One can argue as to whether it was really “the only visible dissent”, as Catholic movements and numerous dissidents of non-Communist descent played important roles in the opposition in 1970s and 1980s; however, there is no doubt that former reformed Communists had strong positions in dissent movements.
- [9] Timothy Garton Ash, “Czechoslovakia under Ice”, [in:] Idem, *The Uses of Adversity. Essays on the Fate of Central Europe*, Random House, New York 1989, p. 63.
- [10] Paweł Boryszewski, *Kościół, którego nie było: tajna działalność religijna w Czechosłowacji w latach 1949–1989 (The Church That Did Not Exist: Secret Religious Activity in Czechoslovakia in the Years 1949–1989)*, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IFiS PAN), Warsaw 2002, pp. 23–24.
- [11] Anton Hlinka, *Sila Slabých a Slabost' Silných*, Rome 1989, p. 140, quoted after: Paweł Boryszewski, *Kościół, którego nie było...*, op. cit., pp. 23–24
- [12] Paweł Boryszewski, *Kościół, którego nie było...*, op. cit., p. 31.
- [13] Timothy Garton Ash, *Czechoslovakia...*, op. cit., p. 63.
- [14] Karl Peter Schwarz, *Česi a Slováci Dlhá cesta k mierovému rozchodu (Czechs and Slovaks. A Long Way to Peaceful Separation)*, Odkaz, Bratislava 1994, p. 205.
- [15] Milan Otáhal, *Opozice...*, op. cit., p. 33.
- [16] Timothy Garton Ash, *Czechoslovakia...*, op. cit., p. 62.
- [17] Milan Otáhal, *Opozice...*, op. cit., p. 31.
- [18] An extremely popular Czechoslovak counterpart of ‘imperialist’ Coca-Cola.
- [19] Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia...*, op. cit., p. 280.
- [20] Milan Otáhal, *Opozice...*, op. cit., p. 56.
- [21] Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless”, [in:] Jan Vladislav [ed.], *Václav Havel or Living in Truth: Twenty-Two Essays*, London-Boston 1986, p. 41.
- [22] Milan Otáhal, *Normalizace, 1969–1989: příspěvek ke stavu bádání (Normalisation 1969–1989: Contribution to the State of Research)*, Institute of Contemporary History (USD) of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague 2002, pp. 54–55.
- [23] Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia...*, op. cit., pp. 283–284.

- [24] See: Petr Blažek, Radek Schovánek, *Prvních 100 dnů Charty 77. Průvodce historickými událostmi (The First 100 Days of Charter 77. A Guide to Historical Events)*, Academia, Prague 2018.
- [25] Milan Otáhal, *Opoziční proudy v české společnosti 1969–1989 (Opposition Currents in Czech Society 1969–1989)*, Institute of Contemporary History (USD) of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague 2011, p. 130.
- [26] Full text of the letter: [http://www.vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=clanky&val=71\\_aj\\_clanky.html&typ=HTML](http://www.vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=clanky&val=71_aj_clanky.html&typ=HTML) [accessed on 19.04.2018].
- [27] Pavel Kohout (born 1928) – Czech novelist, playwright, and poet. Co-author of the “Charter 77”.
- [28] Zdeněk Urbánek (1917–2008) – Czech writer and translator, university lecturer. Righteous Among the Nations, signatory of the Charter 77.
- [29] František Pavlíček (1923–2004) – Czech playwright and screenwriter, signatory of the Charter 77.
- [30] Josef Topol (1935–2015) – Czech playwright, writer and translator, father of writer Jáchym Topol.
- [31] Ivan Havel (born 1938) – scientist, brother of Václav Havel.
- [32] Petr Husák, *Česká cesta ke svobodě. Revoluce či co? (Czech Path Towards Freedom. Revolution or What?)*, VOLVOX Globator, Prague 1999, pp. 16–17.
- [33] Petr Blažek, Radek Schovánek, *Prvních 100 dnů Charty 77...*, op. cit., p. 137.
- [34] Francis D. Raška, *Fighting Communism from Afar. The Council of Free Czechoslovakia*, Columbia University Press, New York 2008, p. 174.
- [35] “Seznamy otiskovalo Rudé právo dva týdny” (“Lists Were Printed by Rudé právo for Two Weeks”), *Lidové noviny*, 24 January 2002, p. 15.
- [36] Miroslav Lehký, “Classification of Crimes Committed between 1948 and 1989 and the Prosecution of These Crimes after 1990”, [in:] *Interational conference: Crimes of the Communist Regimes – An Assessment by Historians and Legal Experts*, Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes (USTR), Prague 2011, p. 277.
- [37] “Období normalizace ČST – úkoly televizního zpravodajství” (“Period of Normalisation of ČST – Tasks of Television News”), available at: [http://www.totalita.cz/norm/norm\\_kult\\_tt\\_12\\_01.php](http://www.totalita.cz/norm/norm_kult_tt_12_01.php) [last accessed on 03 January 2018].
- [38] See: Peter Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, University of California Press, Oakland 1985.
- [39] Wojciech Roszkowski, *Cultural Heritage of East Central Europe. A Historical Outline*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN)/Instytut Jagielloński, Warsaw 2015, p. 93.
- [40] Zhdanovism (Zhdanovshchina) – cultural policy of the Soviet Union during the Cold War period following World War II, calling for stricter government control of art and promoting an extreme anti-Western bias. It was initiated by a resolution (1946) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that was formulated by the party secretary and cultural boss Andrey Aleksandrovich Zhdanov. After: Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Zhdanovshchina> [accessed on 19.04.2018].

- [41] Jozef Žatkuliak, “Deformácie ústavného zákona o Československej federácii po októbri 1968” (“Deformations of the Constitutional Act on the Czechoslovak Federation after October 1968”), [in:] *Historický časopis (Historical Magazine)* No. 4/1992, pp. 480–484.
- [42] Dušan Kováč, *Slováci – Česi. Dejiny (Slovaks – Czechs. History)*, AEP, Bratislava 1997, pp. 93–94.
- [43] Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: the Struggle for Survival*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2005, p. 245.
- [44] Jan Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci...*, op. cit., p. 281.
- [45] Karl Peter Schwarz, *Češi a Slováci...*, op. cit., p. 213.
- [46] Milan Otáhal, *Opozice...*, op. cit., pp. 53–54.
- [47] The debate itself began as late as in the beginning 1987 and was held both in the Central Committee of the KSČ and in the party press. It did not result in any conclusions to adopt. See: Martin Štefek, *Za fasádou jednoty. KSČ a SED po roce 1985 (Behind the Facade of Unity. The KSČ and the SED after 1985)*, Pavel Mervart, Červený Kostelec 2014, pp. 89–142.
- [48] Jan Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci...*, op. cit., p. 299.
- [49] Józef Darski, “Rok 1989: Jesień Ludów czy KGB?” (“1989: the Autumn of Nations or of the KGB?”), *FRONDA* 2001, Vol. 23–24.
- [50] Pavel Žáček, *Celostátní projekt „KLÍN” (National Project “KLIN”)*, available at <http://www.cibulka.com/stblist/clin.html#4> (last accessed on 5 January 2018).
- [51] See: Milan Otáhal, *Opoziční proudy v české společnosti...*, op. cit., pp. 247–255.
- [52] Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia: the Struggle...*, op. cit., p. 248.
- [53] Paweł Boryszewski, *Kościół...*, op. cit., pp. 69–70.
- [54] See Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia...*, op. cit., p. 295.
- [55] <http://www.17november1989.sk/sk/bratislavanahlas/> [last accessed on 8 January 2018].
- [56] Petr Husák, *Česká cesta ke svobodě...*, op. cit., pp. 45–46
- [57] Václav Havel, *To the Castle and Back*; translated from the Czech by Paul Wilson, Portobello Books, London 2009, p. 52.
- [58] Milan Otáhal, *Opozice...*, op. cit., p. 59.
- [59] Milan Otáhal, *Opoziční proudy...*, op. cit., p. 607.
- [60] Jiří Suk, Jaroslav Cuhra, František Koudelka, *Chronologie zániku komunistického režimu v Československu 1985–1990 (Chronology of the Extinction of the Communist Regime in Czechoslovakia 1985–1990)*, Institute of Contemporary History (USD), Prague 1999, p. 95.
- [61] Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Czechy i Słowacja (Czechia and Slovakia)*, TRIO, Warsaw 2007, p. 279.
- [62] Milan Novotný, “November 1989 na Filozofickej fakulte Univerzity Komenského v Bratislave (príprava a priebeh protestného pochodu 16. novembra 1989)” (“November 1989 at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava (Preparation and Carrying Out of the Protest March on November 16, 1989)”), [in:] Peter Jašek (ed.), *20 výročie Nežnej revolúcie: Zborník z vedeckej konferencie Bratislava 11.-12. november 2009 (20th Anniversary of the Revolution: Proceedings of the Academic Conference Bratislava 11.-12. November 2009)*, National Memory Institute (Ústav pamäti národa), Bratislava 2010, pp. 138–145.

- [63] Jan Opletal (1915–1939) – student of the Medical Faculty at the Charles University, shot and severely injured by Germans during protests against the occupation of Czechoslovakia on the Independence Day (28.10.1939). He died of his wounds two weeks later.
- [64] Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia...*, op. cit., p. 298.
- [65] Jiří Suk, *Občanské Fórum. Listopad – Prosinec 1989 (Civic Forum. November–December 1989)*, Vol. 1: *Události: Dokumenty (Events: Documents)*, Institute of Contemporary History (USD), Prague 1997, p. 43–44; *Sametová revoluce 1989. Pátek 17. listopadu 1989 průběh demonstrace (The Velvet Revolution 1989. Friday 17 November 1989 demonstrations)*, available at: [http://totalita.cz/1989/1989\\_1117\\_dem\\_03.php](http://totalita.cz/1989/1989_1117_dem_03.php) (last accessed on 9 January 2018).
- [66] *Mladý svět (Young World)* 1989, Vol. 51, quoted after: [http://totalita.cz/1989/1989\\_1117\\_svedek.php](http://totalita.cz/1989/1989_1117_svedek.php) (last accessed on 9 January 2018).
- [67] It was referring to the Tiananmen Square massacre of 4.06.1989, when student-led demonstration was bloodily suppressed by the Chinese communist authorities.
- [68] ‘*Studentské listy*’, prosinec 1989 (*Student Letters*, December 1989), quoted after: [http://www.totalita.cz/1989/1989\\_1117\\_svedek.php](http://www.totalita.cz/1989/1989_1117_svedek.php) (last accessed on 9 January 2018).
- [69] Petr Husák, *Česká cesta ke svobodě...*, op. cit., p. 61.
- [70] *Ibid.*, pp. 70–80.
- [71] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
- [72] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- [73] Milan Otáhal, *Opozice...*, op. cit., pp. 97–98.
- [74] Jiří Suk, *Občanské Fórum. Listopad – Prosinec 1989*, Vol. 2: *Dokumenty (Civic Forum. November–December 1989, Vol. 2: Documents)*, Institute of Contemporary History (USD), Prague 1998, p. 13.
- [75] *Ibid.*, p. 13–14.
- [76] *Verejnost proti násiliu 1989–1991. Svedectva a dokumenty (Public against Violence 1989–1991. Testimonies and documents)*, ed.: Ingrid Antalová, Milan Šimečka Foundation, Bratislava 1998, p. 33.
- [77] *November 1989 a Slovensko. Chronologia a dokumenty (1985–1990) (November 1989 in Slovakia. Chronology and Documents (1985–1990))*, ed.: Jozef Žatkuliak, Milan Šimečka Foundation, Bratislava 1999, p. 325.
- [78] Paweł Ukielski, *Aksamitny rozwód. Rola elit politycznych w procesie podziału Czechosłowacji (The Velvet Divorce. The Role of Political Elites in the Process of Division of Czechoslovakia)*, Instytut Jagielloński, Warsaw 2007, pp. 75–78.
- [79] Jiří Suk, Jaroslav Cuhra, František Koudelka, *Chronologie zániku...*, op. cit., p. 100.
- [80] Petr Husák, *Česká cesta ke svobodě...*, op. cit., p. 87.
- [81] *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- [82] Milan Otáhal, *Opozice...*, op. cit., p. 106.
- [83] *Sametová revoluce 1989: některá hesla těchto dnů (The Velvet Revolution 1989: Some Slogans of Those Days)*, available at [http://www.totalita.cz/1989/1989\\_11\\_hesla.php](http://www.totalita.cz/1989/1989_11_hesla.php) (last accessed on 12 January 2018).
- [84] Milan Otáhal, *Opozice...*, p. 111.
- [85] Václav Havel, *To the Castle...*, op. cit., p. 65.

- [86] Jiří Suk, *Chronologie zániku ...*, op. cit., p. 103.
- [87] Václav Bartuška, *Polojasno. Pátrání po vinících 17. listopadu 1989 (Somewhat Cloudy. The Search for the Culprits of 17 November 1989)*, Exlibris, Prague 1990, p. 5.
- [88] Paweł Ukielski, *Aksamitny rozwód...*, op. cit., p. 81–82; Jiří Suk, *Chronologie zániku ...*, op. cit., p. 103.
- [89] Václav Havel, *To the Castle...*, op. cit., p. 61.
- [90] Milan Otáhal, *Opozice...*, op. cit., p. 117.
- [91] Jiří Suk, *Občanské Forum...*, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 71.
- [92] *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- [93] *Ibid.*, pp. 91–101.
- [94] Jiří Suk, *Chronologie zániku...*, op. cit., p. 106.
- [95] In the Czechoslovak communist constitution from 1960, the National Front was defined in Article 6: "National Front of Czechs and Slovaks, where social organisations are associated, is a political emanation of the alliance of working cities and villages, with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia leadership." 100/1960 Sb. Ústavní zákon ze dne 11. července 1960 Ústava Československé socialistické republiky, available at: [https://www.psp.cz/docs/texts/constitution\\_1960.html](https://www.psp.cz/docs/texts/constitution_1960.html) (accessed on 19.04.2018).
- [96] Jiří Suk, *Chronologie zániku...*, op. cit., pp. 104–106.
- [97] The Czechoslovak People's Party (*Československá strana lidová – ČSL*).
- [98] The Party of Slovak Revival (*Strana slovenskej obrody – SSO*).
- [99] Paweł Ukielski, *Aksamitny rozwód...*, op. cit., pp. 123–124, 128–129.
- [100] Jan Pešek (ed.), *Aktéři jedné ery na Slovensku 1948–1989 (The Actors of One Era in Slovakia 1948–1989)*, Michal Vaško Publishing, Prešov 2003, p. 148.
- [101] *Ibid.*
- [102] Jiří Suk, *Občanské Fórum...*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 156.
- [103] Jozef Žatkuliak, Viera Hlavová (eds), *November 1989 a Slovensko. Chronológia a dokumenty (November 1989 in Slovakia. Chronology and Documents)*, Nadácia Milana Šimečku, Bratislava 1999, p. 420.
- [104] Jiří Suk, "K prosazení kandidatury Václava Havla na úřad prezidenta v prosinci 1989" ("To Promote Vaclav Havel's Candidacy to the Presidency in December 1989"), *Soudobé dějiny* 1999 (*Contemporary History* 1999), Vol. 2–3, p. 350.
- [105] *Ibid.*, p. 351.
- [106] *Ibid.*
- [107] *Ibid.*, pp. 359–363.
- [108] Paweł Ukielski, *Aksamitny rozwód...*, op. cit., pp. 91–92.
- [109] Václav Havel, *To the Castle...*, op. cit., p. 87.
- [110] In 1928, Czechoslovakia had become the largest exporter of footwear worldwide.
- [111] Paweł Ukielski, *Aksamitny rozwód...*, op. cit., p. 93.

- [112] Václav Havel, *To the Castle...*, op. cit., p. 88.
- [113] About the conflict: Milan Šútovec, *Semióza ako politikum alebo „pomlčková vojna“ (Semiotics as a Politics or a “Hyphen War”)*, Kalligram, Bratislava 1999.
- [114] Jiří Suk, *Občanské Fórum...*, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 209.
- [115] Oldřich Dědek (ed.), *Ekonomické aspekty zániku Československa (Economic aspects of the demise of Czechoslovakia)*, Fortuna, Prague 1997, p. 47.
- [116] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- [117] Anton Marcinčin, Miroslav Beblavý, *Hospodarská politika na Slovensku 1990–1999 (Economic Policy in Slovakia 1990–1999)*, Slovak Foreign Policy Association – Centrum pre spoločenskú a mediálnu analýzu – INEKO, Bratislava 2000, p. 32.
- [118] Rüdiger Kipke, Karel Vodička (eds.), *Rozloučení s Československem. Příčiny a důsledky československého rozchodu (Goodbye to Czechoslovakia. The Causes and Consequences of the Czech-Slovak Split)*, Český spisovatel, Prague 1993, p. 168.
- [119] Oldřich Dědek (ed.), *Ekonomické...*, op. cit., p. 56.
- [120] Rüdiger Kipke, Karel Vodička [eds.], *Rozloučení...*, op. cit., p. 48.
- [121] Zora Bútorová, “Premyslene “ano” zániku ČSFR?” (“Thoughtfully “yes” to the dissolution of Czechoslovakia?”), [in:] *Sociologický časopis*, 1993, Vol. 1, p. 92.
- [122] Oldřich Krpec, “Polityka gospodarcza Republiki Czeskiej (1991–2003)” (“The Economic Policy of the Czech Republic (1991–2003)”), [in:] Bernard J. Albin and Walenty Baluk (eds), *Republika Czeska (The Czech Republic), Europa Środkowa. Dekada transformacji (Central Europe. One Decade of Transformation)* series, Arboretum, Wrocław 2005, p. 103.
- [123] Václav Žak, “The Czech Republic”, [in:] *New Europe. The Impact of the First Decade. Variations on the Pattern* edited by Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone and Piotr Dutkiewicz with the assistance of Agnieszka Orzelska, the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2006, p. 238.
- [124] Paweł Ukielski, *Aksamitny rozwój...*, op. cit., pp. 270–274.
- [125] Vladan Hodulák, Oldřich Krpec, “Hospodářská politika” (“Economic Policy”), [in:] Stanislav Balík, Ondřej Císař, Petr Fiala (eds), *Veřejné politiky v České republice v letech 1989–2009 (Public Policies in the Czech Republic in 1989–2009)*, CDK, Brno 2010, pp. 199–201.
- [126] Martin Myant, *Vzestup a pád českého kapitalismu. Ekonomický vývoj České republiky od roku 1989*, Academia, Prague 2013, pp. 81–82. (English original: Martin Myant, *The Rise and Fall of Czech Capitalism: Economic Development in the Czech Republic since 1989*, Edward Elgar: Cheltenham-Northampton, 2003).
- [127] See: Vladan Hodulák, Oldřich Krpec, *Hospodářská...*, op. cit., pp. 204–208.
- [128] Piotr Bajda, *Elity polityczne na Słowacji. Kręta droga do nowoczesnego państwa (Political Elites in Slovakia. A Winding Road to Modern State)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, IW Pax Publishing, Warsaw 2010, pp. 102–107.
- [129] See: Anton Marcinčin, Miroslav Beblavý, *Hospodarská politika...*, op. cit., pp. 38–48.
- [130] Piotr Bajda, *Elity polityczne...*, op. cit., pp. 156–157, 168–169 and 194–196.

- [131] <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results> [accessed on 18 January 2017]; [https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption\\_perceptions\\_index\\_2016](https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016) (last accessed on 16 January 2018).
- [132] Paweł Ukielski, *Aksamitny rozwój...*, op. cit., pp. 122, 127–128, 219, 228.
- [133] Juraj Marušiak, "Rok 1989 na Slovensku" ("1989 in Slovakia"), [in:] *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka (Czech-Slovak Historical Yearbook)*, Brno 2002, p. 151.
- [134] Marek Migalski, *Czeski i polski system partyjny (The Czech and Polish Party Systems)*, Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, Warsaw 2008, p. 74.
- [135] Hans Štembera, "Vážili jsme si práce Kim Čong-ila, kondolovala KSČM do Koreje" ("We appreciated the work of Kim Jong Il, condoled the KSČM to Korea"), available at: <http://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/zpravy/Vazili-jsme-si-prace-Kim-Cong-ila-kondolovala-KSCM-do-Koreje-217959> (last accessed on 24 January 2018).
- [136] Barbora Janáková, "Levici trápí úbytek členů. KSČM ztratila tisíce, naopak „táhne“ SPD" ("The Left Is Worried About the Loss of Members. The KSČM Has Lost Thousands, While the SPD Pulls Them In"), available at: [https://zpravy.idnes.cz/politika-politicke-strany-snemovna-clenove-pirati-spd-kscm-cssd-ano-1gu-/domaci.aspx?c=A180212\\_171920\\_domaci\\_bja](https://zpravy.idnes.cz/politika-politicke-strany-snemovna-clenove-pirati-spd-kscm-cssd-ano-1gu-/domaci.aspx?c=A180212_171920_domaci_bja) (accessed on 20.04.2018).
- [137] *Národní obroda*, 10.02.1991.
- [138] Piotr Bajda, *Elity polityczne...*, op. cit., pp. 128–134.
- [139] *Ibid.*, pp. 145 and 161.
- [140] *Ibid.*, p. 163.
- [141] *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- [142] Paweł Ukielski, "Fico bierze wszystko" ("Fico Takes It All"), available at: <http://www.omp.org.pl/artukul.php?artykul=262>.
- [143] *Problem lustracji w Europie Środkowej i krajach bałtyckich, (The Problem of Lustration in Central Europe and the Baltic States)*, OSW (The Centre for Eastern Studies) Report, Warsaw, September 2005, p. 7.
- [144] *Ibid.*
- [145] *Zákon ze dne 4. října 1991, kterým se stanoví některé další předpoklady pro výkon některých funkcí ve státních orgánech a organizacích České a Slovenské Federativní Republiky, České republiky a Slovenské republiky, č. 451/1991, (Act of 4 October 1991 laying down certain additional prerequisites for the exercise of certain functions in state bodies and organizations of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic)* available at: <http://www.psp.cz/docs/laws/fs/451.html> (last accessed on 15 February 2018).
- [146] *Problem lustracji w Europie Środkowej...*, op. cit., pp. 5–6.
- [147] <https://www.ustrcr.cz/o-nas/> (accessed on 20.04.2018).
- [148] "Šéf ČSSD chce zrušit ústav stůj co stůj" ("The ČSSD Chief Wants to Abolish the Institute As Soon As Possible"), *Lidové noviny*, 17 March 2008.
- [149] <http://www.memoryandconscience.eu/> (last accessed on 27 February 2018).

[150] The beginning of the project was the conference under the auspices of the former Presidents of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek and Hans-Gert Pöttering, and fourteen MEPs. Jerzy Buzek said there: “We must restore the proper meaning of truth and justice in our view of Communist crimes. Just as we restored their meaning in our everyday life after Communism’s collapse. But to do that, historians are not enough. A legal settlement of Communist crimes – precisely because of its legal aspect, its reference to rule of law, justice – can best restore clarity in our understanding of those dark times”. See: *Proceedings of the International Conference “Legal Settlement of Communist Crimes”*, Prague 2014, p. 10.

[151] <http://www.memoryandconscience.eu/2016/03/02/criminal-complaint-filed-against-the-communist-party-of-bohemia-and-moravia/> (last accessed on 27 February 2018).

[152] *Problemy lustracji...*, op. cit., pp. 9–10.

[153] Vaclav Drchal, “Dva ministři agenty StB” (“Two ministers – StB Agents”), *Lidové noviny*, 30 May 2007.

[154] Adam Hradilek, Petr Třešňák, “Milan Kundera’s Denunciation”, available at <https://www.respekt.cz/respekt-in-english/milan-kundera-s-denunciation> (last accessed on 15 February 2018). Original, in Czech, Adam Hradilek, Petr Třešňák, “Udání Milana Kundery”, *Respekt* 2008, R. XIX, vol. 42, pp. 38–46.

[155] Robert Malecky, “1989: Češi odmítají tlustou čáru” (“1989: The Czechs Reject the Thick Line”), *Lidové noviny*, 16 November 2007.

[156] *Strašidlo komunismu: Jsou lustrace i dnes nutné? Toto říkají Češi (The Specter of Communism: Are Lustrations Needed Today? This is what the Czechs say)*, <http://domaci.eurozpravy.cz/zivot/106498-strasidlo-komunismu-jsou-lustrace-i-dnes-nutne-toto-rikaji-cesi/> (accessed on 20.04.2018).

[157] The Moscow State Institute of International Relations (*Московский государственный институт международных отношений*) – a prestigious Soviet institute which educated staff from various countries in diplomacy and similar subjects. It exists to this day and is subordinated to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[158] *Problemy lustracji w Europie Środkowej...*, op. cit., pp. 12–14.

[159] “Stanovisko Mons. Jána Sokola k zverejňovaným dokumentom” (“Abp. Sokol’s Position Regarding the Published Documents”), the Press Agency of the Slovak Bishops’ Conference, available at <https://www.tkkbs.sk/view.php?cislocianku=20070227029> (last accessed on 15 February 2018).

[160] Andrzej Niewiadowski, “Czy arcybiskup przekazał miliony agentowi bezpieki” (“Did the Archbishop Transfer Millions to a Secret Service Agent?”), *Rzeczpospolita*, 29 May 2009.

[161] “Ústav paměti národa v Bratislavě má nového ředitele” (“The National Memory Institute in Bratislava Has a New Director”), available at: [http://www.rozhlas.cz/nabozenstvi/zpravy/\\_zprava/1202400](http://www.rozhlas.cz/nabozenstvi/zpravy/_zprava/1202400) (last accessed on 17 January 2017).

[162] “Babiš vyhrál ‘agentský soud’. Ústav paměti národa se odvolá” (“Babiš Won in the ‘Agent Court Case’. The National Memory Institute Will Appeal”), available at: <http://echo24.cz/a/iibsi/babis-vyhral-agentsky-soud-ustav-pameti-naroda-se-odvola> (last accessed on 17 January 2017).

[163] “Court Rejects Babiš’s Lawsuit Against His StB Registration”, available at: <http://prague-monitor.com/2018/02/14/slovak-court-rejects-babi%C5%A1s-lawsuit-against-his-stb-registration> (last accessed on 26 April 2018).

[164] See: Tomáš Pergler, *Babiš. Příběh oligarchy (Babis. The Story of the Oligarch)*, Mladá fronta, Prague 2014.

[165] James Shotter, “Czech prosecutor reopens Andrej Babis fraud probe”, *Financial Times* 4.12.2019, available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/ffe1cfd0-16a3-11ea-9ee4-11f260415385> (last accessed on 7.01.2020).

[166] Jan Lopatka, “EU audit finds Czech Prime Minister Babis in conflict of interest: report”, *Reuters* 1.12.2019, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-czech-eu-babis/eu-audit-finds-czech-prime-minister-babis-in-conflict-of-interest-report-idUSKBN1Y51CO> (last accessed on 7.01.2020).

[167] The Munich Agreement was a settlement among Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Italy signed on 30 September 1938. It permitted Germany’s annexation of a part of the Czechoslovak territory along the country’s border (the so called Sudetenland). Czechoslovakia lost its strategic parts and became almost defenceless against Germany.

[168] Paweł Ukielski, *Aksamitny rozwód...*, op. cit., pp. 95–113.

[169] *Zákon ze dne 2. listopadu 1951 o státním svátku, o dnech pracovního klidu a o památných a významných dnech*, Sb. 93/1951 (Act of 2 November 1951 on the National Holiday, on public holidays and on memorable and significant days), available at <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1951-93> (last accessed on 16 February 2018).

[170] *Zákon ze dne 29. června 2000 o státních svátcích, o ostatních svátcích, o významných dnech a o dnech pracovního klidu*, Sb. 245/2000 (Law of 29 June 2000 on Public Holidays, Other Holidays, Important Days and Public Holidays), available at: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2000-245> (last accessed on 16 February 2018).

[171] *Zákon Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky z 20. októbra 1993 o štátnych sviatkoch, dňoch pracovného pokoja a pamätných dňoch* (Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic of 20 October 1993 on Public Holidays, Labour Days and Commemorative Days), *Z. z. 241/1993*, available at: <http://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/1993-241> (accessed on 16 February 2018).

[172] Matica Slovenská – Slovak academic and cultural institution established in 1863. Its aim was to support development of Slovak science, culture, education and institutions in the Kingdom of Hungary. Nowadays it still exists and is governed by the 1997 “Act on Matica slovenská”.

[173] [https://is.muni.cz/el/1441/podzim2012/CJ2MP\\_JAM1/um/Nazvy\\_brnenskych\\_ulic.pdf](https://is.muni.cz/el/1441/podzim2012/CJ2MP_JAM1/um/Nazvy_brnenskych_ulic.pdf) (last accessed on 26 April 2018).

[174] Andrej Šimončíč, “Socialistické peniaze: Pamätáte si na ne?” (“Socialist Money: Do You Remember It?”), [in:] *Život 2008*, vol. 9.

[175] [http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/nejvetsicech/oprojektu\\_top100](http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/nejvetsicech/oprojektu_top100) (last accessed on 23.04.2018).

[176] <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/nejvetsicech/padouch> (last accessed on 23.04.2018).

[177] Sławomir M. Nowinowski, “Glosa do sporu o sens czeskich dziejów” (“Comment to the Discussion on the Sense of Czech History”), [in:] Sławomir M. Nowinowski, Jan Pomorski, Rafał Stobiecki (eds), *Pamięć i polityka historyczna. Doświadczenia Polski i jej sąsiadów (Remembrance and ‘Historical Policy’. Experiences of Poland and Her Neighbours)*, Ibidem and Institute for National Remembrance IPN, Łódź 2008, pp. 48–52.

[178] Václav Drchal, “Opomíjení velikáni” (“The Neglected Greats”), *Lidové noviny*, 5 March 2008.

[179] See: Radosław Zenderowski, *Nad Tatrami błyska się... Słowacka tożsamość narodowa w dyskursie politycznym w Republice Słowackiej (1989–2004) (There is Lightning Over the Tartra Mountains. Slovak*

*National Identity in Political Discourse in the Slovak Republic (1989–2004)*), Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw 2007, pp. 415–489.

[180] Miroslav Pekník (ed.), *Verejná mienka a politika. Historické vedomie slovenskej spoločnosti (Public Opinion and Politics. Historical Consciousness of Slovak Society)*, VEDA/SAV, Bratislava 2006, pp. 43–44, 101–102.

[181] Martin M. Šimečka, “Poučenie z reálneho socializmu. Tak sme si tu žili a ako budeme žiť?” (“Lessons from real socialism. Thus we lived here and how will we live?”), [in:] *Slovenská otázka dnes. Výber textov z časopisu OS 1997–2006 (The Slovak Question Today. Selection of Texts from OS Magazine 1997–2006)*, ed. László Szigeti, Kalligram, Bratislava 2007, pp. 263–272.

[182] “Húsákovo 3 + 1. Podívejte se, jak jsme žili za socialismu” (“Húsákovo 3 + 1. See How We Lived under Socialism”), *Mlada fronta DNES*, 10 October 2007.

[183] “O komunizme na plné pecky” (“About communism at full blast”), *Sme*, 20 December 2007.

[184] See: <http://soc.sme.sk/> (accessed on 21 July 2009).

[185] See: <http://ekonomika.idnes.cz/ekonomika.asp?y=ekonomika/od.htm> (last accessed on 23.04.2018).

[186] For more, see: Martin Bastl, Miroslav Mareš, Josef Smolík, Petra Vejvodová, *Krajní pravice a krajní levice v ČR (The Far Right and the Far Left in the Czech Republic)*, Grada Publishing, Prague 2011, pp. 39–41.



Adam Burakowski

# Romania

## – A Bloody December

### The Genius of the Carpathians

When Mikhail Gorbachev took power in the Kremlin, he must have reviewed the situation of the entire Soviet Bloc. The brief analysis he was most likely offered must have indicated that Nicolae Ceaușescu, called by his staunch followers the ‘genius of the Carpathians’,<sup>[1]</sup> was not only the most recalcitrant vassal, but also that his regime was in a deplorable state. The ‘Mamalyzhniks’, as the members of the Soviet leadership sometimes scornfully referred to the Romanians (Khrushchev even used the word in public once<sup>[2]</sup>), had problems obtaining on a daily basis their national dish: cornmeal porridge (*mămăliga*). Lines in front of stores, poorly illuminated streets, under-heated flats, buses and trams, which ran late and were crammed with passengers to capacity were everyday sights across Romania in the mid-1980s.<sup>[3]</sup> Such a report must have moreover included a statement that there was no way out of the situation, even in a longer time frame. In fact, the above held true for all the countries in the socialist camp, but in Romania, all the above phenomena were more pronounced and more cumbersome for ordinary citizens, even for members of the country’s nomenklatura. The system fell into disrepair ever deeper and dragged down, at least image-wise, the entire Soviet Bloc in Central and Eastern Europe.

Ceaușescu’s marked political departure from the other leaders of the Soviet Bloc countries was another problem. Since the 1960s, Romania had begun to show a tendency towards independence and, in time, this trend intensified.<sup>[4]</sup> Political relations between Bucharest and Moscow were far from good, and went from bad to worse after Gorbachev (the first Soviet leader

who was younger than Ceaușescu) came to power. Thus, the power of Soviet propaganda in Romania was greatly debilitated, and the promotion of perestroika, just like the promotion of any other idea born in Moscow for that matter, was hard.

The Romanian economy was at the end of its tether already in the late 1970s. Nevertheless, Ceaușescu would continue opting for industrialisation based on obsolete technologies, and shifted the costs of the crisis onto society. Between 1981 and 1982, consumption was dramatically curbed, individual energy consumption was reduced, and even a special *Programme of scientific nurturing of citizens (Programul de alimentație științifică a populației)* was devised.<sup>[5]</sup> The most significant decision, however, and one which foreshadowed the most tragic of consequences, was taken in December 1982 to pay off foreign debt in full.<sup>[6]</sup> This task was given absolute priority and was implemented, among other methods, through the export of all sellable goods, food included, abroad.

In the 1980s, economic indicators were commonly falsified starting from enterprises, through provincial departments and ministries, to the Central Directorate of Statistics, which published 'revised' statistical yearbooks. According to later analyses, two years stand out as the worst regarding data falsification: 1987, when Romanian citizens were offered economic data 'improved' by nearly 90 per cent, and 1989, when the data presented was unjustifiably better by over 300 per cent.<sup>[7]</sup> To date, it is hard to establish the gravity of the situation, but even the official statistics demonstrated symptoms of an economic collapse.<sup>[8]</sup>

To beguile society, the regime gradually raised salaries while simultaneously employing all sorts of stratagems to reduce the real income, which dropped by a few per cent from year to year. In addition, the number of banknotes in the local currency, the lei, did not translate into purchasing power. It was US dollars, which were the true currency in Romania, like in other communist countries, although technically there was a ban on the possession of dollars, let alone on their exchange. The only goods available in stores were inedible Chinese canned food and the 'iconic' product of the time, a 'coffee' based on so-called replacements (*inlocuitori*), which accounted for 80 per cent of its contents. It was called *nechezol*, a derivation of the verb *a necheza*, or to 'neigh'. Genuine coffee, most often

of the *Wiener Caffè* brand, was a true rarity and was available, for all intents and purposes, exclusively on the black market, which actually grew slowly and not without the participation of the secret political police (*Securitate*). Shops employed up to a dozen assistants who had nothing to do; the only purpose of their employment was to eliminate joblessness. In the 1980s, a similar state of deterioration was also felt in shops for mid-level party members. In fact, until the end of communism, only dollar stores (which were few and far between, extremely expensive, and available exclusively for the chosen few) sold acceptable-quality goods.<sup>[9]</sup>

Each autumn, citizens expected new regulations that limited energy consumption during winters, which were exceptionally severe in the latter half of the 1980s. At the close of 1985, the regime announced that apartments would be heated up to a temperature of mere 12°C. The same was true with public venues, such as shops, schools, offices, etc. The Romanians would have to revert to wearing overcoats at home, even sleeping in them, and finding any decently-heated room was nigh impossible. The situation would repeat itself in the following years, too; the 1986/1987 winter was by far the hardest. The trauma of that time contributed to the fact that immediately after the fall of Ceaușescu, companies that installed tile stoves in apartment blocks mushroomed as the demand was exorbitant. Crisis was also present in television, the principal propaganda tool. Airtime was limited to a few hours per day; most of the coverage was dedicated to the life and current activities of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Interspersed with accounts of successive working visits of the Romanian leader were little-interesting films, including Bollywood productions, from a period when the Indian movie industry suffered hardest in its whole history. The films were therefore the equivalent of *nechezol* in popular culture, an indigestible imitation of real products. The discotheques played the music of Nelu Vlad and his band Azur, which offered not-too-ambitious music; this was a testimony to the collapse of the entertainment industry after the quite powerful 1970s. Another example of the country's deterioration was a tragic event which occurred during a concert for the youth in June 1985 in Ploiești, when five people died after some of the bleacher seats caved in.<sup>[10]</sup> Moreover, during the rescue operation, vodka bottles, condoms and other objects were

discovered, clearly indicating that the teenagers did not have fun in line with the slogans put forward by the official propaganda.

Nicolae Ceaușescu was unfazed by such details, even if he had full knowledge of them, as has been proven by some transcripts recording meetings of the highest party executives. An anecdote, whose authenticity cannot be ascertained, illustrates well the fact that the tyrant was cognisant of the hardships suffered by his country's citizens. During their visit to the United States, Nicolae's wife Elena Ceaușescu, when shopping in a supermarket and astounded by the wealth of goods, was said to have whispered to her husband, "Look, the CIA must have shipped it here from across the country!" The dictator was most likely also aware of another tendency: in the face of chronically inadequate supplies of raw materials, Romanian factories could not work at full throttle, with gigantic enterprises built across the country used only at a fraction of their total capacity. Indeed, some never used their potential to the full.<sup>[11]</sup>

This did not matter much for Ceaușescu. In the latter half of the 1980s, he was more concerned about the implementation of a project for the radical overhaul of downtown Bucharest, probably sensing his imminent end. The idea was born as early as 1977, when – as a result of an earthquake – a large number of buildings lay in ruins; renovation work had not got under way, however. A new impetus emerged in 1984, when plans were made to erect the Civic Centre (*Centrul Civic*) with the main building of the House of the Republic (*Casa Republicii*), later renamed the People's House (*Casa Poporului*). The project involved huge financial outlays and employed up to 100,000 people during the construction. Romania's capital was transformed into a huge construction site. Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu paid frequent visits to the area and offered 'precious' advice as to its ultimate appearance. This related in particular to the People's House, envisaged as the second largest building worldwide, smaller only than the Pentagon in the United States.<sup>[12]</sup>

The entire project was almost completed by the end of the regime. A huge avenue known as the Victory of Socialism Boulevard (*Bulevardul Victoriei Socialismului*) led from the People's House; it was 4 metres longer than the Champs-Élysées in Paris, which was hardly a coincidence and was to stress Ceaușescu's greatness. The newly constructed boulevard buildings were to serve as offices, seats of institutions and apartments for

the most loyal apparatchiks. Some, however, were left unfinished, their empty windows an eyesore. The Victory of Socialism Boulevard (renamed after the fall of the dictator as the Boulevard of Unification – *Bulevardul Unirii*) was incongruous to the city architecture and was not accepted by the residents as a pedestrian area, as it had been assumed.<sup>[13]</sup>

Ceaușescu's ambitions were not limited solely to the nation's capital. In late 1987 and early 1988, the Romanian leader took the decision to speed up the so-called 'systematisation of the countryside' project. It had surfaced already in the 1960s and consisted in destroying traditional rural architecture for the sake of 'modern' apartment blocks to which the rural population were supposed to be resettled. The operation was implemented with a view to 'bridging the gap in the housing conditions in the countryside and in the city', another stage of constructing a 'multifaceted socialist society'.<sup>[14]</sup> The 'systematisation' began in the first half of 1988. However, after massive worldwide protests, especially in Hungary (many of the villages meant to be 'systematised' were inhabited by the Hungarian minority), in the autumn of 1989 the project slowed down somewhat. Still, this was a criminal operation against a rural population, yet another abortive idea following the collectivisation of agriculture.

In the second half of the 1980s, the Romanian economy grew increasingly dependent on the trade with Comecon countries, which accounted for 53 per cent of the country's total foreign trade in 1983, 56 per cent in 1985, and 60 per cent in 1988.<sup>[15]</sup> At the same time, contacts with the West diminished rapidly. Because of Ceaușescu's negative approach to perestroika, ever-new countries limited imports of Romanian goods. The lifting of Romania's most favoured nation trade status by the United States in 1988 was a most powerful blow. In 1989, Bucharest was completely isolated internationally, although it continued to hold economic relations with the Soviet Bloc countries, even though their political ties were increasingly divergent.

In April 1989, during the Central Committee plenum, Ceaușescu announced that Romania had paid back all the foreign debt.<sup>[16]</sup> At the same time, the Grand National Assembly (*Marea Adunare Națională* – the communist parliament with a degree of real power) adopted a resolution banning any foreign debt in the future. Repayment of foreign debt was a huge burden on the national economy and it might have seemed that the complete

elimination of the problem would let it get back on track. However, this did not take place. As of April 1989, all the negative tendencies deepened and there was no hope whatsoever: only a radical shift in economic policy would be able to save the country.

The economy was not the only thing lying in ruins. Decay crept into the party and state apparatus. The Communist Party of Romania (*Partidul Comunist Român* – PCR) was in a pitiable state. Its structure, still rather vibrant in the 1960s and early 1970s, was crumbling by the mid-1980s, its members aged as well as totally defunct, both intellectually and ideologically. One of the reasons for this was the number of members, unheard of in other countries. On the day of its last congress in November 1989, it had over 3.8 million members.<sup>[17]</sup> None of them believed in communist ideals, however, including Ceaușescu himself; while he tried to implement them, he kept his private savings in a capitalist, Swiss bank rather than in a communist one. The theories propagated by Marx, Engels and Lenin were probably either alien to all PCR activists or none believed them. An ordinary member joined the party in the hope of obtaining some privileges, even as mundane as an additional gasoline coupon.

The communist party was additionally weakened by the reforms of the early 1980s, which strengthened the role of the government and practically stripped it of power at the national level (single-handedly wielded by Ceaușescu) and in central administration. Naturally, the prime minister and the ministers were PCR members, but held their offices as representatives of the government rather than the party.

Communist ideology was replaced by the cult of the leader, and the party, which was once the principal political power, became but one of the institutions perpetuating this cult, along with the trade unions, the Women's League, and other such organisations. There were, moreover, powerful institutions busying themselves solely with the promotion of the Ceaușescu cult. These were folk festivals known as 'Song to Romania' (*Cântarea României*) and the nationwide sports games called the 'Daciada'. The individual activists and artists vied with one another to come up with ever more pompous events and works to extol the leader's greatness and genius. This was coupled with the promotion of nationalism, which even included certain anti-Russian and anti-Soviet aspects. Yet as the Romanian leader posed

no threat to the USSR, Moscow tacitly allowed for this. In the early 1980s, Ceaușescu tried to extend this ideology with anti-Semitism, but discontinued it following protests on the part of the US.<sup>[18]</sup>

The nationalist streak of the Ceaușescu regime was visible also in the area of sports, always conducive to channelling social sentiments and manifesting attachment to the national community. Apart from the above 'Dacia-da' games, the key issue for the Romanian authorities was success during the Olympic Games. This was no doubt one of the reasons Romania did not join the other Soviet Bloc countries in boycotting the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. This event was in fact Romania's biggest success in the country's sporting history: its representatives ranked second, after the US team, as to the number of medals won: 20 gold medals, 16 silver and 17 bronze. Such impressive results had not even been achieved during the bumper Moscow Olympic Games in 1980. The biggest number of medals were won in sports disciplines which had long-standing popularity in Romania, such as sports gymnastics (with Ecaterina Szabo as the great star, winning 4 gold medals and 1 silver), athletics events (Doina Melinte, the master of medium-distance running, won gold and silver medals), rowing, weight lifting, and wrestling. This success was not repeated four years later when Romania ranked 8<sup>th</sup>, having won 7 gold, 11 silver, and 6 bronze medals.

The biggest degree of euphoria, however, ensued after a success in football, the most popular European sports discipline. In 1986, the army football team Steaua Bucharest (on a daily basis competing in the local league against the police team of Dynamo) surprised everyone by winning the most prestigious title in club football, the European Cup. In the final match, Steaua defeated Barcelona FC after a series of penalties. The goalkeeper, Helmuth Duckadam, a German hailing from the Romania's Banat region, who defended all the four penalty kicks delivered from the Catalan team, became a national hero. Interestingly, this was in fact his last major game, as he was forced to conclude his career in sports due to health considerations.<sup>[19]</sup> The triumph over one of the best and most popular football teams triggered euphoria. One of the leading Steaua players, Miodrag Belodedici recalled, "We footballers were gods, not just ordinary people, in the streets of Bucharest. Everyone was eager to touch us and the world around us was delirious. Romania had a team winning the European Cup as the first

of the socialist countries. This main message was stressed everywhere.”<sup>[20]</sup> The dictator also praised the team, but was not uncritical: “He praised us but said we were not ideal, and the true ideal of any Romanian is to reach better results with less effort and input. According to him, we, Steaua footballers, had failed to meet the expectations completely. After all, during the final in Seville we played to a scoreless draw within the regular 90 minutes and won only in the penalty shoot-out! A true Romanian would have solved the matter easily by half-time.”<sup>[21]</sup>

According to plans developed in the Soviet Union, perestroika was to be led by the party. This was virtually impossible in Romania precisely because of the intellectual decay of the PCR. Since no one knew and understood Lenin’s thoughts, it was hard to proclaim the slogans of a return to communist ideas. To create a reformist group within the party was unfeasible, although it seems that for a long time the Soviet authorities were oblivious of this truth. Only the former Stalinists were more mentally agile, but it was difficult to gather a bigger group around them, as they were compromised by the 1940s and 1950s persecutions (hinted at even in officially promoted literature) and without influence on the party rank and file (even PCR members distinguished in the construction of socialism were completely cut off their base).

There was some degree of ferment in the army, which Ceaușescu distrusted and whose influence he tried to limit at all cost. Of all the countries of the Warsaw Pact, Romania earmarked the smallest percentage of its national budget for defence purposes, so the army was under-invested and frustrated as a result. In October 1984, there was even an attempted coup but two of the plotters betrayed it and handed over its plans to Ceaușescu’s people. The most influential person in this operation was to be General Ion Ioniță, who was not executed, but merely sent to retirement.<sup>[22]</sup>

A meagre opposition outside the party was in even worse shape. After the liquidation of partisan troops (the last commander of such troops, Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu, was arrested in 1976<sup>[23]</sup>), there were no actual opposition movements.<sup>[24]</sup> Small groups were set up only in the 1970s. The best-known opposition activist of that time was Paul Goma, who in 1977 tried to organise a Romanian version of the Czechoslovak Charter 77. The group was dispersed and Goma himself was forced to leave the country.<sup>[25]</sup> This did not

curb his activity, however, and he tried to influence public opinion in Romania via Western radio stations, whose airwaves, interestingly, had not been scrambled in Romania as of the 1960s. Goma's associates included Vasile Paraschiv, a worker who tried to establish independent trade unions.<sup>[26]</sup>

Another dissident<sup>[27]</sup> trying to be active in 1977 was Vlad Georgescu, a historian in the Institute of South-Eastern European Studies, and a former Securitate agent. He wrote a moderately radical *Programme of the Romanian Dissident Movement (Programul mișcării disidente din România)*, the reason for his short detention. Later he left the country, and, in 1983, became the head of the Romanian section of Radio Free Europe, a position he held until his death in 1988.<sup>[28]</sup>

The year 1977 also saw mass workers' protests in the Jiu Valley, a Romanian mining area. The protesters went as far as to detain the then prime minister Ilie Verdeț and the situation stabilised only after the arrival of Ceaușescu. The protests' leader, Constantin Dobre, was later 're-educated' and sent to a party academy, but took no further part in political life. In 1990, he was employed at a Romanian diplomatic office in London, but applied for asylum in the United Kingdom and stayed there.<sup>[29]</sup>

In 1979, the Free Trade Union of Workers (*Sindicatul Liber al Oamenilor Muncii*) was set up. The flamboyant name did not really correspond to the actual nature of the union; in practice this was a small group of people, the most important of whom were the engineer Ionel Cana, Orthodox clergyman Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, and a pensioner who had been a high-ranking state official before the war, Gheorghe Brașoveanu. The group was quickly dispersed and all the three members received prison sentences.<sup>[30]</sup>

Apart from the above-mentioned organisations, the opposition in Romania included a few hundred other people at best. They were isolated, followed by the Securitate, incarcerated, and even assassinated, as in the case of Gheorghe Ursu, an engineer and poet who kept a diary, which was eventually intercepted by the secret police. Ursu was detained and then died in a detention centre as a result of torture.<sup>[31]</sup> Doina Cornea, a teacher from Cluj, was more fortunate. She wrote letters to Radio Free Europe, and although her activity was quickly uncovered, the authorities were afraid to arrest her since she had relatives in the West.<sup>[32]</sup> The regime tried to isolate her and monitor her every step. Another figure worth mentioning is Iulius

Filip, a worker from Cluj, who in 1981 sent a letter to delegates attending the Solidarity congress. He was soon identified and sentenced to a long-term prison sentence. Later the punishment was commuted to a shorter sentence; nevertheless, Filip was forced to emigrate in 1988.<sup>[33]</sup>

The negligible number of oppositionists had no impact on the public. Moreover, the vast majority of Romanians had no clue of their existence. They were unable to mobilise the masses or even stir up the intellectual ferment necessary to carry out perestroika. Most of them, in fact, were active not for political, but for moral reasons, as they were simply unable to live under the circumstances in which their country had found itself. Their ideas were not critical of communism as a social and economic system. The critique was directed at the Ceauşescu regime and at the selected aspects of life in the country that he governed. These characteristics would in fact have tallied with perestroika (meant to reform the practice of governance rather than the foundations of the system), but the Romanian oppositionists were too weak to constitute the foundation stone of any major social movement. Small protests erupted here and there during the severe winters when Romanians were in despair over inadequate heating, yet these never intensified into anything larger.

No changes in Romania were possible without the deposition of Ceauşescu. However, it seems that the Soviet authorities did not realise this, at least between 1985 and 1987, or else they were not too bothered by the problem, as the domestic problems of one of the lesser satellites were not a matter of immediate concern for such a vast empire.<sup>[34]</sup>

Ceauşescu understood the risk of the new Soviet policy and immediately countered it. As early as 25 March 1985, he changed his ambassador in Moscow for a more trustworthy individual. A few days later, he called on world leaders to upkeep the peace, most likely trying to stress his international role.

At the same time, agreements were signed to extend the operation of the Warsaw Pact for another 20 years, although Ceauşescu 'was in two minds' on the issue and a grotesque mediation took place with the participation of Egon Krenz and Erich Honecker.<sup>[35]</sup> In October 1985, the Romanian leader went to China to seek support but did not gain much as a result, and a month later, the Romanian regime issued an appeal to Gorbachev and Reagan, yet another insignificant piece of paper.

In the meantime, rumours of a possible deposition of Ceaușescu started among the higher echelons of the party and state administration, with names of his possible successors put forth. Various scenarios were considered, such as the resignation of the dictator for the sake of his wife, son, or one of the staunchest activists, who might be manoeuvrable from behind the scenes. This was to have been a compromise between Ceaușescu's desire to maintain power and Moscow's requirements of a more moderate line.

It was then that the list of potential successors of the Genius of the Carpathians included the name Ion Iliescu.<sup>[36]</sup> Born in 1930, he was a son of Alexandru Iliescu, an activist of the then communist party. After the war, Ion Iliescu was fast-tracked for promotions within the party structures and in the late 1960s was in the thick of things as the minister for youth. In 1971, however, he fell out of favour and was transferred to the province, first to Timișoara and then to Iași. In 1984, he was the head of the Technical Publishing House. He no doubt had the characteristics of a leader of a reformist party faction, but in the years 1986–1987, this seemed completely unreal since there was no such grouping.<sup>[37]</sup>

In November 1987, a referendum was held on the reduction of the army budget by 5 per cent, ostensibly with the motto of a struggle for peace, and most probably meant to demonstrate to Moscow that the system was becoming 'democratic'. Voter turnout during the referendum was precisely 100 per cent.<sup>[38]</sup>

A major impulse for change was provided only by Mikhail Gorbachev's visit, held on 25–27 May 1987. This was the first meeting at this level since 1976, which additionally stressed its importance. Ceaușescu tried to demonstrate to his guest the 'accomplishments of socialism', for example, giving him a tour of shops to which, much like in the above anecdote about the CIA, goods from the entire country had been shipped (in particular meat, which was extremely seldom sold at the time). The Soviet delegation visited the construction site of the Civic Centre and similar buildings. During the visit, Gorbachev tried to communicate with other PCR activists, yet the Romanian bodyguards successfully prevented this, whereas the crowd chanted: "Ceaușescu–Gorbachev!", which made any discussion impossible.<sup>[39]</sup> Before Gorbachev's arrival, Iliescu had been sent off for a holiday in Timișoara to forestall any contact with the Soviet leader, who therefore

ended up leaving Bucharest certain that perestroika in Romania would be very hard and definitely impossible with Ceaușescu in power.

Some activity resembling preparations for the ultimate confrontation took place in the few months following Gorbachev's visit. In July 1987, General Ion Ioniță, who would have supported the deposition of the leader, died in unclear circumstances.<sup>[40]</sup> In September, Silviu Brucan, a former Stalinist propagandist, came forward as an opponent of the Romanian leader by printing an op-ed piece in the *International Herald Tribune* (later on, granting interviews to foreign correspondents and voicing critical opinions)<sup>[41]</sup> The most significant event, however, was the nomination of Iulian Vlad as the head of the Securitate, which took place in early October. Unlike his predecessor, Vlad was a professional, which meant that Ceaușescu decided to trust a pro rather than a loyal activist. Later, however, this proved a major mistake since during the December events Vlad's attitude was ambiguous and he tried to withdraw the Securitate from the front line of the power struggle.<sup>[42]</sup>

The watershed moment was the workers' protest in Brașov on 15 November 1987.<sup>[43]</sup> According to available data, the rebellion was not instigated by the special forces, even if such hypotheses also appeared. The 15 November was the 'election' day for the national councils; the official turnout was 99.99 per cent, i.e. less than in the referendum held the year before.

There is no way of knowing if the missing 0.01 per cent to a perfect turnout was related to Brașov (unlike previously, the election results were not disaggregated by provinces), but this cannot be ruled out. The protest started in the 'Red Flag' Truck Factory (*Intreprindere de Camioane Steagul Roșu*), with its root cause being the halving of workers' wages announced on 14 November in the evening when the workers showed up at the factory for the night shift. Come morning of the following day, they began to gather at the factory gate and then marched onto the city centre. At some places, they met party and trade union activists, who tried to stop them. At one moment, even the mayor of Brașov made his appearance and called on the crowd to disperse but the protesters would not listen to him and he had to withdraw. The crowd chanted anti-Ceaușescu and later even anti-communist slogans. At around 10 a.m., a group of a few hundred people arrived at the provincial communist party headquarters. The Securitate stood by but did not intervene. The workers started singing the pre-war

national anthem *Awaken, Romanian!* (*Deșteaptă-te, române!*), but before long it was evident that few people knew the lyrics as decades of communist propaganda had taken their toll. After a time, people forced their way into the building and then threw different objects, such as portraits of Ceaușescu, out of the windows. As they reminisced later, the biggest shock for them was the luxurious lifestyle of the party elite, as they had found premium liquors, Western cigarettes, and even pineapples, all unavailable to ordinary citizens. It was then that the riot police started their intervention and crushed the rally with brute force.

On the very same day, the most active participants of the rebellion were detained. Most were transferred to Bucharest, where their interrogations involved the use of very cruel torture techniques. The operation was supervised by Emil Macri, with Ristea Priboi<sup>[44]</sup> taking an active role; both had had earlier experience of 'work' with oppositionists.<sup>[45]</sup> Since the Brașov rebellion was covered by international radio stations and could not be covered up, the regime used another stratagem: meetings took place in factories across Romania, where the 'hooligans' were severely censured; calls for just retribution included death sentences. The trial took place on 3 December 1987, yet the penalties were relatively mild (most often a few years in prison with enforced labour). Those who avoided incarceration were forcefully displaced to other parts of the country, where they were under constant surveillance by the secret services.

None of the workers participating in the Brașov rebellion played any role in politics later. However, the events were a springboard for Silviu Brucan, who invited Western journalists and handed them a petition in which he referred to workers' persecution. The bulk of the document was dedicated to the critique of Ceaușescu and his methods of governance. From then on, other foreign journalists started to approach Brucan, and he became well known. Brucan's promotion was made easier by the fact that the Brașov events were widely covered and commented upon by the Western media.<sup>[46]</sup> As of November 1987, Ceaușescu was mentioned solely in negative terms and the discussion mainly focused on when he would be ousted and under what circumstances.

In January 1988, Radio Free Europe dealt a heavy blow to the dictator's prestige. It began to broadcast a book by Ion Mihai Pacepa, a former acting

head of foreign intelligence who had defected in 1978. Pacepa later wrote a quasi-memoir *The Red Horizons*, where he would describe what happened behind the scenes of the Ceaușescu court, showing the Romanian leader and even more so his wife in the most unfavourable light. When the radio station broadcast successive episodes of the book, the streets of Bucharest were nearly totally empty, as the author himself proudly announced, since everyone was seated by their radios, listening in to the programme. Pacepa's positive hero was General Nicolae Militaru, who was introduced as an agent of Soviet military intelligence, but also as a victim of refined machinations of the power-obsessed Ceaușescu. Apart from him, Pacepa had a favourable attitude to the former prime minister, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and the staunchest aide of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (Ceaușescu's predecessor): Gheorghe Apostol. Of the three, only Maurer would not play a major role later.

The regime reacted by extending the already extensive personality cult, which nevertheless produced a contrary effect. It was precisely those practices, which society abhorred the most. The permanent celebration of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu's greatness was moreover the butt of mockery for Western journalists, who arrived in Romania in ever-greater numbers.

In the meantime, the country's international status deteriorated. In 1988, the United States lifted Romania's most-favoured nation clause in trade, and far-reaching changes began in neighbouring countries, especially in Hungary. In May of that year, János Kádár was deposed as secretary general and in June, Budapest was the venue of a huge rally protesting against the non-observance of human rights in Romania. The matter even caused short-lived tension in bilateral relations, alleviated after the meeting of Ceaușescu with the new Hungarian leader Károly Grósz.<sup>[47]</sup> The changes in the Soviet Union must have caused the dictator a headache, as Moscow joined the process of promoting another Romanian oppositionist. Mircea Dinescu, a former student at the party academy (from which he was relegated for delivering an address incompatible with the official party line during a 1981 writers' conference) who later took to poetry, was in August 1988 invited to the USSR by the Soviet Writers' Union. Upon arrival in the Soviet capital, Dinescu was interviewed by Radio Moscow (broadcasting in Romanian, among others), and he wholeheartedly supported perestroika.

At the end of 1988, Brucan took a trip to Western capitals, where he met with government representatives. He subsequently flew to Moscow to talk with Gorbachev himself. The Securitate did not interrupt his journeys, which meant that Ceaușescu had lost most of his influence in the special forces, which may have been due to their commander Vlad. Still, the dictator could fall back on the complete inertia of Romanian society. Brucan, even adequately promoted, was even unable to stir party activists, of which he soon became aware.

Immediately upon return, Brucan began to set up a secret group of followers of reforms among former dignitaries. Ultimately, he managed to talk only five people into the project, including Gheorghe Apostol, mentioned above in *The Red Horizons*. The others, too, were former Stalinists. They wrote a document whose text was first broadcast by the Romanian section of the BBC on 10 March 1989 and went down in history as *The Letter of the Six* (*Scrisoarea celor șase*).<sup>[48]</sup> The party veterans negated, if cautiously, some of the dictator's measures, such as the construction of the Civic Centre or the 'systematisation' of rural areas. Criticism was levelled also at the low standard of living of the population. Brucan and his colleagues fell short of demanding that Ceaușescu step down, but announced their readiness to take part in new initiatives.

*The Letter of the Six* was widely discussed in Western media and was generally regarded as a manifesto of a group of party reformists. This was, in fact, gross over-exaggeration, since the group was composed of a few people only and the regime immediately imposed their house arrest and surveillance. This, however, did not deter others from following suit.

In July 1989, Dumitru Mazilu increased his activity.<sup>[49]</sup> In the 1960s, he had been the principal of the Securitate school, but later was not appointed to influential positions and was in charge of cooperation with the United Nations, for whom, in 1987, he prepared a report on the observance, or rather non-observance, of human rights in Romania. Detained under house arrest by the regime, he was able to make this document public in Geneva only on 10 July 1989, during a session of one of the UN sub-committees. Later he would also send it to diplomatic missions of various countries, including the People's Republic of Poland.

In the summer of 1989, the situation in the region changed dramatically. The most significant event was the appointment of Tadeusz Mazowiecki as Poland's prime minister. Ceaușescu decided to react and in the night of 19–20 August wrote a letter to the brotherly parties where he demanded exerting pressure on Warsaw and opted for helping the Polish United Workers' Party get rid of the threat that, according to him, was posed by Solidarity. However, he did not mean military, but rather diplomatic intervention. One way or another, the letter was unfavourably received by all of its addressees.<sup>[50]</sup>

Within the next few months, all the countries of the Soviet Bloc in Europe save Romania experienced irreversible changes. On 10 October, the Hungarian communist party transformed into a social-democratic party, on 9 November the Berlin Wall fell, and the very next day Todor Zhivkov was ousted in Bulgaria. On 17 November, a huge rally was held in Prague, which sparked off swift changes to the system. At the end of November, Nicolae Ceaușescu was left alone.

The 14<sup>th</sup> congress of the communist party was held on 20–24 November. This was the last opportunity for a legal deposition of the dictator: since formally he was the party's general secretary, only the congress, the highest party instance, was able to effect change. Prior to the gathering, Radio Free Europe had broadcast two open letters calling upon Central Committee members to elect a new secretary. Both were signed by what was at that time a rather mysterious organisation called the National Salvation Front (*Frontul Salvării Nationale* – FSN). The change did not take place, however, and the congress delegates sang the song: *Ceaușescu re-elected at the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress* (*Ceaușescu reales la al paisprezecelea Congres*).<sup>[51]</sup> Opponents of the first secretary had no choice but to resort to violence.

## The Fall of Ceaușescu

The events that led to the collapse and death of Nicolae Ceaușescu began with a symbolic meeting, which took place on 2–3 December 1989 aboard the Soviet cruise ship *Maxim Gorky*, stationed at the shore of Malta. Mikhail Gorbachev discussed matters of global and regional politics with US President George Bush. The available, published transcripts of the talks are most

likely incomplete.<sup>[52]</sup> Whether Romania was a subject of conversation and in what context cannot be ascertained, yet it is more important to note that the meeting meant that the Americans left a lot of leeway to the Kremlin in the Ceaușescu case; at least this was the impression of the Romanians themselves.

On 4 December, Moscow hosted a meeting of leaders of the Warsaw Pact member states. During the meeting, Gorbachev found time for a *tête-à-tête* with Ceaușescu, although it is hard to ascertain what the two talked about.<sup>[53]</sup> The Romanian leader suggested a meeting of “communist and workers’ parties” to address matters of global socialism. The Moscow assembly may have played this role, yet Ceaușescu was evidently not fully satisfied. He also recalled Lenin’s idea that “no matter how few, we must raise the banner”. Gorbachev did not treat his interlocutor seriously, dismissed him, and treated him patronisingly. When the USSR prime minister Nikolai Ryzhkov commented that a Comecon session was scheduled for 9 January 1990, the Soviet leader exclaimed without specifying the addressee of his words: “You will still be alive on 9 January!”<sup>[54]</sup> which may have been a veiled threat with respect to Ceaușescu or a revelation of certain plans.<sup>[55]</sup> The conversation was unproductive. The Romanian dictator was not accompanied to the airport by any of the Soviet officials; that was an evident protocol infringement and a big affront.

The Moscow trip finally made Ceaușescu aware that he was in mortal danger. Immediately upon his return, he took a few decisions, which were to safeguard him against social rebellion and foreign intervention. On 5 December, a decree was issued on raising scholarships for school and university students and on granting stipends to all children of workers and farmers (however, only those from the kolkhoz farms<sup>[56]</sup>), irrespective of their parents’ income.<sup>[57]</sup> Because such ideas had been announced before and had never materialised, they were regarded as yet more empty promises. Furthermore, the measure itself had no longer any major significance.

A much weightier question was the decision of the Political Executive Committee of 11 December on the transferral of the border guard from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>[58]</sup> In the autumn of 1989, the number of people defecting from the country grew exponentially; as an example, in November of that year the famous gymnast Nadia

Comăneci fled to the West. It was patently obvious that the border guards were unable to fulfil their duties. Most probably, Ceaușescu believed that this was not a matter of inefficiency but deliberate activity of his opponents in the Ministry of Defence, and therefore decided to trust a more tested Ministry of Internal Affairs. Theoretically, the decision was rationally justified yet was taken much too late and within the following weeks added to the chaos at the national borders.

Perhaps this had a significant impact on the events to come: this remains purely hypothetical, as the issue has not been resolved until this day whether Romania was or was not entered by a large number of 'tourists' from the Soviet Union.<sup>[59]</sup> Arguments for and against are important, so it is in order to quote them here, leaving the issue open.<sup>[60]</sup> The followers of the 'tourists' theory mention the unquestionable fact that in the vicinity of Craiova, the Romanian services executed three USSR citizens suspected of terrorism. The memoirs of Securitate officers reveal information that the headquarters received reports from across the country of columns of Lada passenger cars with 'tourists', i.e. young, able-bodied and crew-cut men speaking broken Romanian, which may have justified suspicions that they were from the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. Some former officers reminisced that apart from the Ladas, there were also coach loads of such 'tourists'. According to this version of events, the entire group was to have infiltrated Romania from the USSR as of early December, ostensibly on the way to the former Yugoslavia, which indicated that right from the start they were bound for Timișoara. The 'tourists' were supposedly gathering in the *Unirea Hotel* in Iași, which they began to leave on 14 December in the afternoon. They then split into two groups; one of them headed to Timișoara, the other to Bucharest.

Opponents of the above theory provide equally important arguments. First and foremost, they claim that the Securitate had not apprehended any other USSR citizens apart from in Craiova and that no Soviet citizens were detained in mass arrests that took place in Timișoara and Bucharest. If the 'tourists' really existed, they were no doubt well-trained, also in their withdrawal and covering up techniques, yet it is hardly likely that all of them managed to do so successfully. Besides, there is extensive film

footage and photographs from the events and Soviet citizens do not seem detectable among the most active participants.

The middle-of-the-road version seems to be the closest to the truth: the ‘tourists’ really did enter Romania but failed to play a major role in the events. It cannot be ruled out that they were to become active only after it had turned out that Ceaușescu would not be ousted by local forces; however, such intervention was not necessary. Within the few days after the fall of the dictator, the country was in such a state of chaos that even a large group of ‘tourists’ may have left unnoticed, which probably did happen. Perhaps one day we will learn whether the ‘tourists’ really existed or were just a figment of the officers’ imaginations, who tried to explain their inefficiency in quenching social unrest.

The Romanian revolution, or as others prefer to call it, the December events, began independently of each other, in two different places, day after day. On 14 December, an attempt at organising a rally took place in Iași, where there had been some potential for rebellion. The reasons were twofold: first and foremost, this was a vibrant university town with numerous young people frustrated with a lack of prospects in a state governed by Ceaușescu. These young people had actually rebelled prior to 1989: in February 1987, large-scale protests took place there, which had ended without resorting to violence (the authorities made a number of pledges but never carried them out). Besides, the Soviet concepts of perestroika resonated the best precisely in Iași, situated near the Soviet border.

There were few opposition groups in Iași. The most famous activist was writer Dan Petrescu, who was in contact with people from other towns, such as Doina Cornea, and he managed to gather a group of mostly intellectuals around himself. In the autumn of 1987, he left the country, and gave an interview to the French *Libération* daily. His statements were rather blunt for that time in that he said that the departure of Ceaușescu would not solve the problem and the entire system should be changed (suffice it to compare these words with *The Letter of the Six*, who did not even call for the deposition of the dictator). In October 1989, Petrescu began a hunger strike to make the delegates of the 14<sup>th</sup> Party Congress not re-elect Ceaușescu as secretary general, which was obviously to no avail. As punishment, he was placed under house arrest.

Another group was created by Cassian Maria Spiridon and Ștefan Prutianu, less radical and wishing to graft Soviet solutions onto Romanian soil, including the setting up of a people's front to implement Gorbachev's ideas. On 27 November, both circles united and established the Romanian People's Front (*Frontul Popular Român*). The people involved with it began to post leaflets across the city, calling on everyone to join a rally on 14 December, at 4 p.m., in Unity Square (*Piața Unirii*) in Iași.

No doubt, some of the leaflets reached the security forces, which were able to prepare preventive measures. The preparations were very thorough. In the run-up to 14 December, military generals Constantin Olteanu and Ion Coman, who took over the command of the operation, visited the city. Around the Unity Square, there were trucks with troops in plain-clothes, on stand-by, armed with machine guns. Fire engines arrived at the square. Police and paratroopers patrolled the entire area. A karate tournament was organised in the city; if the opposition activists were to gain the upper hand, then the karate athletes would have joined the riot forces. Around 4 p.m., dozen-or-so activists of the Front (including Spiridon and Prutianu) and a few people responding to the leaflets gathered in the square. They waited an hour and then went back home. Each of them was followed, then detained and tortured right up until 22 December.<sup>[61]</sup> Meanwhile, the 'tourists' lay low: this round was won by Ceaușescu's people.

The following day a protest began in Timișoara, on the other side of the country, which ultimately resulted in the collapse of the hated dictator.<sup>[62]</sup> This city, like Iași, had rebellion potential, if for different reasons.<sup>[63]</sup> Timișoara is the capital city of the Banat, a region with rich traditions of, firstly, independence from the centre of power, and secondly of a peaceful coexistence of the nationalities making up its population: Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, and Serbs. Despite numerous attempts, the communists were unable to alienate the communities, but because of the policy of the Ceaușescu regime, most of the Germans had emigrated. To date, Timișoara residents see Bucharest as a foreign world, which unjustifiably meddles with the matters of their town and region.

Of great importance was also the proximity of two countries where perestroika had already been advanced, like Hungary and to some extent Yugoslavia. Timișoara residents received radio and television broadcasts from

the two countries, whose media, for a longer time, had actively promoted the reformist ideals of the Soviet leadership. Hungarian television dedicated ample airtime to the status of the Hungarian minority in Romania. It addressed the 'systematisation' of rural areas, the fight against the national language and culture, and Ceaușescu himself was shown – albeit in a veiled way because of the officially claimed good Hungarian-Romanian relations – as a bloody tyrant wishing to follow through on his nationalist dream of a single-nation country. All of this was avidly accepted and, moreover, the TV aired news of events from other countries where the communist regimes were tumbling. The residents of Timișoara had their reasons to hate the dictator, but the impact of foreign media is not to be underestimated: it seems that they were instrumental in encouraging the future protesters.<sup>[64]</sup>

The fall of Ceaușescu began with a rather plain and exclusively local issue of László Tőkés.<sup>[65]</sup> Born in 1952 in Cluj as a son of a Protestant minister, he decided to follow in his father's footsteps and enrolled in the Protestant Academy of Theology in his hometown. He graduated in 1975 and became a minister in the town of Dej, where he performed his ministry until 1984. During that time, he joined a group of Hungarian opposition activists connected with the *Counterpoints (Ellenpontok)* periodical.<sup>[66]</sup> He had even written one article and, as punishment, he was dismissed from his job in 1984. In 1986, he began a hunger strike demanding that he be re-installed, which ultimately happened. On 1 January 1987, Tőkés was transferred as a minister to the congregation in Timișoara. It was then that his conflict with Bishop László Papp started. The bishop collaborated closely with the communist regime and tried to re-transfer Tőkés back to the province. The latter did everything in his power to prevent this, mainly appealing to higher ecclesiastical authorities, which eventually, however, took the decision to move the stubborn minister to Mineu, Salaj province, in the north-eastern part of Romania. Still, Tőkés opposed the decision; instrumental here was the help he got from the members of his Timișoara parish.

Tőkés decided to internationalise the matter: on 28 May 1989, Budapest-based *Radio Kossuth* had a broadcast about the conflict of a local pastor with his bishop, naturally siding with the former. Far more reaching was the broadcast of Hungarian television of 24 July. Two days later Tőkés's phone line went dead. As of August, *Radio Kossuth* began to cover extensively

the situation in the parish in Timișoara, and on 11 September, Hungarian television once again ran a programme about the Hungarian clergyman.

On 12 September, the day after the programme aired, Ernő Újvárossy, a friend of the minister who was the manager of renovation works, disappeared. His body, even without an autopsy bearing evident signs of severe torture, was found two days later. The discovery of the perpetrator was not a problem, since the murder could only have been committed by the Securitate.<sup>[67]</sup> When addressing those present at the funeral, Tőkés referred to the secret police saying: “The killers of Ernő Újvárossy are hidden among us”. For the following two months, the regime tried to intimidate the clergyman by searching his apartment and sending unidentified people to confront him.

In early December, riot police surrounded the parish. Only employees of the parish and the faithful on their way to religious services were allowed entry. On 6 December, the authorities told Tőkés that he had no right to appeal against the decision of the church authorities and that he was obliged to obey their orders immediately. On 10 December, the pastor himself notified the parishioners about this, adding that within the following week he would have to leave them and move to Mineu. At 8 a.m. on 15 December, a group of around 10–12 congregation members gathered in front of the minister’s flat and decided to prevent his departure. A rally began, which in the long run brought about the collapse of the dictator.<sup>[68]</sup>

For reasons hard to ascertain today, the riot police in Timișoara were not as well prepared as those in Iași. In fact, they were totally unprepared. There was no karate event, armed civilians or fire engines lining the streets. We do not know if the local authorities did not expect a bigger rally, or whether the special forces were simply misinformed. One way or another, for the first few days, only the local authorities confronted the protesters, and the former proved too weak and hesitant to nip the rebellion in the bud. So many mistakes were committed when trying to disperse the crowd that only two explanations are possible: either this was deliberate sabotage on the part of the commanders of the riot police in Timișoara, or the years of negative selection and promotion of only cowardly losers had taken their toll. Regrettably, we do not know the answer to this question and will probably not know it in the foreseeable future.

Over a hundred people gathered at 11 a.m. in front of Tőkés's house. Since it was located in the *Piața Maria* (Mary's Square; after the fall of communism its original name, St. Mary's Square, was reinstated), a hub of city life, curious passers-by started to join the protesters. In the afternoon, a good deal of Hungarian and Romanian students joined the rally. Although the defence of Tőkés concerned only the Protestant parish dominated by the Hungarians, it turned out to join the two communities. At 4 p.m., the place was visited by Radu Balan, the recently appointed secretary of the party's Provincial Committee. His intentions were unclear, since he only looked round, got into his car, and drove off. His behaviour emboldened the protesters. The plainclothes Securitate officers present did not take action and later withdrew. At 5 p.m., Tőkés appeared in a window of his flat and called the crowd to disperse. An announcement to the same effect was also posted on the church door.<sup>[69]</sup>

The protesters would not listen, however, and the rally spun out of control. The authorities failed to see the risk and for a time were mainly concerned with finding a solution to the 'Tőkés problem' rather than with the dispersal of the crowd. A secretary for organisational affairs of the City Committee appeared before the protesters and began to tell them that the decision to transfer the minister had been revoked. Since this was after the visit of Balan, of a higher rank, this announcement was to no avail. The mayor of Timișoara also addressed the crowd, calling on them to disperse, yet was booed off, and had to retreat. It was then that the first anti-Ceaușescu slogans were heard. Since it was getting late, people slowly began to disperse, yet the crowd in front of the minister's house was still sizeable. Around 11 p.m., Balan, in panic, called Bucharest for further instructions. The decision was made only the following morning.

The rally continued through the night and the police did not take action, so this was in fact the first night without the communist regime in Timișoara. This had a tremendous effect as – for the first time in decades – people had felt free, powerful, and accountable for their own actions. The authorities proved weak, and this only accelerated their demise. At 10 a.m. on 16 December, Ceaușescu himself called Balan and ordered him to transfer Tőkés to Mineu immediately. It seems that Bucharest had no knowledge of what was going on in the capital of the Banat and that the 'Tőkés problem' was no longer of much importance, otherwise the dictator would have surely issued orders

to disperse the rally and arrest its most active participants. As a preventive measure, units answerable to the Interior Ministry were issued with an emergency alert, yet no additional forces were transferred to Timișoara.

In the meantime, Balan and other local dignitaries did all they could to avoid responsibility for further developments. On the one hand, they did not want blood on their hands, and yet the only chance to quash the protests was by violent means. On the other hand, they were afraid of the consequences of their disobedience to Ceaușescu, who was still strong enough to do them harm. The final decision could no longer be put off since time worked to the detriment of the authorities: the crowd was growing bigger by the hour. The solution demanded by Bucharest was used, but without too much enthusiasm – central authorities demanded a bloody crackdown on demonstrators, while local authorities were afraid of using force. This may have sped up the events more than the inaction on the part of the regime. This situation continued, in fact, until the arrival of people from Bucharest in the morning on the next day, when it was too late to prevent a bigger bloodbath.

At 2 p.m. on 16 December, workers finished their shift and a large crowd gathered in front of Tőkés's house. The authorities sent in a few dozen union activists, without precise orders, and they therefore simply joined the crowd. In addition, local hooligans joined the protest, and took the opportunity and started to loot shops and vandalise property. It was them who started to act in an aggressive manner. In a democratic state, at this moment, the rally organisers would usually cut themselves clearly off the vandals, but in communist Romania and under the circumstances of an unorganised protest, this was impossible. When the authorities learned via the 'eyes and ears of the people', i.e. the Securitate, that the protesters were involved in acts of vandalism, they dispatched riot police: their numbers were too weak, however, to do anything.

Between 5.30–6 p.m., close to 80 policemen, armed with shields, helmets, and truncheons, as well as a few fire engines, were dispatched. Such a small force was unable to face a rebellious crowd of hundreds of people. The struggle took place until around 9 p.m.; the police were defeated and forced to withdraw, thus unblocking the roads around the Maria Square. This helped the rally spread across the city. Chaotic skirmishes between

the protesters and police units and the Securitate continued until 4.40 a.m.; 180 people were arrested yet the city was unvanquished.

Nonetheless, before the riots had ended, at 3 a.m., László Tőkés was transferred to Mineu by force, but this ultimately had no effect on further developments.

On the evening of 16 December, it dawned upon the Romanian authorities that the local tyrants had let them down. At 9 p.m., Iulian Vlad held a meeting with the heads of all the Securitate departments. A decision was taken to dispatch a special team to Timișoara to take over command. The aforementioned Emil Macri headed the team. Along with his colleagues, he got on a special train and arrived in the Banat's capital at 6.30 a.m. on 17 December. Why the train was chosen as a means of transportation remains unknown; a plane or helicopter flight would have been much faster. As of 17 December, the burden of the operation was shifted to the army: the Securitate continued to take part, but it was soldiers, with live ammunition and military equipment, who had the most important impact.

Since 17 December was a Sunday, most people did not go to work. A taut atmosphere of waiting was felt in the streets. A march of military units through the main streets of the town started at 10 a.m.; it was most probably conducted as a show of power. The residents of Timișoara did not get scared, however. Still during the march, around 4,000 people gathered at the Maria Square. At the same time, other groups started their assault on the party's Provincial Committee. At that very moment, Balan called the minister of national defence, Vasile Milea, who issued an order for military troops to take action. The order was executed at 11 a.m. Very bloody fighting began, although the first live rounds were fired only at 3.30 p.m., killing a few protesters.

At the same time, meetings of the Political Executive Committee began in Bucharest.<sup>[70]</sup> The regime was evidently self-assured. At noon, an order was issued to strengthen military venues and it was publicly announced that the following day Ceaușescu would leave for Iran on a scheduled visit, which was to indicate that the situation had been contained. Within the next few hours, it turned out, however, that the struggle continued and the dictator decided to send one more task force, from the military, to Timișoara. It was composed of Ion Coman (who had a few days earlier proved efficient

in Iași), deputy ministers of defence, Generals Victor Atanasie Stănculescu and Ștefan Gușa, as well as the commander of the Bucharest garrison, Mihai Chițac. They left for the capital of the Banat by plane at 3.30 p.m. and arrived at 5 p.m. Meanwhile, knowledge of the events in Timișoara had spread worldwide thanks to reports from the international media. Of greatest importance in this respect were Radio Free Europe and Hungarian state television, which relayed information to the West and to other Soviet Bloc countries. However, both of these stations imposed an entirely false image of the events. It remains hard to ascertain today as to what extent this was done deliberately, and to what extent it was ordinary speculation or sensationalism. Nevertheless, one cannot rule out conscious disinformation, which was to weaken Ceaușescu's image in addition.

The general tendency was to inflate the number of protesters, in particular the casualties. First, they talked about thousands, and then about tens of thousands of people killed in Timișoara, which was completely absurd. Additionally, Hungarian television tried to show these events principally as the struggle of the Hungarian minority against the Romanian regime represented by Ceaușescu. This style of depicting 'facts' was taken over by other foreign mass media, including outlets based in the Soviet Union, and, later, Romanian (in the sense of citizenship, as it applied to the other nationalities living in the Banat) journalists, historians and participants of the events had to go to enormous efforts to rectify this skewed perspective. One way or another, such was the news that reached other cities in Romania, where Radio Free Europe was listened to on a regular basis. The image of the massacre alleged to have taken place in Timișoara had its impact on the social sentiments in the country and activated at least some of those who had been inactive before.

The news reaching Bucharest from the capital of the Banat aroused serious concerns of the party leadership. At 4.30 p.m., the Political Executive Committee reconvened. Vlad and Milea were severely censured by Ceaușescu, who accused them of inefficiency. A moment later, the dictator said he was stepping down, yet this was only an allegiance test for his people. In the event, everyone passed, raising voices that this would be impossible, and they would not hear any of it, thus underlining support for the secretary general and the hard line which he was adopting at the time. Everyone

present at the meeting was, then, accountable for the bloody suppression of the riots and casualties. Following the meeting, Ceaușescu issued an order to seal the national borders to citizens of all countries save China, North Korea, and Cuba. Then, together with his wife, he went to the construction site of the Civic Centre, where for half an hour they were talking to each other at a distance from the bodyguards (thus preventing any potential eavesdropping of their conversation).

At 6 p.m., all units in Romania were issued an order to enter the state of partial combat (*lupta parțială*). The street combat in Timișoara on 17 December took a tragic toll: 63 dead, 227 injured, and around 800 detained. Material losses were not assessed at that time, but the entire city centre was completely vandalised, with stores regularly pillaged by unidentified looters. Interestingly, some of the stolen goods were later found in the Securitate headquarters. Either they had been intercepted from the thieves or secret police officers had decided to make some extra income on the side. The latter eventuality cannot be ruled out, as Securitate officers, especially those belonging to the lower levels of the hierarchy, were especially demoralised, as the entire system was.

At 5.30 a.m. on 18 December, the commander of the anti-riot operation, Ion Coman, called Emil Bobu (one of Ceaușescu's closest aides) notifying him that the situation in Timișoara had been taken under control. This was untrue, however, and again the question arises whether Coman was deliberately economical with the truth, or whether he wanted to demonstrate his efficiency to his superiors and therefore bend the facts. Patrols of armed units in all of the downtown streets averted further struggle only until 10 a.m. on 18 December, when the fighting erupted anew.

However, this information was enough for Ceaușescu to take the fateful decision to go to Iran. He boarded a plane at 8.30 a.m. and left for Tehran, where he arrived at noon local time. Unlike his previous trips, his wife did not accompany him. The dictator intended in this way to forestall a coup d'état and assure continuity of power in Bucharest during his absence. This proved a huge blunder: Elena Ceaușescu was far more hated than Nicolae, not only by the public, but first of all by the highest party and state dignitaries, the military and special forces, who found it much easier to sabotage her orders than those of her husband. Besides, she was less

intelligent than Nicolae, a matter of prime importance during his absence, even with frequent contacts between the couple. One thing remains certain, though: by leaving his wife in Romania, he gave a clear signal that he was going to return from Iran.

The reason for Ceaușescu's trip to Iran remains unknown. The visit had been planned in the summer of 1989, so this was no spur-of-the-moment decision, and could have been cancelled without causing a stir. Moreover, at least in the official part of the trip's agenda, the visit had no elements, which could not have been put off. The ostensible reason was to sign a long-term programme for the development of economic cooperation; such a document could have easily waited another few months. It is hard to estimate whether there were any other secret matters to be discussed in the Middle East. Speculations on this issue put forth later suggested that the Romanian dictator may have sought aid or was planning to establish a joint credit bank for the developing countries. Moreover, Ceaușescu was rumoured to have taken a large amount of gold with him, which he then left in Tehran. One thing is certain: on 20 December, a group of Iranian dignitaries arrived in Romania to visit a number of factories. On 31 December, they crossed the border with Bulgaria and were heard of no more; they most probably returned to Iran. What the real purpose of their visit to Romania was and why they had not fled the unrest-riddled country earlier remains unknown.

On 18 December, the *Scânteia Tineretului* (Youth's Spark), the press tribune of the Union of Communist Youth, published an absurd article about the different ways of sunbathing on the seashore.<sup>[71]</sup> As this was mid-December, the article was later seen by scholars as an encrypted order, whose addressee remains unidentified. Those who published it maintained that this was a joke. Who, however, would have been as brave or reckless rather, to crack jokes in Romania on 18 December 1989? The article in *Scânteia Tineretului* is yet another puzzle of that time, the solution to which we will probably never know.

On 18 December, the fighting in Timișoara was far less bloody: 8 people were killed and 23 injured. One of the reasons for this was that the events of the previous day had eliminated over a thousand people from participating. Following the orders of Elena Ceaușescu and Emil Bobu, a secret operation was carried out consisting in stealing bodies from morgues

to reduce artificially the number of the dead. This made no sense at all, since the actual death toll was not to be kept secret for long. On the night of 18–19 December, a meeting of commanders of all the units trying to restore peace in Timișoara took place. It was decided that as of then, the army was to concentrate on protecting strategic venues and should not take action first.

At 7 a.m. on 19 December, mass strikes erupted at factories in Timișoara. Workers withdrew to factories, and in light of the order to protect strategic property, this limited the any potential sphere of confrontation. At that moment, Radu Balan and the rest of the city party leaders decided to step in. They were to play ‘the good guys’, which certainly was to their liking. They kicked off negotiations, but their results were negligible, as the workers knew perfectly well that it was the army rather than the compromised party leaders that called the shots. At 11 a.m., Balan went to the Elba Factory (*Intreprinderea ELBA*), but was detained by the workers. It was when General Ștefan Gușă took the initiative. At 1.50 p.m., he ordered some of the troops to withdraw from the city, and ten minutes later was in Elba to talk with the workers. Initial negotiations were unfavourable for the general, yet finally he managed to convince the workforce to stage a peaceful protest (and to free Balan). The workers started to chant, “The army is with us!” (*Armata e cu noi!*): a slogan that was repeated in Bucharest and other cities a few days later.

This was a breakthrough moment in the history of the December events. As of that time, the struggle in Timișoara began to subside, despite the fact that 8 people died and there were 98 injured on 19 December, more than during the previous day. On 20 December, a general strike started at all the major enterprises in Timișoara. As early as 8 a.m., protesters appeared in front of the buildings of the Provincial People’s Council and the opera. The protest was peaceful; citizens fraternised with the troops and once again chanted: “The army is with us!” At 11 a.m., an order was issued, approved by the minister of defence, to ban the use of weapons and to consent to an additional march of workers from factories to join the protest. During the rally, the Romanian Democratic Front (*Frontul Democrat Român*) was set up, which was composed of former dissidents and oppositionists, or indeed previously politically uncommitted individuals. This was a complete defeat for the communists, even those who were ‘reformed’, but who did not

manage to join the *ad hoc* front. At 1 p.m., the protesters said the Lord's Prayer, and a hour later, at 2 p.m., the army withdrew to their barracks.

The party leaders were totally confused. At 2.30 p.m., Emil Bobu and prime minister Constantin arrived by plane to the capital of the Banat. Ion Coman, who waited for them at the airport and then drove to the opera house, notified the dignitaries that "Timișoara is in the hands of its residents". Around 4 p.m., both activists from the nation's capital appeared on the opera balcony, but were booed off. Subsequently, they met with representatives of the front, who handed them a list of demands, including the immediate deposition of Ceaușescu, an opening of the borders, nationwide radio, and television broadcasts of the events in the city, as well as free and democratic elections.

In the meantime, a cheerful rally was taking place in the square in front of the opera house; there was singing and, later, concerts and other merriment. At 6 p.m., individuals detained during the protests started to be released. Similar gatherings were held in other towns of the Timiș province. This was the end of communism in the entire region. The ramifications of those events are felt to date, as the post-communist party in the Banat usually has the lowest polling results in Romania.

Ceaușescu returned to Bucharest only on 20 December at 3 p.m., after the Romanian Democratic Front had taken over power in Timișoara. When briefed about the situation in the country, he went through a short nervous breakdown. After he came to his senses, he decided to continue the struggle. He called Dăscălescu and Bobu, who notified him about the developments in the Banat capital. He then started to write an appeal to the nation. Usually, such documents had been drawn up by someone else, but in this particular case the dictator wrote the text himself, and then submitted it to a few of his closest aides, suggesting holding a mass rally in front of the party's Central Committee headquarters.

Ceaușescu probably wanted to repeat his greatest life success: on 21 August 1968, in this very place he had addressed a one-hundred-thousand-strong crowd and unequivocally condemned the intervention of the Warsaw Pact states in Czechoslovakia. The 1968 rally had then earned him widespread and genuine support, but by 1989, the situation was totally different. Ceaușescu was commonly hated, not only by the ordinary citizens of Romania but also

by the party hierarchy and even a vast majority of the dignitaries. To appeal for public support at such a moment was extremely risky. The idea demonstrated that the dictator was completely unaware of the gravity of the situation. Years of the persistent policy of his cult had done much harm both to the citizens of Romania and to Ceaușescu. He himself believed in the false image supplied by the Cantarea Romaniei, Daciada and other institutions promoting an artificial enchantment with the Genius of the Carpathians.

At 7 p.m., television and radio broadcast Ceaușescu's appeal to the nation. The dictator was curt. He said that, "all the major incidents in Timișoara had been instigated and held by circles of revanchists, revisionists, and foreign special services."<sup>[72]</sup> Thus, propaganda returned to proven methods, as Romanian society had been regularly scared with 'revanchists', 'Hungarian irredentism', 'imperialist circles', and foreign intelligence services, but this time Ceaușescu was more precise. He likened the events in Romania to the situation in Panama (where a US military operation had started on that very day) and referred directly to the Bush-Gorbachev agreement. He called on all Romanians to withstand bravely foreign intervention, invoking the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies on Czechoslovakia in 1968 and his own stance at that time. The speech was appropriate to the circumstances yet was unable to delay the course of events for any longer.

After the broadcast ended, Ceaușescu met with the Russian ambassador, or rather had wanted to meet him, since it turned out that the latter had left for the USSR. The deputy ambassador arrived for the meeting. The Romanian leader protested against what he described as a warped image of the situation in Timișoara, relayed worldwide by the TASS Soviet press agency. He also told the interlocutor that Hungarian and Soviet special services had been participating in the events. At midnight sharp, the Romanian ambassador in Moscow was called in by the Soviet deputy minister of foreign affairs, who demanded information about the events in the capital of the Banat, including the number of casualties.<sup>[73]</sup>

When Ceaușescu was talking with the Soviet diplomat, at 8.30 p.m. a presidential decree was proclaimed introducing a state of emergency in the entire Timiș province. The decree came into effect at 11.30 p.m. and was to ensure combat readiness of all the units of the army, police, Securitate, and paramilitary units composed of workers (so-called Patriotic Guards, established

in 1968). The decree caused panic in the command centre in Timișoara. Now not only Balan, but also other teams dispatched from Bucharest waited for Ceaușescu to lose power so that they might avoid accountability for their inept handling of the crisis. The dictator proved more 'live and kicking' than they had expected, however, and as a result they began to cede competences to one another.

Ion Coman, who had so far commanded the troops, was seen as the one who led to the peaceful solution of the conflict (despite earlier violence). The moment the state of emergency was announced, he shifted command to Victor Atanasie Stănculescu. He immediately got into a car and a moment later arrived at the military hospital, where he told the commander: "Get me into bed, do whatever you can and may no one get me out if it until 1 p.m. [the following day]!"<sup>[74]</sup> Interestingly, the general gave the exact hour since on 21 December at 1 p.m. the situation was dramatically different. Moreover, Stănculescu called Milea, begging him to be transferred immediately to Bucharest; the latter refused. Since Stănculescu was 'sick' and Coman did not want to be the commanding officer, Mihai Chițac was placed in charge. He agreed, but did not intend to quash the protests. Consequently, Coman called Ceaușescu and notified him that the streets were full of people and that a re-introduction of the army into the streets would lead to bloodshed. The dictator was adamant, however, and reiterated his order of introducing a state of emergency and demanded obedience to its provisions.

Chițac, Coman, and Balan began to go through the motions. They were helped by the defection of Prime Minister Dăscălescu, who at 3.40 a.m. on 21 December clandestinely left the headquarters of the Provincial Committee of the party and left for Bucharest. The authorities in Timișoara ordered the arrival of Patriotic Guards from other provinces. Trains with workers armed with clubs, around 20,000 people, arrived on 21 December between 8 and 11 a.m. Some of the trains, however, were immediately sent back, while others were kept closed at the platforms. Members of the Patriotic Guards who managed to leave the station fraternised with the local residents and had neither the will nor the orders to fight. A rally of 100,000 people began in front of the opera house at 9 a.m. Around noon, Coman and Balan 'turned to' Ștefan Gușă to introduce new troops, but he refused upon consultation with minister Milea. A half hour later, Ceaușescu *de facto* lost

power and therefore, those who had boycotted and sabotaged his orders were not held accountable.

Meanwhile, preparations for a rally in front of the Central Committee building took place in Bucharest. When Ceaușescu was leaving the building in the night of 21–22 December, he was to have said to himself: “I will show those guys from Timișoara!”<sup>[75]</sup> The dominant atmosphere among the leadership was tense, while the residents of the capital city were inertly awaiting further developments. Leaflets prepared by a few oppositionists had been distributed in the city for a few days; on the basis of the events in Timișoara they implied that Ceaușescu’s end was imminent.

The rally was organised by the city authorities. The exact hour of the gathering’s start was unknown, so units of the Patriotic Guards were told to patrol the streets as early as 2 a.m., but otherwise received no specific orders. The first workers were sent to town at this very hour. They were to take part in the rally, but why they were sent so early remains disputable. Later, workers from other factories joined them and at 6 a.m., the streets were full of people wandering about.

Shortly before noon, Ceaușescu convened a meeting of the Political Executive Committee where he notified the people present of his decision to raise the minimum wage as well as child benefits. He then invited all the committee members to appear with him on the balcony of the Central Committee building during the ‘rally of working people’.

Those standing on the huge balcony may have believed that nothing had changed. The square was full of people holding portraits of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu and banners with communist slogans, and chanted: “We shall work and fight, we shall defend the country!”, (*Vom munci si vom lupta, tara o vom apara!*), “Ceaușescu – peace!” (*Ceaușescu – pace*). Early on, the rally was totally peaceful; a few people addressed the crowd to condemn the events in Timișoara and the ‘imperialist circles’ that had allegedly instigated them.

Nicolae Ceaușescu began his speech at 12.30 p.m. As an opener, he thanked the rally organisers. We do not know what he wanted to say next, as his words were interrupted by a strange sound from the loudspeakers. It is hard to say what it was exactly, although it was similar to the reverberating sound made by a microphone held close to a speaker. Some of the people gath-

ered panicked and started to shout. The cries were inaudible yet definitely, no one chanted: “Ceașescu – peace!”

Unrest was also felt on the balcony. The dictator stopped his speech and began to tap the microphone, shouting: “Halo!”, “Comrades!” Different people, including Securitate officers, were running around behind his back. One person shouted: “Someone has detonated something!” The crowd grew quiet around five minutes later, and one person on the balcony openly spoke about a provocation. Ceaușescu resumed speaking, although one could still hear chanting which did not fit into the official line of the gathering. He spoke about the increase of the minimum wage, which was to improve the lot of 1.5 million ‘working people’. However, he was forced to finish at that moment as the noise had intensified and he was barely audible. Someone from the crowd shouted: “Down with Ceaușescu!”, a cry which was picked up by successive groups of demonstrators. The defeated dictator withdrew with his entire entourage to the building. The first people started to leave the square as early as 12.41. As they did not know what to do next, they simply roamed the streets.

Ceaușescu already knew that the spark, which had ignited the fire in Timișoara had reached Bucharest as well. He decided to defend himself assuming, erroneously as it turned out later, that his orders would not be boycotted in the capital. The leader summoned Vasile Milea, Iulian Vlad and Tudor Postelnicu, the minister of interior. He notified them of taking over the personal command over all the armed forces and of introducing a ‘state of war’; he ordered an immediate offensive in Bucharest.

Fighting began as early as 1.30 p.m., and the first casualties were recorded. The combat was the most intense in *Bulevardul Magheru*, a thoroughfare in the Romanian capital. At one end, a barricade was erected between the Hotel Intercontinental, usually picked by international journalists (they were also residents there that time and this greatly impacted media coverage), and Bucharest University. A similar situation took place at the other end of the street, in *Piața Romana* (Rome Square). Skirmishes and fighting with armed troops across the nation’s capital continued throughout the day and the following night. The number of casualties was staggering: by early morning, 49 people had been killed, 463 injured, and 698 detained.

The following day, until Ceaușescu's evacuation, another 33 people were killed, 101 injured, and 1,245 arrested.

Incessant meetings were taking place in the Central Committee building. Ceaușescu fully realised the gravity of his position, but knew no way out. Despite brutal military activity, the situation in the city was not contained; on the contrary, the number of protesters continued to grow. At 6 p.m., the dictator held a teleconference with provincial party secretaries and told them, that “groups of defenders of the well-being of the entire society, cities, socialism, independence, and national sovereignty would be set up based on patriots, with the participation of the best party activists, the best workers of all professions.”<sup>[76]</sup> What he really meant by that remains unclear. It is certain that he did not mean the existing Patriotic Guards. This was possibly a part of some secret plan prepared in the event of Soviet invasion (such plans envisaged the establishment of guerrilla troops). Some see these words as foreshadowing future events and the appearance of unidentified ‘terrorists’, who shot at the crowd after the dictator fell.

On the evening of 21 December, the Central Committee building was in a state of siege. The army stood guard at the building and even though the crowd was not yet substantial, the people inside felt the pressure of the street. Hectic talks continued through the night. At one moment Ceaușescu set up ‘a single command’ (*comandamentul unic*), composed of Milea, Postelnicu and Ion Dinca. The group was tasked with the command of all the armed forces. Seeing uncertainty on the faces of all the three men, Ceaușescu decided to fall back on other reserves. He summoned to Bucharest General Stănculescu, the one who had proved disloyal during the events in Timișoara. Stănculescu arrived in the capital at 2 a.m., and three hours later was admitted to the local military hospital where doctors put his leg in a cast, simulating an injury. He then appeared in the Central Committee and later boasted of having acquired the image of a ‘general with a leg in a plaster cast’.

In the meantime, Milea, when it dawned on him that no one was in control of the situation, had a nervous breakdown. At 6.30 a.m., Ceaușescu summoned him and nearly accused of treason. This had a powerful impact on Milea. This professional soldier was not mentally prepared for such an affront. At the 8.30 meeting, he was once more verbally assaulted by

the dictator. He then withdrew and around 9.30 a.m. committed suicide on the sixth floor of the building. Some believe that Ceaușescu had him assassinated, but there is no concluding evidence to this effect.

The news of Milea's death reached the dictator at 9.45 a.m. Without a second thought, he once more summoned Stănculescu and notified him: "You take command!" Before the general managed to issue any orders, Ceaușescu had radio and television inform of Milea's suicide. This was the last order of the falling dictator. Soon thereafter, Stănculescu ordered the military troops of the local garrison to withdraw to its barracks. At 11.45, he called helicopters to land on the Central Committee building.

A large crowd gathered in front of the building on the morning of 22 December. At one moment, people began to push against the doors (the security guards did not intervene) and forced their way inside. At 11.30 a.m., Ceaușescu once more went out on the balcony, only to realise that his case was lost. At 12.06 p.m., he went to the roof of the building and together with his wife and two staunchest aides, Emil Bobu and Manea Manescu, got on a Delfinul S.A. 365–202 helicopter piloted by Colonel Vasile Maluțan. When the chopper, clearly overloaded, was taking off, people armed with machine guns appeared on the roof of the Central Committee building. Ceaușescu was evacuated literally in the nick of time; otherwise the crowd would have lynched him. On 22 December 1989, at 12.06 p.m.,<sup>[77]</sup> the dictator finally lost power and this moment is seen as the collapse of communism in Romania. In the case of this country, then, it is easy to establish the date of the onset of the post-communist era.

## Post-Communism

Before the situation became stable, however, the Romanians still had to fight bloody battles, survive a long time of unrest in the capital, and then a decade of inertia and unsuccessful reforms.<sup>[78]</sup> The revolutionary transformation of the system was concluded in June 1990, after the first (barely democratic) elections and the massacre in *Piața Universității* (the University Square), when miners summoned from the Jiu Valley and the riot police attacked the protesting residents of Bucharest.

Within the first few hours of Ceaușescu's collapse, real power was in the hands of the army and General Victor Atanasie Stănculescu, the commander-in-chief still appointed by the dictator. Luckily for the other pretenders, he had no major political ambitions and would not prolong this situation beyond the necessary minimum. As soon as a group of civilians emerged (as it later turned out, this was a group of civilians with members of the military who were actually in the majority), and at around 4.30 p.m., he ceded power to them.<sup>[79]</sup>

Much had taken place by that time. People believed that after the escape of the dictator and his wife, power lay in the streets, and within a few hours a number of 'interim governments' were set up in the Central Committee building; they were mostly composed of random individuals. Theoretically, Constantin Dăscălescu was the incumbent prime minister. He appeared for a moment on the Central Committee building balcony but was booed by the crowd, forced to withdraw, and officially tender his resignation. Similar fate met the former prime minister Ilie Verdeț, who, along with Iulian Vlad, the head of the Securitate, tried to set up a 'cabinet' yet failed the 'popularity test' on the balcony. Petre Roman, a son of the late senior official Valter Roman, fared much better in this respect. Some of his statements, about the power belonging to the people, for example, earned him the support of the crowd and he left the balcony amidst applause.

After almost an hour, the setting had shifted towards the television building. At around 1.00 p.m., state television renewed broadcasting, with programming televised live from Studio 4. The first to talk to the cameras were dissident poet Mircea Dinescu and the famous actor Ion Caramitru. The latter began by making a reference to God, the mention of whom had been strictly forbidden throughout the communist era. Dinescu said that the dictator had escaped. At the same time, Ana Blandiana, a famous dissident poet, spoke on the radio. Later, a vast number of more-or-less popular individuals visited Studio 4. The name of the television was changed *ad hoc* into Free Romanian Television (*Televiziunea Romana Libera* – TVRL). Excerpts of its broadcasts were relayed by most European stations, with Bulgarian television going as far as to relay the broadcasts live for as long as three days.<sup>[80]</sup>

Everyone realised that those who would appear in TVRL on 22 December would become extremely popular. At 2.45 p.m., Ion Iliescu appeared

in the studio and was from the start shown as the most prominent figure. Iliescu, who had established contacts with those who would soon occupy key state positions, had also met with army representatives in the early afternoon on 22 December. In his TV address, he called on “all responsible people” to come to the Central Committee building at 5.00 p.m. He moreover announced the imminent establishment of the National Salvation Committee (*Comitetul Salvării Nationale*). After his address, he went to the Ministry of Defence. Together with Petre Roman, who was waiting for him there in the company of Ștefan Gușa, Mihai Chițac and Nicolae Militaru among others, met with Victor Atanasie Stănculescu, who ceded power to Iliescu around 4.30. This took place without any formalities. Iliescu also took over power as the formal successor of Stănculescu and as a hero of the revolution, which had been confirmed earlier in the TVRL studio. However, he still had to win the approval of the crowd gathered in front of the Central Committee building.

At 5.30 p.m., Iliescu appeared on the balcony. As he began with the words “Dear Comrades!”, he was booed by the crowd. Advised by the famous director Sergiu Nicolaescu, the new leader changed tack and began once more: “Dear Citizens!” He received applause and thus his newly found authority received a degree of social legitimacy. At that time on the political arena (if we can use this term in reference to the last days of December 1989), there were no representatives of the anti-communist opposition, as the entire group holding power were dissidents, army representatives, and people of the secret service who only opposed Ceaușescu, rather than the entire communist system.

Between 10 and 11 p.m., Iliescu again appeared in Studio 4 and read out the “Communiqué of the Council of the National Salvation Front to the People”, where he spoke about the establishment of the National Salvation Front (*Frontul Salvării Nationale* – FSN) and an interim executive body, or the Council of the National Salvation Front (*Consiliul Frontului Salvării Nationale* – CFSN) and rolled out a temporary government programme. It included plans to normalise the internal situation, the holding of free elections in April 1990, basing the national economy on the criterion of rationality, respect for the rights of national minorities, as well as terminating Romania’s international isolation. Iliescu, moreover, read

out the composition of the CFSN, which included oppositionists Cornea and Tőkés, dissidents such as Dinescu, some signatories of the *The Letter of the Six* (Alexandru Bârlădeanu, Brucan) and many army officers (including Guşa and Stănculescu). The list closed with the name of Ion Iliescu.

Still a few hours before Iliescu's TV appearance, shots were being fired in Bucharest and other cities. This was the onset of events later referred to as a 'terrorist phenomenon'. These 'terrorists' were well-disguised snipers, who shot at the crowd and uniformed soldiers. News of their activities was broadcast by the media, leading to a further intensification of fighting, with troops starting to shoot at one another in some places due to inadequate field intelligence. Fighting erupted against Securitate troops. Nearly 50 people died during the skirmish at the local Otopeni Airport. In Sibiu, where Ceauşescu's son Nicu had been in power for the past few years, the army attacked the local secret police headquarters. Because of the terrorists, streets and town squares were completely devoid of all activity as Romanians were afraid to leave their homes.

Shooting stopped only in the evening of 25 December after news of Ceauşescu's execution was announced, yet isolated incidents occurred for almost two weeks following the news. The 'terrorist phenomenon' had an exceptionally tragic toll: between 17 December and noon of 22 December, 162 people died and 1,101 were injured across Romania, while as of Ceauşescu's evacuation until 10 January 1990, 942 people died and 2,251 sustained injuries.<sup>[81]</sup> Almost six times more people died after the ousting of the dictator. Irrespective of later explanations, the bloodbath was put down to the Iliescu government, unable to cope with this incomprehensible phenomenon.

The question of mass murders has not been convincingly explained to this day. In the revolutionary chaos, many people suspected of shooting at the crowd were detained, yet these were in the majority totally random people whose connection with the massacre was dubious. Three versions are the most credible. Some opposition politicians accused Iliescu and his group of provoking the shootings to divide society. Another version maintained that the terrorists included troops faithful to the dictator and therefore the fighting continued until his execution. The last hypothesis indicates that all resulted from erroneous military intelligence and friendly fire. Neither the first, nor the second hypothesis can be proven.

The third version is the most likely, since such events did take place, yet it fails to address the issue in its entirety.

The new authorities tried to control the situation amidst the shots. A triumvirate emerged in the CFSN: Iliescu, Brucan, Militaru, who had the biggest impact on what was going on during the first few days. Theoretically, Dumitru Mazilu also had a lot of sway, yet from the outset, Iliescu tried to limit his role and push him aside. On 23 December, Iliescu and Brucan applied for 'military assistance' from the Soviet Embassy. Moscow refused military aid, but expressed its readiness to assist otherwise, e.g. to provide humanitarian or diplomatic aid, the latter of which was unnecessary since most of the world's leaders had welcomed the deposition of the hated dictator.<sup>[82]</sup>

One of the biggest problems faced by the new authorities was the fate of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu. After their departure from the roof of the Central Committee building, they arrived at their Snagov residence, where the fallen dictator tried to issue orders to regional secretaries. However, he soon realised that his continued presence in Snagov may prove hazardous, and he took off with his wife. The pilot let them leave the helicopter at a road near Târgoviște. They stopped a car there, followed by another, concluding their eventful trip at a military garrison in the town. However, the unit commander did not know what Ceaușescu's exact status was, and as a result decided to detain him for the time he spent at the unit. In the meantime, CFSN leaders argued whether the dictator and his wife should be immediately executed, or arrested and put on trial later. A middle-of-the-road position prevailed. On 25 December, 'judges' were brought into Târgoviște from the capital in the company of a firing squad. The trial, or rather a travesty of a trial, took only 55 minutes and Ceaușescu received completely trumped-up charges (including the execution of 60,000 people, for example). The dictator launched a sober defence and indicated that the court had no jurisdiction to judge him. This did not change the proceedings, however. The tribunal handed the only possible sentence at that time, the death penalty, which was executed at 2.50 p.m.<sup>[83]</sup>

News about the execution was publicly announced in the evening. The film footage of the trial was not broadcast, however, for fear it would have an undesirable effect (Ceaușescu had accused the new regime of being

riddled with Soviet agents). Interestingly, copies of the film in two differently edited versions circulated on the black market, and finally the authorities agreed to show the film.

The ‘terrorists’ stopped shooting after the execution of the dictator and his wife. On 26 December, an interim government was set up, with Petre Roman as prime minister. For a few days, the authorities operated on old principles from the communist era. The PCR was replaced by the FSN, and the PCR Central Committee was replaced by the CFSN, while the government in fact only administered, to the best of its ability, the rebellion-ridden country. The CFSN, which quickly grew to include almost 150 members, convened only a few times and its meetings were spent on useless debates. The PCR disappeared, yet most of its activists moved to the FSN, recognising it as a communist party without Ceaușescu.

Many people from the former dictator’s circles, such as Vlad, were arrested on 31 December. On that day, the CFSN issued a decree equivalent to a law on the operation of political parties. This introduced pluralism in Romania. Furthermore, on the same day, the foundation meeting of the Social Dialogue Group (*Grupul pentru Dialog Social* – GDS) took place at the Hotel Intercontinental in Bucharest. The Group gathered intellectuals, mainly oppositionists and dissidents (although for a time Brucan was also part of the group), who wanted to lay the foundations of civic society. Many leading Romanian intellectuals were associated with the GDS. Along with the GDS, the “22” weekly was founded, its name referring to the day on which Ceaușescu was ousted. To date, it has remained one the most important periodicals in Romania.<sup>[84]</sup>

The CFSN decree led to the foundation of political parties. The most influential groupings continued the operation of former pre-war parties. This applied, first of all, to the Christian Democratic National Peasants’ Party (*Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin Democrat* – PNȚCD), led by a long-term political prisoner, Corneliu Coposu, and the National-Liberal Party (*Partidul National Liberal* – PNL), temporarily headed by Radu Câmpeanu, who had returned from emigration. Furthermore, a party of the Hungarian minority was set up on 25 December 1989 called the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (*Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România* – UDMR, Hungarian name *Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség*), headed

by writer Géza Domokos, who was closely tied to the PCR. The three parties would later constitute the bulk of the opposition against Iliescu.

Romanian society, expecting immediate change after the fall of Ceaușescu, was greatly disappointed by the first weeks under the new government. Social enthusiasm following the ousting of the dictator, only slightly stifled by the terrorists' activity, turned against Iliescu. The first large rally took place in Bucharest on 12 January 1990. It was led by Dumitru Mazilu, who, seemingly oblivious of his own past, chanted: "Death to Securitate officers!" It was then that 'a woman from the crowd' reminded him that he himself had been the commander of the special forces school.<sup>[85]</sup> This was the first instance of lustration in Romania. Under the influence of the crowd, which reached the government offices, the authorities issued a number of decrees, among others outlawing the communist party. The next day Iliescu realised he had committed a mistake, and, together with Roman, started to distance himself from the decisions, while the *Romania Libera* daily (linked to the GDS and PNTȚCD) published a large article about the links between Mazilu and the Securitate. On 17 January, the controversial decrees were publicly repealed.

A CFSN meeting took place on 23 January. It was announced that the FSN would be transformed into a political party and would take part in the upcoming elections. As a sign of protest against this decision, Doina Cornea left the front and joined the opposition. The FSN was to be a wide social platform, possibly in the long run giving rise to political parties, but initially this was not (officially) being considered. However, Iliescu concluded that the consolidated FSN would ensure him power.

Bloody skirmishes took place in Bucharest on 28–29 January. A huge rally, organised by the PNTȚCD, PNL, and other opposition parties took place near the government building. FSN followers joined the protest and tried to confront the crowd, yet until the evening, there were only increasingly brutal assaults. Come night, however, a few thousand miners came to Bucharest and immediately took action on the side of the government. Fighting continued throughout the next day. The miners vandalised the offices of the opposition parties and beat their followers. The most dramatic events took place in front of the national peasants' party headquarters, where Coposu narrowly avoided being lynched as he was whisked away by an armed military carrier after Roman, climbing out if it, hastily invited the opposition

leader to get in and they were both driven away to a safe spot. After pacifying the protests, the miners arrived at the government building, where Iliescu and Roman thanked them for their intervention. This was the first *mineriada* (from the Romanian word *miner*), a nightmare of the 1990s.

On 1 February, the FSN reached an agreement with the opposition parties. An Interim Council of National Unity (*Consiliul Provizoriu de Uniune Națională – CPUN*) was set up. Half of it was composed of FSN members, while the other half was comprised of all (!) the registered parties and organisations of national minorities. The CPUN was a kind of proto-parliament meant to prepare the elections. The post-communists were the vast majority of the council's members, as a majority of the registered parties were led by former PCR members or agents, or even Securitate officers.

The events of 28 January – 1 February are sometimes referred to in relevant Polish publications as the 'round table', as some sort of agreement of all political forces was reached.<sup>[86]</sup> This, however, is a misconception, not only because hardly anyone in Romania uses the term: the idea behind the Polish and Bulgarian round tables was actual agreement without violence, whereas the negotiations in Bucharest took place mainly with the use of miners' pickaxes, with a certain degree of consensus reached comprising more of a temporary ceasefire.

Unrest was growing in the military as well. While the army was co-responsible for crushing of protests in Timișoara and Bucharest, it also contributed to the collapse of Ceaușescu. To forestall a possible coup, on 16 February Iliescu dismissed Militaru<sup>[87]</sup> as minister of defence and appointed Stănculescu to this position. The latter began comprehensive reforms in the army. The changes, mostly related to the military brass, were to 'democratise' the country, or in this context, to reduce the impact of officers on current politics. Stănculescu proved loyal to Iliescu and his activity helped tone down the sentiments in the military.

Another rally in Bucharest took place on 18 February. Yet again, there was fighting in the streets and the crowd even forced their way to the government building. The arrival of miners led to a pacification. To relieve social tension, on 21 February it was announced that on 29 December 1989, the Securitate was formally dissolved. Other parts of the country were also far from peaceful. In March, there were intensive upheavals in Transylvania.

On 19–20 March, there were bloody fights between Romanians and Hungarians in Targu Mureş; 6 people were dead (3 Romanians and 3 Hungarians), and 278 injured (190 Romanians and 88 Hungarians).<sup>[88]</sup> Most scholars agree that the events were a provocation of the special forces and were used as a pretext for establishing the Romanian Information Service (*Serviciul Român de Informații* – SRI), which, despite some personnel changes, was commonly seen as the successor of the former Securitate.

Campaigns preceding the May general and presidential elections kicked off in spring. The state media clearly favoured the FSN and Iliescu. Acts of violence against opposition members occurred, especially outside the capital. On 22 April, a huge rally took place in Bucharest, organised by the PNȚCD, PNL and other opposition parties. It turned into a six-weeks' long permanent protest in the University Square, located in the heart of the city. The protesters, mainly students, put up tents, held concerts, and put on lectures. Many people went on hunger strike. The rally was joined by opposition politicians and members of the GDS. Television broadcasts tried to show this initiative as an example of the rebirth of fascism. However, the student protest had little impact on the situation in the country, and first and foremost on the results of the ballot. Apart from the capital and larger cities, the Romanians supported Iliescu and the FSN, which they considered a guarantee of stable authority.<sup>[89]</sup>

Parliamentary and presidential elections took place on 20 May. The FSN came up trumps, receiving 263 of a total of 395 seats in the lower chamber and 91 out of 118 seats in the Senate. The UDMR came second with 29 seats in the lower chamber and 12 in the upper chamber. The PNL mustered 29 and 10 seats respectively. Unexpectedly, the Romanian Ecological Movement came fourth (*Mișcarea Ecologică din România*), receiving 12 seats in the lower chamber and 1 in the Senate. The PNȚCD obtained the same result. The remaining seats were taken by smaller parties. In the presidential election, Ion Iliescu clinched a victory in the first round, with 85.07 per cent of the ballot. Radu Câmpeanu was the runner-up (10.64 per cent); Ion Rațiu representing the PNȚCD came last (4.29 per cent). Voter turnout in both elections was identical and reached 86.19 per cent of eligible voters.<sup>[90]</sup> The opposition parties gathered extensive material showing that the election results were rigged, yet their protests were not taken into account,

possibly because this had nevertheless been the most democratic election since before World War Two.

After the election, Iliescu and Roman received the social legitimacy to hold power, but the protest in the University Square continued, which meant that the centre of the capital remained blocked. Within a few weeks, the number of protesters largely dropped and the GDS and other opposition parties withdrew their support. Around 10 June, there were only a few hundred people left in the square. The authorities decided, however, to use violence. On the evening of 12 June, Petre Roman ordered the riot police to 'clear out' the square, which took place in the early morning of the following day. At around 9.00 a.m., people reappeared in the University Square. This meant that the protest could resume. It was then that the workers took action. Despite the fact that the protesters were outnumbered, the fighting continued the whole day; the students locked themselves in the buildings of Bucharest University and began a sit-in.

In the morning of 14 June, over 10,000 miners arrived in Bucharest and fought the rebellious students, with innocent bystanders caught in the action. There were also some assaults against groups of the Roma, who did not take part in the protests. Another *mineriada* took its deadly toll, with 6 people dead and 560 injured; 185 people were arrested. The upheavals concluded on 15 June, when the miners returned home.

On 20 June, Ion Iliescu took the presidential oath and a government was established on 28 June with Petre Roman as prime minister. The fall of communism in Romania began with bloodshed and concluded in much the same manner. The December massacre in Timișoara and the June events in Bucharest's University Square marked a symbolic start to a new era.

## Blood Worth Its Price

Ion Iliescu began his term of office with innocent blood on his hands. While Ceaușescu was accountable for the dead and injured before 22 December 1989, Iliescu was politically accountable for the victims after that date (amounting to six times more fatalities). It is immaterial whether the 'terrorists' acted on or against his orders. Even if the latter was true, he was guilty

of not being able to discover the killers quickly enough to neutralise them. He was also instrumental in the execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, although many Romanians believe they met their deserved end. Iliescu and his circles were responsible for the *mineriadas* and the massacre in the University Square, and similar occurrences in later years.

Romania was the only country in Central and Eastern Europe to topple communism by violent means. Paradoxically, this led to the establishment of one of the most restrained governments in the region. Economic reforms began only in the latter half of the 1990s, when a coalition of centrist and right wing parties came to power. By that time, the system had been in a state of suspension; it was definitely not communist, yet the free-market principles were not in place, either. A natural question arises: was it worthwhile to pay such a huge price to carry out such negligible changes?

Those who answer negatively, indicating that other countries had achieved more without shedding blood, are not fully in the right, although most of their arguments are convincing. The only unquestionable advantage of the nature in which communism ended in Romania was that everyone saw with their eyes that the totalitarian system was criminal and it was therefore easier to symbolically settle accounts with it.

Romania was the first country to bring justice to those representing the old regime, although the initial methods used were controversial and were opposed not only by the circles linked to the PCR and the Securitate. Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu's execution following their farcical trial looked more like the riddance of uncomfortable witnesses. The arrests made at the end of December 1989 looked more credible. Those detained at that time had really been in the higher echelons of power, and their contribution to the operation of the system was unquestionable. Moreover, unlike the Targoviște 'trial', appearances of legal action were preserved.

The later, yet similar activities of the Iliescu group were probably motivated by something different. The post-communist president and his milieu wanted to break free from the totalitarian past so that they would not be held liable for the crimes of the Ceaușescu regime. The rehabilitation of the "Genius of the Carpathians" was not in their interest since they toppled him. If it had turned out that he was less of a criminal than he was shown in December 1989, it would have been harder to explain the decision

to have him executed. The post-communists considered the eventuality of a partial rehabilitation of his foreign and economic policy of the late 1960s and early 1970s, yet all he did in the 1980s (when Iliescu was clearly out of his favour) had to be condemned.

In the early 1990s, some of the staunchest aides of the executed dictator were put on trial and sentenced. A trial of the last members of the Political Executive Committee, the highest authority of the communist regime, took place. It concluded on 25 March 1991; the defendants received prison sentences. Furthermore, on 30 April 1992, these penalties were made more severe and the prison sentences were prolonged to over ten years. When hearing the news, one of the defendants, Ioan Totu (a former ambassador in Moscow), committed suicide. Within the next few years, some of the sentences were revoked; some people (including the dictator's son Nicu Ceaușescu) were released for health reasons, and in March 1994, President Ion Iliescu pardoned those who had not been released earlier.

Some army officers and special forces personnel were also put on trial. Macri, sentenced for genocide, died in prison in April 1991. Vlad, arrested alongside others at the end of December 1989, was released four years later. In 2014, he began to be active publicly, which provoked questions of his impact on the operation of the special forces. The trial of Chițac and Stănculescu dragged on indefinitely; the two were charged with a bloody suppression of the revolution. In 1999, both former prominent representatives of the regime were sentenced to 15 years in prison, yet the sentences were later revoked and reinstated a number of times. Elena, Stănculescu's wife, committed suicide on 21 December 2003. She left a farewell note where she explained the decision to take her own life was the result of her husband's trial. In 2007, they were sentenced again, and appealed against the verdict. In 2008, however, their appeal was turned down and they landed behind bars. When incarcerated, Chițac grew seriously sick and was released, but died in November 2010. In May 2014, Stănculescu left prison.

Only in December 2016, 27 years after the events, did the Romanian Prosecutor General's Office decide to reopen the case of crimes committed in Timișoara and other places, and especially the case of the so-called terrorists.<sup>[91]</sup> Knowing the fate of other juridical processes involving communist crimes in Romania, the outcome of this one is also doubtful.

To this day, Romanians believe that those people were judged too leniently. Perhaps it was so, yet relative to the similar situations in the entire region, the penalties sentenced and served were rather severe. Still, many of those who actually took part in the communist crimes or actively supported the system made breath-taking careers within two decades of the collapse of communism. There were cases when officers who had personally tortured political prisoners assumed lucrative positions or were shown in the media as moral authorities.

The real revolution was symbolic, which is ultimately a huge contrast to neighbouring Bulgaria. As early as December 1989, national flags with the communist emblem cut out appeared on the streets (this had been done earlier by the Hungarian insurgents in 1956) and the ubiquitous portraits of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu were destroyed. Iliescu, despite the unfortunate beginning of his speech (“Distinguished Comrades!”), or rather thanks to the reaction of the crowd to this greeting, avoided communist or even socialist elements in his actions when in office, at least for some time. The FSN was the only post-communist party in the region whose name did not refer to a leftist ideology. This changed only in 1993, when the party was meant to become a “modern European social democracy”. Within a short time the portraits, slogans, commemorative exhibits, and other gadgets of the Ceaușescu cult were removed. Only over a decade later did the National Museum of Romanian History in Bucharest begin collecting such objects from the entire country for academic purposes. Bookstores no longer offered works by the ‘Genius of the Carpathians’ and his acolytes, although in many institutions sets of such books have remained on the shelves until today, mostly untouched and collecting dust.

Since Ceaușescu’s predecessor Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was also a criminal, the general condemnation of communism concerned also the remains of his era. A lot of streets were renamed (the Boulevard of the Victory of Socialism in Bucharest was called the Boulevard of Unification – *Bulevardul Unirii*); schools and other institutions restored their names from before the war or received new patrons. Streets and squares in many cities and towns bore names referring to the December 1989 events. After the death of Corneliu Coposu in 1995, one of the main streets in Bucharest received his name.

After the fall of communism, many monuments were unveiled commemorating the victims of the regime and the heroes of the December events. In downtown Bucharest, we can find, apart from the bust of Coposu, the monument of Iuliu Maniu (an outstanding politician assassinated during the Dej regime) and the rather awkward monument of the December Revolution, as well as many crosses commemorating the dead. In the Belu military cemetery, there is a special section containing the graves of the victims of the December events. In Timișoara, too, there are many memorabilia harking back to those days. 22 December has become an unofficial national holiday, with a number of annual celebrations commemorating the events.

In condemning communism, Romanians rehabilitated pre-war traditions, naturally with the exception of the Iron Guard and Ion Antonescu (though the latter is better perceived). This era is most often shown as a time of carefree joyfulness (not always justifiably) and the heyday of culture and arts (by all means correctly). The late King Michael Hohenzollern I, who had been enthroned as a child and then forced to abdicate and emigrate, tried to return to Romania in the 1990s to play some political role. Ultimately, he had to content himself with the restitution of part of his property. Michael I might not have been a person who can capture the crowds, but the traditions of the former kingdom are respected in society and among the intellectual elites.

Despite the substantial efforts taken to restore old ideals and denounce criminal totalitarianism, a certain degree of nostalgia for the Ceaușescu era lingers on. This does not apply to communism as an ideology or even practice. No one longs for the personality cult, lines in front of shops, or surveillance bugs at work or home. The nostalgia is for childhood or youth memories and the rather nebulous idea of social peace and social welfare. The post-communists fuelled this nostalgia in a variety of ways. For many years, Iliescu posed as the one who would assure to the nation adequate living conditions without Ceaușescu.

Nostalgia additionally concerns some of the mass-culture products of the communist era, such as music bands related to the 'Flame' Circle movement (*Cenaclul Flacăra*), which promoted the communist and nationalist ideology among young people. The most eminent Romanian rock band from the communist era, *Phoenix*, was more independent though, and

in the late 1970s, its members decided to emigrate. When Ceaușescu was ousted, *Phoenix* returned to the country and it turned out that lots of people knew all their songs by heart. The band sided with the democratic parties, so its popularity cannot be a token of a genuine nostalgia after communism.

Ever since the fall of Ceaușescu, a debate has been ongoing in Romania about the causes and course of the December events, as well as, to a lesser extent, on communism as such. There are a number of competing narratives, which coincide with the lines of political divisions created back in 1989 and 1990. The most important question posed by academics and commentators is “How much spontaneity was there during the tempestuous days of December 1989, and how much was directed spectacle?”

Ion Iliescu and his circles portray the fall of Ceaușescu as resulting from a totally grass-roots rebellion of a repressed society, which he himself later channelled. This version in its many incarnations has been repeated from 22 December to date, yet despite its low credibility, it has been for a long time the foundation of the post-communist party’s positive image. Those in favour of this hypothesis call the December events the Romanian Revolution (*Revoluția Română*).

Opposition groups disseminated and promoted a version according to which a real spontaneous social rebellion took place. It was to lead to the fall of Ceaușescu, but later Iliescu appeared (who had been preparing for this role) and usurped power, presumptuously calling himself an ‘emanation’ of the revolution, with which he in fact had nothing to do. This fact is unquestionable: for most Romanians, Iliescu was a total stranger in December 1989. Militaru, for instance, the hero of Pacepa’s book aired by Radio Free Europe, was far better known. By this token, oppositionists such as Cornea or pre-war politicians like Coposu may have been seen as fully-fledged representatives of the nation. This version of the December events was used for ongoing political struggle; its proponents also speak about a revolution, calling it the Romanian Revolution or the December Revolution (*Revoluția din Decembrie*). This interpretation was enshrined in the first article of the 2003 Constitution, which refers to the ideals of the December Revolution of 1989.

According to another hypothesis, all the events, starting from the unsuccessful beginning in Iași through to the assumption of power by Iliescu,

had been pre-programmed and the actors of the drama simply played their roles. This applied also to Romanian society, whose rebellion was fuelled by secret service agents; they got killed on the streets while power was usurped by a group of plotters who, a few years previously, had been in cahoots with one another, as well as with foreign intelligence officers, primarily from the Soviet Union. This was the version put forward by Ceaușescu during his brief trial. This hypothesis emerged among foreign journalists, mostly from France. As early as 1990, a book by Romanian émigré Radu Portocală came out in France, where he presented the December events as a well-prepared coup.<sup>[92]</sup> Initially it seemed, then, that this version would be adopted by right-wing groups, but they quickly decided on the preceding version, while the plot theory was promoted by former Securitate officers sidelined by the transformations. The terms they used in reference to what happened in December 1989 were most often a “coup d’état” (*lovitură de stat*), “palace coup” (*lovitură de palat*) or “December events” (*evenimente din decembrie*).<sup>[93]</sup>

Over the nearly thirty years after the fall of Ceaușescu, a certain convergence of opinion has appeared. At present, nearly all scholars agree that the December events resulted from three principal factors: external circumstances, a rebellion within the ruling party (Iliescu’s group), and actual spontaneous social rebellion. Academic debates now concern rather the significance of each of the three factors.<sup>[94]</sup> The temperature of the debate has dropped, if only because from year to year the possibilities of using those arguments in the power struggle between the parties have dwindled.

Apart from journalists’ and political debates, a lot of research was carried out in Romania to get to know both all the circumstances of the December events, and of communism as a system of power. The first critical commentaries of the subject came out still in the 1980s in the West, including a noteworthy text penned by the then head of the Romanian section of Radio Free Europe, Vlad Georgescu.<sup>[95]</sup> For a few years following the fall of Ceaușescu, the books published in Romania, like in other countries of the region, were mainly memoirs and eyewitness accounts of the time, or texts polemical with respect to the description of the events, such as the aforementioned book by Portocală.

Studies on the history of communism have been favourably received by the public from the start, which gained them the support of political

parties. As early as 1990, a Senate Commission for examining the events of December 1989 was set up (*Comisia Senatorială de cercetare a evenimentelor din decembrie 1989*), led by Sergiu Nicolaescu. In 1992, he presented a report, which was criticised by many circles and therefore did not gain the status of the official position of the commission. During the Senate's next term of office, a new commission with an identical name was created. It was headed by a former political prisoner, Constantin Ticu Dumitrescu from the PNTCD, who was later succeeded by Valentin Gabrielescu from the same party. The commission researched the archives and questioned witnesses, including the incumbent president Ion Iliescu in December 1994. In May 1995, the commission questioned Vasile Maluțan, the pilot of the helicopter in which Ceaușescu was evacuated. He said that apart from a large amount of money, the dictator had with him a briefcase with documents, but its whereabouts were unknown. The day after providing his witness account, Maluțan died in a suspicious air crash. This commission did not produce a joint report, either, although its members would later publish a number of texts with the transcripts of the accounts,<sup>[96]</sup> all kinds of other documents, and their own reflections on the December events.

In 1995, the first fairly complete (many archival documents were still not available at the time) and critical study of the Nicolae Ceaușescu era was published. It was written by British historian Dennis Deletant,<sup>[97]</sup> who was married to a Romanian and conversant with Romanian reality. The publication was favourably received and provided an impetus for further research. The following years saw the publication of many works dedicated to different aspects of the history of Romanian communism. For obvious reasons, books on the December events and the activity of the Securitate enjoyed the greatest popularity; many were published, although the vast majority were either of low quality, or altogether worthless.

In time, institutions specialising in the studies of communism or treating it as an important part of their activities were set up. The GDS had addressed these problems, mainly in the form of debates on the communist legacy and the need for its removal. One of the major institutions of this kind was the Civic Academy Foundation (*Fundația Academia Civică*), with prominent roles played by Ana Blandiana and her husband Romulus Rusan. In 1992, their circles had come up with the idea to set up a museum

of communism in a former prison in Sighetu Marmăției (commonly abbreviated to Sighet). In April 1994, the Civic Academy Foundation was created, and in 1995, the Council of Europe extended its auspices over the Sighet museum. In 1998, the venue was placed on a list of the most important places of this kind in Europe (next to, *inter alia*, the museum in Oświęcim/Auschwitz). The Foundation, apart from taking care of the museum, has published periodicals and books on the various aspects of the history of Romanian communism. The Foundation runs a yearly summer school in Sighet, invariably popular to date, and which is one of the major events of this type in the entire region.

Another major institution was the Romanian Institute of Recent History (*Institutul Român de Istorie Recenta – IRIR*), set up in 2000 under the auspices of Coen Stork, who in the 1980s had been the ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Romania. The institute grouped many historians, sociologists, and representatives of related disciplines, who published many noteworthy texts, such as *The Banality of Evil (Banalitatea Raului)* by renowned historian Marius Oprea.<sup>[98]</sup> Regrettably, after a few years of successful operations, IRIR discontinued its activities. In 2006, Oprea, along with a few collaborators, such as the eminent historian and political scientist Stejărel Olaru, founded another research institution: the Institute for Investigating the Communist Crimes in Romania (*Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România – IICCR*). Later, the institute was renamed the Institute of Studying Communist Crimes and a Memorial of Romanian Emigration (*Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc – IICCMER*). At present, its role is much smaller.<sup>[99]</sup>

Among the institutions devoted to the commemorating of the events of 1989, we should also mention the Memorial of the Revolution in Timișoara, which was launched as early as April 1990.<sup>[100]</sup> The Memorial played an active role in investigation of the events, but also in commemorating the victims and spreading knowledge among the citizens of, and visitors to Timișoara. A series of small monuments has been erected in the city with the help of the Memorial. Its role, however, is largely limited by the fact that Timișoara is a remote place, not only geographically but also politically remote from the rest of the country.

Lustration had a decisive impact on the political life of post-communist Romania. Let us recall that the first 'lustration' took place on 12 January 1990,

when an unidentified woman from the crowd called out to Dumitru Mazilu that he had been a commander of the Securitate school. On 11 March 1990, the democratic circles adopted a document known as the Timișoara Proclamation (*Proclamația de la Timișoara*). It contained the following statement: “We suggest that the election law should during the next three parliamentary elections forbid former communist activists and Securitate officers from running for any office. (...) We moreover demand that the election law should contain a special provision forbidding former communist activists to run for Romanian president. The President of Romania must be one of the symbols of our rejection of communism (...).”<sup>[101]</sup> Thus, they demanded not only lustration, but also de-communisation.

Later, the media repeatedly leaked information about all kinds of politicians, business people, ‘moral authorities’ or artists who had been agents in the past. Most of this information was hard to verify, as the archives were inaccessible to ordinary citizens. As a result, an idea was put forward to set up an institution tasked with making the Securitate archives available. This idea was advocated the most by Constantin Ticu Dumitrescu, who tried to raise interest in the issue in the parliament, to which he was elected three times running.

A real possibility of establishing such an institution appeared only in the latter half of the 1990s. After many years of struggle, in 1999 parliament adopted a lustration law, called after its author, the “Ticu law”. Since the initial intention was significantly altered (the amendments made the accessibility of files and the possibility of recognising someone as an agent more complicated), Dumitrescu himself wanted to have nothing to do with the law. Nevertheless, pursuant to this law, the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (*Consiliul National pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securitatii* – CNSAS) was created in 2000. Slowly, clearing many logistical and procedural hurdles, it took over the files gathered by that time in the SRI. The establishment of CNSAS made access to files possible for historians and journalists, as well as private individuals, with more in-depth and well-documented publications published as a result.

A marked political conflict emerged around the CNSAS from the outset; the budget and staff have been repeatedly changed, depending on the current political situation. The number of scandals did not dwindle, either.

In Romania to this day every few months, the media provide information based on the materials gathered by the Securitate. The CNSAS is the butt of incessant attacks by the powerful anti-lustration lobby. The most powerful attack was launched in late 2007 by Dan Voiculescu, a famous politician and businessman, who turned out to have been an informant. Because of his activities, the CNSAS had to change its formula and, since March 2008, has operated on the basis of a government regulation.

During Ion Iliescu's last term of office of (2000–2004), the post-communists tried to impose their vision of the December events and decided to establish a research institution dedicated to the study of this issue. The Institute of the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 (*Institutul Revoluției Române din Decembrie 1989* – IRRD) was established in late 2004. Its programme board was appointed by Iliescu and therefore gathered figures like Roman, Sergiu Nicolaescu or Mazilu. Initially, the council was to have been joined by Stănculescu, but the idea was dismissed in the face of criticism. The IRRD publishes periodicals dedicated to the December events.<sup>[102]</sup> Interpretation of the events can be intuited from the name of the institute, and one of the initial programme council members, Lorin Fortuna (better known as an enthusiast of esoteric knowledge and polytheism), warned that he would sue those who would question the revolutionary nature of the 1989 transformations. He died in 2016.

After a coalition of democratic parties and the new president Traian Băsescu came to power in 2004, debates were held on further settlements of old scores with the communist system. The pressure of public opinion and of intellectual circles was very strong. In April 2006, the Presidential Commission for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania (*Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România*) was set up, and was charged with the preparation of a relevant report. Famous historian Vladimir Tismăneanu, an author of numerous valuable historical publications on the communist era, headed it. The composition of the commission was politically diverse, but the expertise criterion was fundamental here. It was joined *inter alia* by Constantin Ticu Dumitrescu, Romulus Rusan and Marius Oprea. The commission prepared a hefty report of over 800 pages, an attempt at presenting all the major issues. The December events are not discussed in depth and the terms used are fairly neutral

(the title of the chapter dedicated to this period is entitled *The Fall*), although the word “revolution” also appears, even if spelled in lower-case. The report highlights the criminal and unlawful character of the communist system in Romania.<sup>[103]</sup>

The president adopted the report in December 2006. On 18 December, in parliament, Băsescu delivered a speech, which was later turned into an official state document. The president scathingly condemned the communist system, indicating its most criminal elements and calling it “a totalitarian regime born in violence and concluded in violence” stressing that “without a condemnation [of communism] we will develop with difficulties, will be developing while bearing on our backs the corpse of our past.”<sup>[104]</sup> Thus, Romania was the only country in Central and Eastern Europe, which so decisively rejected totalitarianism and condemned its practices.

Communism and the December events became the subject for settling the scores also in culture, first and foremost in mass culture. Within the first two decades, many fairly valuable works were produced, whose authors tried to pose questions about the nature of the totalitarian system and the political and economic transformation. These issues have been raised in Romanian films. The December events are portrayed by three 2006 films: *12:08 East of Bucharest (A fost sau n-a fost?)*,<sup>[105]</sup> *Paper Will Be Blue (Hîrtia va fi albastră)* and *The Way I Spent the End of the World (Cum mi-am petrecut sfârșitul lumii)*. In all of the films, people wonder about the spontaneity of the December events, the sense of the bloodshed and the nature of the systemic transformation. The first title presents the above issues from the perspective of residents of a small town (Vaslui, to be precise), the second from the point of view of soldiers taking part in the fighting, and the third picture from the perspective of a child living on the outskirts of Bucharest. The 2010 film *Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaușescu (Autobiografia lui Nicolae Ceaușescu)* directed by Andrea Ujică, was received with tremendous interest. The film, made solely of newsreels and other archival footage, with no commentary, makes a powerful impression on the spectator.

The sense of the systemic transformation is addressed by the comedy titled *Occident*, directed by Cristian Mungiu. The recurrent theme of the movie is a communist children’s song *The Year Two Thousand (Anul Două Mii)*. Unlike other songs of this type, *The Year Two Thousand* (to date probably the most

iconic hit of that period) is no primitive propaganda, but a strangely nostalgic text with the chorus: “In the year 2000, no longer kids, we will achieve what we used to dream about, during our second youth”. The film is set precisely in 2000. Mungiu portrays the entire spectrum of what, in his view, is a botched transformation, focusing on the biggest wish of the young Romanians: to head west. Children who experience their ‘second youth’ at the turn of the third millennium not only are unable to realise their old dreams, but they have problems maintaining a decent standard of living.

The subjects of communism, the December events, and systemic transformation has also been present in literature during the decades after the December events. Suffice it to mention *Miss Bucharest* by an émigré writer of German extraction, Richard Wagner. This is a story about the Securitate, the shift of the political system, and a search for one’s own identity. The author poses important questions about the nature of the communist system, the December events, and the ramifications of these processes, but stops short of providing any answers. Present-day Romania is depicted as a country where people connected with the communist special services have a lot of say.<sup>[106]</sup> A novel by Dan Lüngu, “I’m an Old Commie!” is also interesting and deals with post-communist nostalgia.<sup>[107]</sup> Another Romanian writer of German origin is Herta Müller, laureate of the Nobel Prize for literature in 2009. In her works, Romania under communism is a dark and depressing country marred by the atmosphere of surveillance and suspicion. Other authors of other such texts reach similar conclusions.

What has happened to the main actors of the December events thirty years on? Ion Iliescu was the central figure of post-communism. He was Romania’s president in 1990–1996 and 2000–2004, and between his terms of office was the chairman of his party. Upon retirement in 2008, he enjoyed tremendous authority among post-communists. When Iliescu finally lost power, the prosecution authority pressed many charges against him in connection with the *mineriada* of June 1990. On 13 June 2017, the Prosecutor’s office indicted him for crimes against humanity in this context.

Other members of his first group are either deceased or retired. Militaru tried his hand at politics and ran for president in 1996, but suffered a shameful defeat, receiving less than 1 per cent of the vote. He died soon afterwards.

Brucan withdrew from mainstream politics but was a political analyst, author and renowned media commentator, professions he pursued until his death in September 2006.

Roman was prime minister until September 1991, when as a result of another *mineriada* his cabinet collapsed. He later provoked a division in the FSN and set up a party, which after many transformations became the Democratic Party (*Partidul Democrat* – PD). It joined the government coalition with the democratic parties in the period 1996–2000, but Roman's role was diminishing. In 2001, he lost the position of the PD chairman to Traian Băsescu, and then was marginalised.<sup>[108]</sup> In 2017, along with Ion Iliescu and Miron Cozma, a leader of the coal miners union, Roman faced prosecution charges for the organisation of a *mineriada* in June 1990.

Sergiu Nicolaescu, after a few years in the Senate representing the post-communist party, started to publish books, and was quite successful with his tomes on the December events, and then for a time (less successfully) tried his hand again as a director. He died in 2013.

The vast majority of the leading figures of the Ceaușescu regime never re-entered the political mainstream. However, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, in the 1980s called the 'dictator's court poet', had a sweeping career. In the post-communist era, he became an influential politician with nationalist views, the leader of the Party of Great Romania (*Partidul România Mare*) and as its representative got to the second round of the 2000 presidential election, only to be defeated by Iliescu. Between 2009 and 2014 he was a Member of the European Parliament. He died in 2015.

Nicu Ceaușescu, the son of the executed dictator, died in September 1996 of cirrhosis of the liver, which was the incontrovertible proof confirming eyewitnesses' accounts that he was addicted to alcohol. His brother Valentin for many years sued for the restitution of the family property (which included valuable paintings), and was ultimately successful in December 2008. Their sister Zoe also filed a lawsuit; in her view, Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu had not been buried in the Ghencea Cemetery in Bucharest, where their graves are located. Like Nicu, she died because of her addiction, but in her case this was smoking; in November 2006 she died of lung cancer. Valentin managed to prompt the exhumation of his parents in 2010. The forensic examination confirmed that the graves contained the remains

of the Ceaușescus. They were later interred together, in a grave also located in the Ghencea Cemetery in Bucharest.

In April 2016, the villa of the Ceaușescu family, located in Bucharest's splendid Cartierul Primaverii neighbourhood, opened its doors to the public. In a short time, it became an important place on tourist routes. The description of the villa and the programme offered by guides is, however, somehow misleading and gives the pro-Ceaușescu viewpoint on many issues.

The leading figures of former anti-communist opposition enjoyed great prestige throughout the decades to come, at least among the intelligentsia and democratically oriented part of the society. The Rev. Laszlo Tőkés, whose case sparked off the riots in Timișoara, was active among the Hungarian community and in the Protestant Church. He was famous for very radical statements on the rights of national minorities in Romania, and therefore could not enter the political mainstream. In 2007, he faced serious accusations of being a former agent, but ultimately the CNSAS, upon a thorough examination of the documents, announced that he had not collaborated with the Securitate. In November 2007, Tőkés was elected to the European Parliament; he ran as an independent candidate. Between 2010 and 2012, he was vice-president of the European Parliament. In 2014, he ran again for the European Parliament, this time as a member of the Hungarian Fidesz party, thus represented Hungary in Brussels.

Doina Cornea, the 'conscience' of the democratic opposition still under communism, retained this role later, too. Initially she was active in various organisations (for example as the co-founder of the GDS and a coalition which later transformed itself into a democratic parties camp), but later confined herself to publishing.

Mircea Dinescu's impact on events was larger. He was a publicist, appeared in the media, and was furthermore a TV anchor. Since the establishment of the CNSAS, he has been on the college of this institution, in favour of lustration. He also opened a top-class restaurant in Bucharest named, after the title of the famous book by Emil Cioran, "Lacrimi și Sfânti".

Former oppositionists did not leave the Romanian political arena, either. In the 1990s, Paul Goma published in Romania his books written while in emigration; later he was in conflict with many activists of the democratic circles, and his position dwindled.

Vasile Paraschiv had the role of an authority among the anti-communist intelligentsia. He filed a lawsuit against the Romanian state for the torture he had endured during the Ceaușescu era and won in December 2008; he was granted compensation to the amount of EUR 300,000. He died in February 2011.

The Romanian political scene has evolved from a very turbulent period in the Nineties to a solid stability nowadays. The political spectrum is covered by the main parties (all of them post-communist), which have similar, centrist and pro-Western (both pro-European and pro-US) policy. The support for post-communist nationalists, which was still visible in the Nineties, has vanished almost completely. For more than a decade, Romania has been the most stable country of the region, without any bigger-scale political turmoil. Protests, some of which are quite numerous, are not intended to change the system, only to replace one politician with another – there is virtually no difference in worldview between these politicians. It seems that even the recent rise of popularity of radical and anti-immigration parties in Western Europe does not affect Romania.

However, Romania still bears the stigma of the communist system and of the December events. These issues are often addressed by the media, and discussed among run-of-the-mill citizens. In each larger town, there are monuments, squares, or streets commemorating the victims of communism. However, this does not affect the education system: history taught in most schools ends with the Second World War. Thanks to the efforts of non-governmental organisations, the history of communism can be taught in separate courses. In principle, however, few young people are interested in the most recent past and they locate the December events in their consciousness somewhere around the capture of Dacia by the Romans, or the rule of Dracula.

Communism left Romania in dire poverty, lifted only at the threshold of the third millennium. There were also mafia connections, which constricted the entire country and until today have proven an obstacle to economic and intellectual progress. In 2017, the Romanian government published a report entitled *Strategia Națională pentru Românii de Pretutindeni pentru perioada 2017–2020* (National Strategy for Romanians Everywhere for the period 2017–2020), where the number is given between 3.5 and 4 million Romanians

living abroad, of which 2.8 million in other EU countries. According to this report, emigration increases by 7.3 per cent per year.<sup>[109]</sup>

Virtually whole villages vanished from maps and in many small towns, it is almost impossible to meet an active population. Those who went abroad send some of the money earned back to the home country, to their families, but later the links with the mother country break and, like the great playwright Eugen Ionescu, they change the last letter of their surname from 'u' to 'o'. Since Italy is the principal destination, the Romanian language, and especially its slang variation for the time being, has adopted a number of Italian loan words, such as *ragazza*, or girl. The linguistic similarity (the *Occident* movie contains a long scene which demonstrates it) no doubt helps these people assimilate and forget about the far-away home country in the Carpathians.

The history of post-communism in Romania is not only one of poverty and dreams of emigration. The blood was not shed in vain in December 1989. Relative to some other countries of the region, the sacrifice of those who were not afraid to take to the streets contributed to a sizeable and strong, intellectual, and to some extent political, elite (notwithstanding the business elite, however), which is not related to the communist party or the Securitate. This is often under-appreciated in Romania itself. It is the heirs to the tradition of Emil Cioran and Mircea Eliade, as well as circles connected with them, that substantially influence public opinion, even though one cannot underrate the post-communists, whose impact is not as strong as it could be had they not been the heirs to the tradition of criminal communism, the later *mineriadas*, and other such events. The major current problem is mass emigration. According to official statistics, the population of Romania has dwindled. It is unclear whether present-day Romania will be able to stem the outflow of mainly young people.

[1] The Ceaușescu personality cult has been analyzed by a few authors. Among them and their publications, there are for example: Anneli Ute Gabbanyi, *The Ceausescu cult: Propaganda and power policy in communist Romania*, The Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House, 2000; Manuela Marin, *Nicolae Ceaușescu. Omul și cultul (Nicolae Ceaușescu. The Person and the Cult)*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște 2016.

- [2] Mihai Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring. Romanian Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Czechoslovakia 1968*, Center for Romanian Studies, Iasi-Oxford-Portland 2000, p. 42.
- [3] Some interesting accounts regarding everyday life during the Ceaușescu era can be found in a recently published book by Robert D. Kaplan: R. D. Kaplan, *Two Cold Wars and a Thirty-Year Journey through Romania and Beyond*, Random House 2016.
- [4] There are a few books containing a concise history of Romania, a description of how the communists came to power, and the first 20 years of communist rule in that country. See, e.g.: Neagu Djuvara, *A brief illustrated history of Romanians*, Editura Humanitas, Bucharest 2014; Keith Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*, Cambridge University Press 2014; idem, *Rumania 1866–1947*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1994; Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania. Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State 1948–1965*, C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, London 1999; Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*, University of California Press, 2003.
- [5] Cristina Păiușan, Narcis Dorin Ion, Mihai Retegan, *Regimul comunist din România. O cronologie politică (1945–1989) (Communist Regime in Romania. Political Chronology (1945–1989))*, Tritonic, Bucharest 2002, p. 276.
- [6] Nicolae Ceaușescu. *Raport la Conferința Națională a Partidului Comunist Român. 16–18 decembrie 1982 (Report to the National Conference of the Romanian Communist Party, 16–18 December 1982)*, Bucharest 1982, p. 32.
- [7] Constantin Ionete, *Criza de sistem a economiei de comandă și etapa sa explozivă (Systemic Crisis of the Planned Economy and its Explosive Period)*, Editura Ekspert, Bucharest 1993, pp. 19–20.
- [8] One of the interesting aspects of the situation is that there is still no academic book on the economic history of Ceaușescu's rule.
- [9] Information regarding the hardships of everyday life under late Ceaușescu can be found in Carment Bugan, *Burying the Typewriter. A Memoir*, Graywolf Press, Minneapolis, MN 2012.
- [10] More details on intellectual life under late Ceaușescu, including a description of the Ploiești tragedy, can be found in Norman Manea, *On Clowns: The Dictator and The Artist: Essays*, Grove Press, New York 1994.
- [11] More anecdotes about Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu were published by a former Romanian spy, Ion Mihai Pacepa, in his famous book: I. M. Pacepa, *Red Horizons: Chronicles of a Communist Spy Chief*, Regnery Gateway, Washington, D.C. 1987.
- [12] It now serves as a House of the Parliament and is partially open to visitors.
- [13] One of the architects of this complex later wrote interesting memoirs: Gheorghe Leahu, *Arhitect în 'Epoca de Aur (Architect in the "Golden Era")*, Fundatia Academia Civica, Bucharest 2013.
- [14] One of the first "systematised" villages was Scornicești, where Nicolae Ceaușescu was born. An interesting account on this history can be found in Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *A Tale of Two Villages. Coerced Modernization in the East European Countryside*, Central European University Press, Budapest 2010.
- [15] Adam Burakowski, *Geniusz Karpat. Dyktatura Nicolae Ceaușescu 1965–1989 (The Genius of the Carpathians. Dictatorship of Nicolae Ceaușescu 1965–1989)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2008, p. 312.
- [16] Dinu C. Giurescu (co-ord.), *Istoria României în date (History of Romania in Dates)*, Editura Enciclopedica, Bucharest 2003, p. 738.

[17] Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, “Studiu introductiv” (*Introduction*), [in:] *Membrii C.C. al P.C.R. 1945–1989. Dictionar (Dictionary of the Members of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party 1945–1989)*, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest 2004, p. 21.

[18] A more in-depth analysis of Ceaușescu’s nationalism can be found in Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu’s Romania*, University of California Press, 1995.

[19] Duckadam’s mysterious health problems triggered all kinds of rumours and speculations. These included an unofficial version of events stipulating that the goalie’s career ended due to Nicolae’s son Valentin Ceaușescu, who made Securitate officers break both of Duckadam’s arms. This was to be a punishment for his refusal to hand over the Mercedes received from a sponsor for the sports success. The goalkeeper himself vehemently denied these allegations.

[20] *Od Realu do Barcelony. Historia Pucharu Mistrzów (From the Real to Barcelona. A History of the European Champions Cup)*, GIA, Katowice, 1992, pp. 155–159.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] For more on this issue, see: Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate. Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965–1989*, C. Hurst & Co., London 1995, pp. 347–353.

[23] A recent account on the anti-communist partisan movement can be found in William Totok, Elena-Irina Macovei, *Între mit și bagatelizare. Despre reconsiderarea critică a trecutului. Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu și rezistența anticomunistă din România (Between Myth and Slighting. About Critical Reconsideration of the Past. Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu and the Anti-communist Resistance in Romania)*, Polirom, Iași 2016.

[24] Anti-communist partisan troops were set up after World War II and mainly comprised soldiers and officers of the pre-war army. They were not numerous, but for a long time threatened the communist authority, mainly in mountainous regions.

[25] An interesting account, together with Securitate documents, has been presented by Goma himself; see Paul Goma, *Culoarea curcubeului '77. Numele de cod “Bărbosul” (Rainbow Colour '77. Codename “Bearded”)*, Polirom, Iași 2005.

[26] Vasile Paraschiv published his memoirs: Vasile Paraschiv, *Lupta mea pentru sindicate libere în România. Terorismul politic organizat de statul comunist (My Struggle for Independent Trade Unions in Romania. Political Terrorism Organized by the Communist State)*, Polirom, Iași 2005.

[27] In Romania, there is a clear distinction between the opposition and dissidents. The former were not ideologically tied with the PCR (even if they were, like Goma, formally its members), whereas the latter were members of the party or party-related intelligentsia.

[28] There were many theories about his death being an assassination by the Securitate. Georgescu died of cancer at the age of 51.

[29] This event is still to be researched. Some details can be found in Mihai Barbu, Gheorghe Chirvasă, *După 20 de ani sau Lupeni '77 – '97 (20 Years After or Lupeni '77 – '97)*, Editura Matinal, Petroșani 1997.

[30] This topic is still to be researched.

[31] The works of Gheorghe Ursu, including his diary, have been published after 1989 by the Gheorghe Ursu Foundation, available at: <http://gh-ursu.org.ro/index.html>

[32] Doina Cornea published her letters after 1989; see: Doina Cornea, *Srisori deschise și alte texte (Open Letters and Other Texts)*, Humanitas, Bucharest 1991.

[33] The story of Iulius Filip has been presented in a Polish film of 2005 titled *Rumuński List* (*A Romanian Letter*).

[34] According to Larry L. Watts, an American researcher, Soviet authorities were opposed to Ceaușescu even earlier, and all the time they were trying to weaken the Romanian position. See: Larry L. Watts, *With Friends Like These... The Soviet Bloc's Clandestine War against Romania*, Military Publishing House, Bucharest 2010.

[35] For more on this see: Petre Opreș, *România în organizația Tratatului de la Varșovia (1955–1991)* (*Romania in the Warsaw Treaty Organisation (1955–1991)*), Militara, Bucharest 2008, pp. 232–235.

[36] In fact, the US Embassy in Bucharest reported about Iliescu as a possible successor of Ceaușescu as early as 1979, see: *Telegram from the Embassy in Romania to the Department of State, Bucharest, June 8, 1979*, the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977–1980, Vol. XX, Eastern Europe.

[37] Iliescu disclosed some interesting details about his career in a dialogue with Vladimir Tismăneanu. See: V. Tismăneanu, *The great shock at the end of a short century: Ion Iliescu in dialogue with Vladimir Tismăneanu on communism, post-communism and democracy*, Boulder, Social Science Monographs, 2004.

[38] In Romania, as in other communist countries, the results of such votes and other elections were invariably close to 100 per cent yet never reached the full figure so that citizens who, for one reason or another, did not cast a vote might think that they were the negligible fraction of a per cent of non-voters. The results were rigged anyway, but this made it easier to accept the underlying hypocrisy of the communist system.

[39] Alex Mihai Stoenescu, *Interviuri despre revoluție (Interviews on the Revolution)*, RAO, Bucharest 2004, p. 102. See also: Lavinia Betea, Florin Razvan Mihai, Ilarion Țiu, *Viața lui Ceaușescu (The Life of Ceaușescu)*, Vol. 3, *Tirantul (Tyrant)*, Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște 2015, pp. 224–227.

[40] Ion Ioniță left his memoirs, which were published later. I. Ioniță, *Însemnări (Notes)*, Curtea Veche, Bucharest 2007.

[41] For more about the activities of Silviu Brucan, see: Radu Ioanid (ed.), *Dosarul Brucan. Documente ale Direcției a III-a Contraspionaj a Departamentului Securității Statului (1987–1989)* (*Brucan's Dossier. Documents of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Counterintelligence Directorate of the Department of State Security (1987–1989)*), Polirom, Iași 2013.

[42] Iulian Vlad, after decades of silence, surprisingly re-emerged as a security expert in the mass media in December 2015.

[43] For more about the Brașov revolt, see Marius Oprea, Stăjarel Olaru, *The Day We Won't Forget. 15 November 1987, Brașov*, Polirom, Iași 2003.

[44] Ristea Priboi became a famous businessman and politician after the fall of Ceaușescu.

[45] General Emil Macri's expertise was used in the most difficult situations, e.g. during the 1977 miners' rebellion. Major Ristea Priboi took part in an operation against intellectuals in the early 1980s.

[46] Radu Ioanid (ed.), *Dosarul Brucan. Documente ale Direcției a III-a...*, op. cit. -

[47] The topic of Romanian-Hungarian relations during late 1980s is still to be researched. Generally, Ceaușescu accused Hungarians of irredentism, but played a double game with them as well. Some accounts of this topic can be found in Larry L. Watts, *Cei dintâi vor fi cei din urmă. România și sfârșitul Războiului Rece (The First Will Be the Last. Romania and the End of the Cold War)*, RAO, Bucharest 2013, pp. 639–647.

[48] See: Ion Jianu, *Gheorghe Apostol și Scrisoarea celor șase (Gheorghe Apostol and the Letter of the Six)*, CURTEA VECHIE, Bucharest 2008.

[49] Mazilu published his memoirs, see: Dumitru Mazilu, *Revoluția furată. Memoriu pentru țara mea (A Kidnapped Revolution. Memory for My Motherland)*, Cosia, Bucharest 1991.

[50] For more as to whether Ceaușescu did or did not call for military intervention, see Cold War International History Project E-Dossier No.60, documents and discussion here: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/did-nicolae-ceausescu-call-for-military-intervention-against-poland-august-1989>

[51] Such songs were first sung by one of Romania's best musical choirs, Corul Madrigal. The aforementioned song became a kind of nostalgia-hit in the Nineties.

[52] The most complete set of documents has been published by the National Security Archive at the George Washington University. See: <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB298/>

[53] Șerban Săndulescu, *Decembrie '89. Lovitura de stat a confiscat revoluția română (December '89. Coup d'Etat Confiscated the Romanian Revolution)*, Vol. 1, Omega Press Investment, Bucharest 1996, pp. 283–298.

[54] “Stenograma întâlnirii de lucru a tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu, secretar general al Partidului Comunist Român, președintele Republicii Socialiste România, cu tovarășul Mihail Sergheevici Gorbaciov, secretar general al Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist al Uniunii Sovietice, președintele Sovietului Suprem al URSS, Moscova 4 decembrie 1989” (“Transcript of the Working Meeting Between Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu, Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party, President of the Socialist Republic of Romania and Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, President of the Supreme Council of the USSR, Moscow 4 December 1989”), [in:] Șerban Săndulescu, *Decembrie '89. Lovitura de stat a confiscat Revoluția Română (December '89. Coup d'Etat Confiscated the Romanian Revolution)*, ed. a II-a, pp. 283–298, Omega Press Investment, Bucharest 1996.

[55] This version is, however, contested by Vasile Buga, who served as the official translator of Romanian dictator during that visit. Mr Buga told me in October 2014 that Gorbachev had used the common colloquial form, simply wishing Ceaușescu good health, without any allusions.

[56] In Romania, a small fraction of farms was not collectivised, mainly in mountainous regions, where soil cultivation and cattle husbandry were extremely hard.

[57] Dinu C. Giurescu (co-ord.), *Istoria României în date*, op. cit., p. 739.

[58] Ibid.

[59] An interesting approach to the discussion of the nature of the events of 1989 in Romania was presented by Dragoș Petrescu; see: Dragoș Petrescu, *Explaining the Romanian Revolution of 1989: Culture, Structure, and Contingency*, Enciclopedica, Bucharest 2010, pp. 68–87.

[60] Among those who believe in the existence of the Soviet 'tourists' we can name controversial historian Alex Mihai Stoenescu and journalist Grigore Cartianu. Also, numerous Securitate and army officers mentioned them in their memoirs published later. There is still no hard evidence about the “tourists” and the majority of historians doubt their existence.

[61] Spiridon published later a book about the events of 1989 in Iași. See: Cassian M. Spiridon, *Iași, 14 decembrie 1989, Începutul Revoluției Române (Iași, 14 December 1989, the Beginning of the Romanian Revolution)*, Timpul, Iași 1994.

[62] Many books were written about the events in Timișoara and the topic was covered by major world media, even during the events. However, many of those reports are rather sensational stories

and nothing more. Among the most important and most serious books we can suggest the ones published by the “Memorialul Revoluției” Association, e.g. Lucian Ionică (co-ord.), *Enciclopedia Revoluției din Timișoara 1989* (*Encyclopedia of the Revolution in Timisoara 1989*), Vols. I–II, Timișoara 2014.

[63] Some analysts claim that the revolution in fact only started in Timișoara. See the course of events presented by Dragoș Petrescu in *Explaining the Romanian Revolution of 1989...*, op. cit., pp. 87–108.

[64] An interesting book on Radio Free Europe’s coverage of the events in Timișoara is Miodrag Milin, *Timișoara în Arhivele “Europăi libere”, 17–20 decembrie 1989* (*Timisoara in the Archives of the “Free Europe”, 17–20 December 1989*), Academia Civica, Bucharest 1999.

[65] László Tőkés later published many books on those events, in Hungarian, Romanian and English. Among them are László Tőkés, David Porter, *The Fall of Tyrants: The Incredible Story of One Pastor’s Witness, the People of Romania and the Overthrow of Ceaușescu*, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois 1991.

[66] For more on this opposition group, see: Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate...*, op. cit., pp. 131–132.

[67] Lucian Ionică (co-ord.), *Enciclopedia Revoluției din Timișoara 1989*, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 24.

[68] Marius Mioc, *Revoluția fără mistere. Începutul revoluției române: cazul László Tőkés* (*Revolution Without Mysteries. The Beginning of the Romanian Revolution: the Case of László Tőkés*), Almanahul Banatului, Timișoara 2002, pp. 10–19.

[69] The course of events according to a few books: Lucian Ionică (co-ord.), *Enciclopedia Revoluției din Timișoara 1989*, Vol. I, op. cit.; Marius Mioc, *Revoluția fără mistere...*, op. cit.; Alex Mihai Stoenescu, *Istoria loviturilor de stat în România* (*History of the Coup d’Etat in Romania*), Vol. II, RAO, Bucharest 2005. The versions differ sometimes, I have presented here the most ‘neutral’ versions.

[70] There are many accounts on the events of December 1989 in Romania. The most important book on the topic was published by British historian Peter Siani-Davies, see: Peter Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*, Cornell University Press, 2007. Other books sometimes have doubtful value or are incomplete. Here, I have used that book, the works by Deletant, and the trilogy by Grigore Cartianu: *Sfârșitul Ceaușeștilor, Crimele Revoluției, Teroriștii printre noi* (*The End of the Ceausescus, Crime of the Revolution, Terrorists Among Us*), which were published in the years 2010–2011. The trilogy of Cartianu is, however, very controversial and has a journalistic approach rather than an academic one.

[71] Some historians dispute the fact of the existence or publication of this article or its importance in the events.

[72] Alex Mihai Stoenescu, *Istoria loviturilor de stat in Romania* (*History of the Coups d’Etat in Romania*), Vol. 4 (I), RAO, Bucharest 2004–2005, pp. 713–718.

[73] The documents on Romanian-Soviet diplomatic contacts in December 1989 have been published by the Cold War International History Project, see: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/new-evidence-the-1989-crisis-romania>

[74] Dinu Sararu, Victor Atanasie Stanculescu, *Dinu Sararu în dialog cu Victor Atanasie Stănculescu. Generalul revoluției cu piciorul în ghips. Interviu-fișe pentru un posibil roman* (*Dinu Sararu in Dialogue with Victor Atanasie Stănculescu. General of the Revolution with Foot in Plaster. Interview – Sketches for a Possible Novel*), RAO, Bucharest 2005, p. 105.

[75] Silviu Curitceanu, *Mărturia unei istorii trăite* (*Memories of a History Lived*), Holding, Bucharest 2007, p. 424.

[76] Alex Mihai Stoenescu: *Istoria loviturilor...*, Vol. 2, p. 289.

[77] Some claim that it was 12:08.

[78] Concerning the Romanian transition, see: Stephen D. Roper, *Romania: The Unfinished Revolution*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon 2004; Tom Gallagher, *Theft of a Nation: Romania Since Communism*, C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, London 2005; Tom Gallagher, *Romania and the European Union: How the Weak Vanquished the Strong*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 2013; Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 2009.

[79] The course of events of 22 to 25 December 1989 according to: Alex Mihai Stoenescu, *Din culisele luptei pentru putere 1989–1990...*, op. cit.; Domnița Ștefănescu, *Cinci ani din istoria României. O cronologie a evenimentelor decembrie 1989–decembrie 1994 (Five Years in the History of Romania. A Timeline of Events December 1989–December 1994)*, Editura Masina de scris, Bucharest 1995; Paul Siani-Davies, *The Romanian Revolution of December 1989*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y. 2005.

[80] The full transcript of the TVRL *ad hoc* show was published later; see: Mihai Tatulici (co-ord.), *Revoluția română în direct*, Televiziunea Română, Bucharest 1990.

[81] Paul Siani-Davies, *Revoluția Română Din Decembrie 1989 (The Romanian Revolution of December 1989)*, transl. C. Mac, Bucharest 2006, p. 142.

[82] On this issue see: Adam Burakowski, “În decembrie 1989, Iliescu și Brucan au cerut ajutor militar de la sovietici” (“In December 1989, Iliescu and Brucan Asked the Soviets for Military Help”, *Revista* 22, 2 February 2010; Adam Burakowski, “O intervenție armată ar fi fost un dezastru” (“Armed Intervention Would Have Been a Disaster”, *Adevărul*, 7 March 2010; Grigore Cartianu, *Crimele revoluției. Sângeroasă diversiune a KGB-istilor din FSN (Crimes of the Revolution, Bloody Diversion of KGB-ists from the National Salvation Front)*, ADEVARUL HOLDING, Bucharest 2010, pp. 333–346.

[83] A detailed description of the last days of Mr and Mrs Ceaușescu can be found in Viorel Domenico, *Ceaușescu la Târgoviște: 22–25 decembrie 1989 (Ceausescu in Targoviste: 22–25 December 1989)*, ION CRISTOIU, Bucharest 1999.

[84] The Group still exists and works as an NGO, see: <http://www.gds.org.ro/>

[85] See e.g.: Domnita Stefanescu, *Cinci ani din istoria României*, op. cit.

[86] Cf. Jacek Gorzkowski, Wojciech Morawski, *Jesień Narodów (The Autumn of Nations)*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen, Warsaw 1991, p. 150.

[87] There were serious warnings about a possible attempt of coup d'état by Militaru. See: Adam Burakowski, Marius Stan, *Kraj smutny, pelen humoru. Dzieje Rumunii po 1989 roku (A Sad Country Full of Humour. Post-1989 History of Romania)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Wydawnictwo TRIO, Warsaw 2012, pp. 53–54.

[88] Alex Mihai Stoenescu, *Din culisele luptei pentru putere. 1989–1990...*, op. cit., p. 323.

[89] Ion Iliescu remained a central figure in Romanian politics for the next twenty years, but an unbiased biography of him is still to be written. He published many books with his memories; among those is Ion Iliescu, *Destinul unui om de stângă (Destiny of One Man from the Left)*, Litera, Bucharest 2014.

[90] Stan Stoica, Ion Alexandrescu, *Romania după 1989: mica enciclopedie (Romania After 1989: A Little Encyclopaedia)*, Meronia, Bucharest 2005, pp. 219–223, 239.

- [91] “Dosarul Revoluției | O nouă pistă după 27 de ani” (“The Dossier of the Revolution. A New Take after 27 Years”), Digi24 television, 22 December 2016, <http://www.digi24.ro/special/campanii-digi24/1989-anul-care-a-schimbat-lumea/dosarul-revolutiei-o-noua-pista-dupa-27-de-ani-634805> (last accessed on 4.12.2017).
- [92] Radu Portocală, *Autopsie de coup d'état roumain. Au pays du mensonge triomphant*, Broché, Calmann-Lévy, Paris 1990.
- [93] The term “December events” used in this publication does not signify that the authors accept the assumption of the plot and earlier scenario. This is the most neutral term, which does not impose any of the versions. A similar solution was applied to the name of the Senate commission tasked with studying the genesis and course of the events.
- [94] For more on this subject, see: Adam Burakowski, *Geniusz Karpat...*, op. cit., pp. 306–309.
- [95] Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria românilor de la origini până în zilele noastre (History of Romanians from the Origins to Our Days)*, Humanitas, Bucharest 1992. The book is not dedicated exclusively to the communist era, but to the entire history of the country.
- [96] See e.g.: Șerban Săndulescu, *Decembrie 89. Lovitura...*, op. cit.
- [97] Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate...*, op. cit.
- [98] Marius Oprea, *Banalitatea raului. O istorie a Securității în documente: 1949–1989 (Banality of Evil. History of Securitate in Documents: 1949–1989)*, Polirom, Iași 2002.
- [99] The activity of the IICMER is presented at the following website: <https://www.iiccr.ro/>
- [100] The Memorial’s website is quite interesting: <http://www.memorialulrevolutiei.ro/sitenou/en/>
- [101] “Proclamația de la Timișoara (11 martie 1990)” (“Proclamation of Timisoara (11 March 1990)”), [in:] Stan Stoica, *Romania după 1989...*, op. cit., pp. 304–309.
- [102] Their website looks, however, somewhat archaic: <http://irrd.ro/>
- [103] *Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România: Raport Final (Presidential Commission for Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania. Final Report)*, Bucharest 2007. This being an official report of a state commission, it can be found on various websites.
- [104] *Ibid.*, pp. 11–18.
- [105] The Romanian read literally: *Was There [a Revolution], or Wasn't There?* The English translation perpetuates a serious mistake as Ceaușescu left by helicopter from the Central Committee building at 12:06 rather than at 12:08. However, the movie clearly points to 12:08, which is one of the many errors in the script.
- [106] Richard Wagner, *Miss București*, RAO, Bucharest 2009.
- [107] Dan Lungu, *Sunt o baba comunistă!*, Polirom, Iași 2013. For the English edition: Dan Lungu, *I'm an Old Commie!*, Central Books, London 2017.
- [108] Roman published a few books with his memories. Among them is Petre Roman, *Mărturii provocate. Convorbiri cu Elena Ștefoi (Provoked Memories. Discussions with Elena Ștefoi)*, PAIDEIA, Bucharest 2002.
- [109] *Strategia Națională pentru Românii de Pretutindeni pentru perioada 2017–2020*, Bucharest 2017, p. 4.

Adam Burakowski

# Bulgaria

## – In Search of the End of Communism

### Holidays in a Terror State

‘Holiday’ is the first thing that comes to mind for most citizens of Central and Eastern Europe when they think about Bulgaria under communism.<sup>[1]</sup> The practically iconic ‘Bulgarian holiday’ was much coveted for the inhabitants of the Soviet Bloc (possibly with the exception of Romanians), or even of the Soviet Union itself. Depending on the particular country, such holidays were either available for the public at large, or were an exclusive privilege for the higher echelons of the communist party. The holidays in Bulgaria were not as attractive as holidays in Yugoslavia or in the West, which, besides, few could even dream of as a totally unrealistic perspective, but alluring enough to trigger highly favourable associations in the citizens of other communist countries.

The Bulgarian holiday was deeply ingrained in the consciousness of the societies of the region. Moreover, they were often depicted in the art of the time. To limit ourselves only to Poland, the Bulgarian sojourn was a motif in some of the most ‘iconic’ films by Stanisław Bareja: *What Will You Do When You Catch Me?* (*Co mi zrobisz, jak mnie złapiesz*) and *A Jungle Book of Regulations* (*Nie ma róży bez ognia*). Additionally, a 1981 thriller, based on a book penned by Wojciech Żukrowski the previous year and under the somewhat clumsy title *Scent of Dog’s Fur* (*Zapach psiej sierści*), was set in sun-bathed Bulgaria. The lead role of a Polish sculptor was performed by Roman Wilhelmi, who met a Slavic studies specialist from Germany

on the shores of the Black Sea. While the movie mainly addressed organised crime and drugs, it also showed the advantages of holidays in Bulgaria.

In fact, Bulgaria resembled the present-day 'tourist republics' ruled by ruthless dictators, where there were enclaves for foreigners, yet where the vast majority of citizens lived in dire poverty. In Bulgaria under communism, tourists were not prohibited from travelling to other parts of the country, but the real living conditions of the society under this system were carefully hidden from view. For decades, the country had been ruled by a regime that terrorised society and pushed the country towards economic ruin. In the 1980s, the regime's brutality visibly increased in comparison with the preceding period.<sup>[2]</sup>

Bulgarian communism was in a way an autonomous, local construction, which was markedly different from neighbouring Romania, for example, where the communist party before the war had actually been composed of Soviet agents, as well as some dregs of society. Of special significance here was the centuries-long symbolic friendship between Bulgaria and Russia. Both the Slavic states originated in the Christian Orthodox tradition and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia played a substantial role in Bulgaria's regaining of independence and in the creation of its modern statehood.<sup>[3]</sup> During the Second World War, the so-called Chavdars, or communist insurgents, laid their claim to fame. The most outstanding Bulgarian communist was Georgi Dimitrov,<sup>[4]</sup> who made a name for himself as a defendant during the 1933 Reichstag arson trial. After the Red Army entered Bulgaria in 1944,<sup>[5]</sup> Dimitrov became prime minister for a few years. He promoted the idea of a communist federation of the Balkan states, which, nevertheless, was not implemented due to Stalin's opposition. He died in 1949 in the Soviet Union. His mummified body was transported to a mausoleum in Sofia. Dimitrov then became a sort of 'moral benchmark' for the Bulgarian communists, often invoked in official historiography and propaganda.

Dimitrov's death was followed by a long period of infighting among the party leaders, eventually won by Todor Zhivkov; in 1956, he gained total power,<sup>[6]</sup> although he only managed to get rid of his competitor, Anton Yugov, as late as 1962.<sup>[7]</sup> The Stalinist period was soon obliterated in social memory and, for many, the time of communism simply means the rule of Todor Zhivkov.<sup>[8]</sup>

Until Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union, Zhivkov tried to be seen as the staunchest ally of the Soviet Union. Tradition was no doubt his own ally, since downtown Sofia is full of tokens of gratitude to Russia, built still by the pre-communist authorities: worthy of note here is the monumental Orthodox Alexander Nevsky Cathedral and the monument to Tsar Alexander II of Russia.<sup>[9]</sup> With his immoderate reverence for the Soviet Union (he was said to have been more attached to the ideals of the Soviet Union than some Soviet leaders), Zhivkov was part and parcel of this tendency. Soviet advisors worked in all the major Bulgarian institutions and many people had dual, Bulgarian and Soviet, citizenship, which was nothing out of the ordinary.<sup>[10]</sup>

Zhivkov was a very astute player and in return for his servile attitude to Moscow, he obtained tangible financial, material, and technological aid. Simultaneously, the Soviets saw him as a guarantor for the sustainability of the alliance and of internal stability in Bulgaria; and for a few decades, he was able to meet both expectations.<sup>[11]</sup>

Zhivkov and his team took substantial effort to gain the ongoing support of both the Soviets and of Bulgarian society, or at least its large portion. Social promotion was inseparable from involvement in the system (which was not always the case in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe), but it was accessible for a relatively large social group. Leaving the villages and moving into cities to obtain better (if not always better paid) jobs was possible for many once they had shown their support to the regime.<sup>[12]</sup> Bulgaria highlighted one element of traditional Marxist and Leninist thought, which was rare in other countries, and even if it was present, hardly anyone believed in it. Namely, the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) claimed that the transformations taking place in the country were but a form of socialism; true communism is still to come and all should work to help it become a reality. Readers in other Soviet Bloc countries, especially in Poland, may find it hard to believe, yet a vast majority of Bulgarians were actually hopeful for the advent of the communist system, which promised to be the fulfilment of a dream and a paradise on earth. This tendency, present until today (many still claim that communism never really took root in Bulgaria since the evolution of the system in the desirable direction was cut short), testifies to how deep the regime's ideological foundations took root.

The Bulgaria of the late 1970s, like other countries of the Soviet Bloc, began to slide into economic crisis, a multifaceted phenomenon, which was not singularly caused by internal factors.<sup>[13]</sup> The entire system was proving inefficient, and the problems of one country, first and foremost the Soviet Union, were automatically reflected in the others. The technological divide between the 'people's democracies' and the West grew ever wider. This forced the Eastern Bloc states to sell very basic products to Third World countries; complex industrial products sold were no competition to Western counterparts. A system based on a command economy proved inefficient worldwide, and Bulgaria was but one example of this tendency.

The internal reasons for increasing economic downturn included, for instance:

- the ageing of the leadership and the management, who in turn prevented advancement opportunities for the younger generations;
- a loss of innovativeness, including the sphere of corporate governance;
- a collapse in morale for the leadership and the management at each and every level;
- a negative selection during recruitment (in place since the creation of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, yet acutely felt 30 or 40 years later);
- extreme nepotism and the passing down of positions and social status;
- growing tendencies among the party leadership and management to acquire wealth at the expense of the state and enterprises (which also stemmed from lower crime detection rates);
- tendencies to falsify economic indicators at all levels.

All of the above made the system less and less prone to change and thus less efficient and, more significantly, less manageable. Since the ideology of a 'drive towards communism' was very strong in Bulgaria, theoretically the regime should have favoured reforms more than in other countries (the introduction of ideal communism without reforms would have been difficult to imagine). In fact, all the projects originating in the upper tiers of power were discretely blocked or derailed at the lower levels.

Virtually since the late 1950s (with a short break in the mid-1970s),<sup>[14]</sup> even official statistics' main economic indicator, GDP growth, showed a constant decline despite occasional upwards trends. Yet this indicator,

in many ways manipulated by the regime, showed that Bulgaria in the 1980s was in a state of crisis and there was no way out in sight.

Other economic indicators additionally made the dramatic standing of the country blatantly obvious. Foreign debt also became a major problem, with the Zhivkov regime doing what it could to offset the predicament. The first foreign debt-related crisis took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but then it was overcome. However, by the latter half of the 1970s foreign debt reached around USD 700 million, and in the early 1980s as much as USD 4.4 billion.<sup>[15]</sup> It was at that time that a series of tough negotiations with creditors began which led to the introduction in Bulgaria of an austerity scheme; for a time the country's economy was organised to pay off foreign debt as soon as possible. In the short run, these steps brought about the expected results as in 1983 the debt dropped to USD 2.5 billion, and in the following year to USD 700 million.<sup>[16]</sup>

In 1985, Bulgaria was ravaged by two natural disasters: one of the severest winters in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as one of the biggest droughts the country had ever seen. These were main reasons why the Zhivkov regime had to take out loans, and this time: without any moderation. Since 1985, foreign debt grew by around USD 1.5–2 billion annually, reaching in excess of USD 10 billion in 1989 according to the Bulgarian National Bank.<sup>[17]</sup> Paying off such a debt, which was huge relative to the country's population, required ever-greater amounts of money, and ultimately provided the nail for the coffin of the communist system in Bulgaria. The situation became even worse after 1987.<sup>[18]</sup>

Both foreign debt and Bulgaria's economic dependence on the Soviet Union grew. For a few decades, the Bulgarian economy 'had grown used to' permanent subsidies from Moscow and this tendency was extremely hard to curb. Soviet help consisted, for example, in allowing Bulgaria to re-export fuels sold to it at preferential rates. A partial pay-off of foreign debt in the early 1980s was in large part possible due to this process. It is estimated that in the period 1981–1983 Bulgaria gained in this way around USD 2.2 billion.<sup>[19]</sup> According to Zhivkov's aide, Kostadin Chakarov, who was responsible for the economy in the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, "[railway cars with fuel] travelled from Bulgaria's eastern border to the western one, where shipment documentation was changed",<sup>[20]</sup>

although theoretically the re-exports were to produce some added value on the Bulgarian side.

Every now and then, the authorities offered their society substitutes of luxury goods and more-or-less successful copies of Western products. The most spectacular of these was the launch in manufacturing of personal computers. Pravets, a small town in central-western Bulgaria inhabited by a few thousand people, became the Bulgarian 'silicon valley'. The town's undeniable asset lay in the fact that it was the birthplace of Todor Zhivkov and this was reason enough for the location of a computer factory. The first model, known as the IMKO-1 (Individual Micro-Computer), was released in 1979. Subsequently, few other models were produced, called *Pravetz*, followed by a successive number. This computer became the most 'iconic' product of Bulgarian communism.<sup>[21]</sup>

Gorbachev's coming to power meant serious economic trouble for the Zhivkov regime. As early as 1985, it turned out that Soviet economic assistance might quickly be put to a halt, leading to the major reason for the growth of Bulgaria's foreign debt. Long years of economic dependence on Soviet subsidies necessitated a search for other sources of international financial assistance. While subsidies from the USSR were paid off by all kinds of political concessions, new loans led to inescapable economic problems. The regime endeavoured to solve these issues by pretending to follow the Kremlin's new directives. The so-called July Concept, which was announced in the summer of 1987, contained a political agenda and ideas of economic reforms leading to the creation of a kind of merger between a socialist economy with free-market elements.

As Zhivkov tried to slow down change, adequate solutions saw the light of day only in early 1989. Decree No. 56 (*Ukaz 56*), published on 11 January, ushered in comprehensive reforms. The most crucial of these was to allow the operation of small-scale private enterprises, including those with foreign capital, first and foremost in the form of joint ventures.<sup>[22]</sup> Conditions were also created for the establishment of stock companies and other forms of private property. As such, a slow introduction of capitalism to Bulgaria took place, parallel to the political events of 1989. However, this saved neither Zhivkov nor the system he had led, leading only to the acceleration of its

collapse. In the late 1980s, it had become obvious to everyone that salvaging the bankrupt economy would be impossible without fundamental reforms.

The political and social life of the citizens was under unlimited surveillance of the omnipresent State Security (the DS);<sup>[23]</sup> of special 'significance' was the institution's Sixth Department, whose aim was to combat actual or imagined political opposition. The department, commonly referred to as the 'Sixth' was especially infamous.<sup>[24]</sup> Among others, it spied on the intelligentsia and possibly for this reason it was so well-known, since the people it was interested in had the biggest impact on the country's culture and the media. As was proved by the vetting procedure conducted with varying success after Zhivkov's deposition, numerous DS agents were present in all social groups. The level of infiltration of society was bigger than in other countries, perhaps with the exception of the GDR and Romania.

The economic downturn forced the regime to redirect citizens' attention to other issues. The Bulgarian intelligentsia demonstrated record low intellectual levels. The Orthodox Church was persecuted on an ongoing basis and infiltrated with agents: the clergy were being recruited on a mass scale and, what is more, security agents were tasked with becoming priests.<sup>[25]</sup> This led to a dramatic decline in the prestige and popularity of Christianity among Bulgarians. The regime tried to fill the void created in this way with esoteric science, neo-paganism and new age thought, so popular in the West; this tendency was far more pronounced than in other countries of the Soviet Bloc. Of special significance here was Ludmila Zhivkov, the communist leader's daughter, who tried to pose as an independent. Fascinated by all non-Christian mysticisms, she promoted its different forms, such as certain sects of Indian origin. She died in mysterious circumstances in July 1981. Many legends arose around her death, which some put down to her interest in esoterism. Nevertheless, her death did not curtail the popularity of clairvoyance, divination, etc. in the least. Consequently, primitive superstitions thrived in a formally atheist country that combated Christianity from the point of view of Marxist ideology, with the Georgi Dimitrov Mausoleum as its main 'temple'.

Other kinds of entertainment were prepared for more conversant citizens. Unlike in neighbouring Romania, but similarly to Poland, for example, the 1980s in Bulgaria was a time of flourishing for rock music,

which sometimes served as a 'safety valve' for young people who were critical towards their surrounding reality. The most famous band was the *Shturtsite* (or The Crickets; an analogy with The Beatles was all too obvious). The group was set up in the 1960s but was still active in the 1980s, dominating the local music scene. Its music and lyrics may have passed for somewhat 'subversive', especially those in the 1985 album *Horseman (Konnikyt)*. Another 'subversive' band was Signal. Besides, there were other music groups (such as FSB: *Formatsiya Studio Balkanton*), which openly cooperated with the official political actors of the time.

In time, however, this proved insufficient. Like other countries of the Soviet Bloc, Bulgaria slowly drifted towards nationalism. Turks were (and still are) the largest national minority in Bulgaria, remaining in this territory upon the dissolution of the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Since after the establishment of the independent Bulgarian state, the entire imperial administration left or was forced into exile, with the Turkish minority consisting mainly of farmers, living to this day in eastern and southern Bulgaria. The Bulgarians and the Turks had lived next to each other for centuries and there had been no major conflicts between them, although minor conflicts obviously occurred.

Initially, the communist government supported the Turks and got them involved in the machinery of the regime by facilitating access to education, party membership, and positions in the state apparatus. Georgi Dimitrov, a follower of internationalism, promoted the idea of the Balkan federation, and thus this policy was aligned with the predominant ideas.

Following Zhivkov's ascent to power, minority policy was changed and life for the Turks was made increasingly difficult. As early as 1961, the Department of Turkish Philology at St. Kliment Ohridski University in Sofia was renamed the Department of the Studies of the Orient, and later renamed the Department of Eastern Languages. In 1978, enrolment to the department was discontinued.<sup>[26]</sup> This detail fittingly demonstrates the evolution of the regime's approach to the Turkish minority. Legal bans were followed by stricter surveillance. In 1974, a special division (*otdel*) to fight 'Turkish nationalism' was set up in the special forces.<sup>[27]</sup>

In the early 1970s, a campaign was launched against the Pomaks, who considered themselves Islam-practicing Bulgarians. Concluding that

centuries before the Pomaks had been forced to accept Islam, they were thus 'reintegrated' to the 'true' nation (a practice preceded by similar actions of pre-communist regimes). Furthermore, vigorous attempts were made to have their given and family names changed to those, which sounded more Slavic. The patterns used with respect to the relatively small group of the Pomaks (approximately 160,000 people) were reintroduced the following decade with respect to the far more numerous Turks.

Despite their deteriorating status, the Turkish minority grew in numbers.<sup>[28]</sup> In 1976, it stood at around 8.4 per cent of the entire population of Bulgaria, while in 2001 it was as much as over 10.2 per cent (following the population and household census).<sup>[29]</sup> The Turks' per centage in society grew faster than their absolute numbers, since ethnic Bulgarians had a lower birth rate. The above situation was no doubt due to the exceptionally liberal abortion law.

The growing number of Turks in the population increased a sense of insecurity among the Bulgarian authorities. This issue seemed the most acute in the district (*oblast*) of Kardzhali, where the Turkish minority was the most numerous. In September 1982, the local first secretary of the communist party, Georgi Tanev, wrote a report where he warned against 'Turkish nationalism' and demanded that the Politburo take firm action to curb this tendency.<sup>[30]</sup> This document unleashed a debate among Bulgarian leaders on the 'Turkish question' and ushered in a new stage of its author's career. Tanev grew in popularity among decision-making circles and, in September 1988, became the minister of transport, only then to go on to become interior minister by the end of the year, in December.

Tanev's document was used by the nationalist faction of the party's executives to step up repressions against the Turkish minority. Slogans of 'restoring' the Turks to the Bulgarian people began to be promoted openly. In turn, the Turks set up clandestine organisations to protect themselves against the changes, yet initially their importance was insignificant. Two terrorist attacks took place on 30 August 1984: bombs were planted at a railway station in Plovdiv and at the airport in Varna. The incidents may have been provoked by the special services to justify another wave of repression. A similar scenario may have occurred in the case of another attack, which took place after the operation concluded; on 9 March 1985, explosives planted on a Burgas-to-Sofia train went off at the station in Bunovo, killing seven

people, including two children. Terrorist attacks and incidents of sabotage blamed on 'Turkish nationalists' took place on and off until 1987.

A mandatory change of Turkish fore – and family names into Bulgarian began in the latter half of 1984. The project was undertaken with extreme haste, and between December 1984 and February 1985, it touched the lives of all Bulgarian Turks. It was usual to make references to the already existing names, yet in many cases, completely new ones were given. One of the persons treated in this way was the most famous Bulgarian weightlifter. He was born in 1967 as Naim Suleimanov, but since his name was considered to sound too Turkish and Muslim, he received a new one of Naum Shalamanov. In 1986, Shalamanov defected during a tournament in Melbourne and sought asylum in Turkey. The local authorities consented readily as he was a world-renowned athlete, but as soon as he received citizenship, he did not return to his original name (which this time sounded more Slavic) but changed it to Naim Süleymanoğlu. This was not the end of his problems. In 1988, the Bulgarian regime would not allow him to participate in the Seoul Olympic Games on the Turkish team and demanded 'compensation' in the amount of USD 1 million; only after the fee had been paid did Bulgaria withdraw its protest.

A propaganda campaign of name changes was carried out to 'remind' the Turks that in reality they were Bulgarians who had adopted the Turkish culture and custom solely in the course of compulsory Islamisation by the Ottoman regime. This was meant to demonstrate that the Bulgarian Turks had been victims to a greater degree than the Pomaks, as not only did they adopt the invaders' religion, but also their language and customs. The campaign went by the very perfidious name of the 'Revival Process', which implied the rebirth of the 'true' national identity of the Bulgarians who had been Turks for a few centuries.

The 'Revival Process' did not proceed peacefully: rebellions erupted in some towns and were brutally thwarted by the security service. Activists were incarcerated. In total, between 1984 and 1987, the DS infiltrated 34 such groups, which comprised a total of around 450 people.<sup>[31]</sup> The most famous rebel was Ahmed Doğan, who since 1974 had been a DS agent with aliases such as 'Angelov', 'Sergey', and 'Sava',<sup>[32]</sup> which to some extent casts doubt over the sincerity of his intentions.<sup>[33]</sup> Since the Turkish minority

inhabited less frequented regions, the 'Revival Process' was carried out far from the prying eyes of tourists. Nevertheless, the campaign sparked international protests and the image of Bulgaria suffered significantly. The policy, however, was not changed, and until the very end of the communist regime, the Turks bore artificially created first and family names.

All in all, the 'Revival Process' proved especially harmful for the regime. The Turks would not be 'reborn', instead becoming estranged towards the regime. The Bulgarians themselves were at least impartial to the campaign, whereas the majority commiserated with the Turks and were disgusted with the Zhivkov regime. In regions with a larger Turkish minority, some Bulgarians approved of the measures taken, but only extreme nationalists supported them completely. Since, however, these extremist circles were anyway loyal to the regime, their additional mobilisation would not have made sense. The authorities lost the case in terms of their propaganda as the 'Revival Process' was vehemently criticised by dissident circles, and to this day has been symbolic of the communist repressions in Bulgaria.

## Reorganisation

Gorbachev's coming to power and his slogans pertaining to the restructuring of the system spelled serious trouble for the Zhivkov regime. The Bulgarian leader had followed successive authorities in the Kremlin and tried to copy Soviet solutions on native soil, at least those he considered beneficial for himself. This time, however, an unquestioned submission to the will of the Soviets would have meant his inevitable collapse. Similar dilemmas plagued Zhivkov's other hardliner colleagues: Husák in Czechoslovakia, Honecker in the GDR and Ceaușescu in Romania (the Jaruzelski and Kádár regimes in Poland and Hungary adopted perestroika without major opposition). They decided to boycott the new line for as long as possible. Zhivkov, who seemed their intellectual superior and, unlike Ceaușescu, remained clear-headed despite his old age, decided to take a different route – as meandering and dangerous as it was perfectly masterminded.

Despite the thinly veiled dislike of Gorbachev, Zhivkov initially paid lip service to perestroika and tried to make believe that it was being implemented

in Bulgaria. In hindsight it is clear that he did all he could to prolong certain processes and carry out incessant debates on the imponderabilia; he feigned change and led it astray or, if cornered, tried to carry out reforms by the most circuitous way. Until the collapse of his regime, he managed to introduce but one reform, which could not be simply reversed, i.e. Decree 56. Zhivkov seems to have counted on Gorbachev's and his circles' imminent end, hoping he would be deposed in a similar manner to Khrushchev more than two decades earlier, and that all would return to 'normal'.

It may have seemed, then, that Zhivkov actually implemented the ideas espoused by the new Soviet leaders. The first two years of Gorbachev in power, however, were lost in Bulgaria on prolonged preparations for the implementation of the Kremlin's projects. Official propaganda did not use the Soviet term *perestroika* but its Bulgarian equivalent *preustroystvo* (or 'reorganisation'), which may have shown both a deep internalisation of the idea and a pursuit of a 'uniquely national way' of implementing its assumptions. As a result, the term washed down the issue and debilitated its reformation potential.

This was also the goal of the first more serious attempt at changing internal policy, taken at a plenum of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, held on 28–29 July 1987. Zhivkov and the other party leaders announced that a 'comprehensive reorganisation' (*korenno preustroystvo*) should be implemented in order to remove the 'deformities' (*deformatsiite*) which occurred during the construction of socialism in Bulgaria. The plenum decided that 'more democracy' had to be introduced via 'socialist pluralism'. Moreover, debates focused on the role of the communist party in the state and society. This led to the development of a general reform plan, or the July Concept.<sup>[34]</sup>

The main message of the July Concept was a slight liberalisation of political life. The call for 'socialist pluralism' was seen as encouragement to freer discussions in various circles and, later, to set up informal organisations demanding reforms in different fields. The tendency was generally in line with the Soviet ideas of *perestroika*. Apart from this, there were also two other stands, however, which channelled the energy of those concerned into directions completely harmless for both communism as a system and for Zhivkov himself. One was a partial reform of administration meant

to adjust it to 'economic pluralism', one of the tenets of the July Concept. Here, ministries and other bodies in charge of economic policy were reorganised, but the foundations of the economic policy were left untouched, its slight corrections meant probably to postpone the promised reforms.

The other form of non-productive activity was the creation of a team tasked with the drafting of a new constitution, allegedly to reflect Moscow's novel ideology. As a rule, the constitution of communist states was an insignificant piece of paper and Bulgaria under Zhivkov was no exception. Work on the constitution was supposed to feign work on the reforms, while in reality this proved to be an arid debate and production of extraneous analyses, rationales, and exegeses.

The July Concept was a smoke screen used by Zhivkov and his regime. It quickly turned out, however, that Soviet analysts could not be fooled. As early as 16 October 1987, during a meeting in the Kremlin, Gorbachev criticised Zhivkov for the slow pace of reforms that were demanded by the headquarters. It was probably after this visit that the Soviet leaders concluded that cooperation with Zhivkov would be virtually impossible and, therefore, perestroika should be carried out against him. This ushered in a confrontation of the Bulgarian leader with Moscow, which on the one hand tried to establish a faction opposing him among the Bulgarian leaders, yet on the other hand made efforts to stimulate thinking processes and actions on the part of wider party circles, the intellectuals, and the public at large. The last element was necessary to create a climate facilitating the deposition of Zhivkov, who, unlike his counterpart in neighbouring Romania, was quite popular among broad sections of Bulgarian society.

## Opposition in Bulgaria

In order to understand the situation in Bulgaria under communism, one has to take into account that practically no opposition to the regime existed in the country. After the physical liquidation, or in fact forced emigration, of people connected with the previous system, there was virtually no anti-communist opposition in Bulgaria. Even in Romania, where the regime was equally brutal, there were seeds of rebellion and Romanian society

at times expressed their opposition to the dictatorship. In Bulgaria, there were literally a few dozen dissidents (apart from the Turks, who opposed nationalism and atheisation rather than communism). The DS spied upon all and many were banned from leaving their place of residence or were subject to other restrictions.

Still, occasional events were carried out even under such harsh conditions. During the quenching of the Prague Spring by the Warsaw Pact armies (Bulgaria took part in this operation as well), minor protests were staged by small groups of people. One of these dissidents was the writer Georgi Zarkin, who had been in prison since 1966 for disseminating anti-communist leaflets. After the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies, he staged a hunger strike and submitted a protest to the prison management. He died of injuries sustained by brutal beatings while in prison in August 1977. September 1968 saw a protest of students from the history faculty at Sofia's St. Kliment Ohridski University against the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Students Eduard Genov, Aleksandar Dimitrov, and Valentin Radev threw leaflets into the crowd, for which they were quickly arrested. Genov spent ten years in prison, as the sentence was prolonged after he took part in a protest in the penitential facility. He was released only in 1978.

The entire world was outraged by the assassination (7 September 1978) of the émigré writer Georgi Markov.<sup>[35]</sup> Born in Sofia in 1929, since the 1960s he had tried to address criticism of the Zhivkov regime in his writings, even though at the same time he was writing a script for a highly propagandist TV series *Every Kilometre* (*Na vseki kilomet'r*). In 1969, Markov emigrated to the West, first to Italy, then to Germany, before finally settling down in London, where he began to work for the Bulgarian section of the BBC. He was assassinated with the use of poison hidden in the tip of an umbrella. As of that time, the Bulgarian umbrella became a symbolic murder weapon used by the communist special services in the West.

In May 1977, Bulgarian opposition activists wrote a reply to the Czechoslovak Charter 77. The document was smuggled abroad, where it was mentioned by the radio stations broadcasting in Bulgarian. Still, its reception in Bulgarian society was negligible.

By far the most famous dissident of the 1980s was Iliya Minev.<sup>[36]</sup> Born on 5 December 1917 in Sara Khan bey (renamed after the war to Septemvri), in the province of Pazardzhik, in 1930 he became a teacher in junior high school in Pazardzhik, and then went to Toulouse, where he completed chemistry studies. He later returned to Bulgaria, where he got involved in the nationalist movement and entered the Union of Bulgarian National Legions, an organisation of fascist provenance. When arrested in 1946, he was given a long prison sentence, and was ultimately released only in the late 1970s (meaning he intermittently spent around three decades in prison). Upon his release, he returned to his native Septemvri; the regime banned his leaving the town, monitored his correspondence, and checked his visitors. Moreover, he had to report to a police precinct three times a day. However, during his stay at various penitentiary facilities across the country, Iliya Minev met people with a similar background. Along with them, in the early 1980s, he organised an informal anti-communist group. Its activity was limited to debates and occasional appeals in defence of human rights in Bulgaria, as well as hunger strikes. Yet until the time of perestroika, the dissidents were unable to reach out to the general public and disseminate their ideas.

Minev's popularity grew only in the latter half of 1986. It was then that he signed an *Open Letter* drafted by a group of dissidents – *An Appeal to the Vienna Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe*. Minev's signature was on top of the entire list, followed by those of Tseko Tsekov, Grigor Simov, Grigor Bozhilov, and Eduard Genov, among others. The letter observed that some countries more than ten years following the conference in Helsinki had not secured but one of the fundamental rights of their nations.<sup>[37]</sup> On 19 December 1986, the *Appeal* was submitted to the US embassy in Sofia and thanks to this, it became one of the documents of the Vienna conference.

Over the course of the following months, Minev and his friends embarked on efforts to set up a political organisation, even though a house arrest imposed on Minev was an undeniable hindrance. Since he himself had ample experience in managing all kinds of trials and tribulations, he occasionally managed to escape the DS agents and met with other dissidents (with Tsekov in Mikhailovgrad, for example). Thanks to the *Appeal*, Minev became a quite familiar figure; therefore, the regime had to resort to more veiled

repressions, and focused mainly on preventing meetings and obstructing the publication of the documents.

Finally, on 16 January 1988, the Independent Association for the Defence of Human Rights (NDZPC) was set up, chaired by Minev, with Tsekov serving as secretary.<sup>[38]</sup> The group had only a few dozen members, but it was the first independent organisation in Bulgaria for many years. An additional threat to the regime stemmed from the fact that the Association was composed of true dissidents rather than, as in the case of later groups, party dissenters or DS agents. Minev and his colleagues united against the regime rather than to 'reorganise' it. Theoretically, the goals of the Association concerned exclusively the defence of human rights; however, it could not be ruled out that later on, the programme would be supplemented by political demands.

During its first year of operations, the Association tried, in vain, as it turned out, to gain legal status (theoretically in line with the pluralism declared in the July Concept) and was equally unsuccessful at organising rallies. A demonstration that took place on 25 December 1988 in the town of Ikhtiman was the largest attempt at making the regime face reality, but the DS stopped it. Iliya Minev went on successive hunger strikes and a few of the Association's activists were forced to emigrate in October 1988. Eduard Genov, expelled from Bulgaria, was granted asylum in the United States. Nevertheless, the Association became widely known, mainly thanks to Western media. This situation posed a hazard not only for the regime, but also, if not more, for the party dissidents, whose backgrounds were incomparable with that of Minev's and his colleagues. The activities of the Association proved a serious obstacle for the party dissidents' attempts at playing a role of the only anti-Zhivkov opposition, all the more so that a long-standing campaign in the Bulgarian press, which aimed at discrediting the Association and its leader, actually added to Minev's popularity.

The way to get rid of Minev seemed to have been craftily masterminded. On 25 January 1989, a man knocked on the door of Minev's home in Septemvri. He introduced himself as a proponent of the Association who wished to support its further operation. His name was Rumen Vodenicharov, born in 1938. He came from a family with a clear communist provenance. Before the war, his father was one of the founders of a communist student organisation, and his mother was a communist party member, a prosecutor and

activist of a communist women's organisation. Vodenicharov was a chemist; until 1971 he worked in the Organic Chemistry Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAN), and then until 1989 at the Chemical Pharmaceutical Research Institute in Sofia. He was an avid mountaineer, and went on sojourns to the Alps, the Himalayas, and to Pakistan. Just getting the relevant paperwork and permits to go on such trips would have been impossible without connections among the authorities.

It is truly incomprehensible how someone as experienced as Minev could have trusted Vodenicharov. At any rate, it was a costly mistake. Initially the new 'opposition activist' worked for the benefit of the Association and Minev; thanks to his personal contacts in Sofia, he forwarded information obtained from Minev to foreign correspondents. Unlike others, Vodenicharov had no problems reaching Septemvri.

A few months following the first meeting with Minev, Vodenicharov began to establish the 'Sofia chapter' of the Association. Since the name of the founder was widely recognised, he was unable to oust him from the organisation; he had to make sure that the members from Sofia would be more numerous compared to those from Septemvri. Various people began to gather around Vodenicharov, both dissidents and some more mysterious persons, such as Volen Siderov, at that time a photographer at the National Museum of Literature in Sofia. In the summer of 1989, the Sofia group was numerous and influential enough for Vodenicharov to launch a coup. A meeting of the Sofia chapter of the Association took place on 16 August 1989; Minev had not been notified (and would not have been able to arrive due to his house arrest). Rumen Vodenicharov was unanimously elected the chairman of the chapter. At the same time, all the individuals connected with Minev were dismissed. From that moment on, the Sofia chapter took charge of all contacts and began to speak on behalf of the entire Association. Finally, in the autumn, Minev and his people were removed from the Association.

This in fact marked the end of the biggest opposition movement in Bulgaria. Minev and his colleagues no longer played any role in further events. The Association led by Vodenicharov joined the circles supporting perestroika, Gorbachev, and the internal reform of the communist system. The significance of opposition groups other than Minev's was negligible.

## Dissidents and Plotters

Dissident circles appropriated the role of the opposition. These were members of the party, party-related organisations, communist scholars, as well as DS agents. Since the opposition was very weak (and in the wake of Vodenicharov's stratagems, practically non-existent), the void was filled by dissident groups, seen – especially abroad – as anti-communist organisations, which was a slight misinterpretation.<sup>[39]</sup> Initially, their sole aim was to speed up the implementation of perestroika in Bulgaria. Certain opposition to the system appeared only after the deposition of Zhivkov, its intensity growing in the campaign prior to the June 1990 election and during the deposition of Petar Mladenov a few months later. As some of the major figures of the time saw their chance for social advancement in the long run as posing for the anti-communists, Bulgarians witnessed the spectacle of biography editing and the falsifying of opposition backgrounds by those who had never been members of the opposition movement.<sup>[40]</sup>

Besides the dissidents, a group of top party officials also plotted against Zhivkov. They, too, would not topple communism but join Gorbachev and fulfil his directives, depose the dictator, and take over his position. From Zhivkov's perspective, this was the most dangerous group, and even more so since he was unable to counter it openly. Until the collapse of the long-standing leader, the plotters most probably cooperated to some extent with the dissidents, although most of the plotters harshly criticised them; the discrepancies between the groups emerged only during the latter stages of the political transformations.

Both circles were at that time strongly inspired by the events in the Soviet Union. All over Bulgaria, citizens could watch Soviet television's Channel 1, broadcast live via a relay transmitter in Sofia. All citizens had access to Soviet press, and since Russian was commonly spoken, Gorbachev's ideas were easily disseminated. In the latter half of the 1980s, the monthly subscription of Russian magazines ran to a few hundred thousand copies. Besides, the ideas of perestroika were promoted among the Bulgarian intelligentsia by Soviet citizens: journalists, correspondents, diplomats, etc. They had wide contacts and earned the trust of large numbers of intellectuals, not only dissidents. The most famous Bulgarian journalist who 'promoted'

perestroika was Kevork Kevorkian, whose programme *Every Sunday* (*Vsyaka nedelya*), which was broadcast weekly on Bulgarian television's Channel 1, invariably gathered large audiences in front of their TV sets. It promoted glasnost and addressed many issues shunned by other media outlets available at the time.<sup>[41]</sup>

The best-known dissident of the period in question was Zhelyu Zhelev. He was regarded as the icon of the transformations, and his appointment on 1 August 1990 as President is seen as a breakthrough moment in Bulgaria's history.<sup>[42]</sup> Zhelev was born on 3 March 1935 in the village of Veselinovo in the Shumen province. In 1958, he graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at Sofia University. An activist of the communist youth organisation, since 1960, he was a member of the Communist Party of Bulgaria. In 1967, he wrote his greatest work, *Totalitarian State* (*Totalitarnata d'rzhava*), a treatise where he alluded to the affinities between the Nazi and communist systems. The book could not be sent to print as the censors saw elements incompatible with the official party line in it, yet it was eventually published in 1982 under the changed title *Fascism*.<sup>[43]</sup> The publication of the book provoked a scandal; part of the print-run was withdrawn from bookstores and those involved in the publishing process were punished in both their workplace and within the party.<sup>[44]</sup> However, Zhelev did not lose his university position and continued his research. The scandal provoked by the book linked his name with dissident activity, although this affair was known only to an inner circle of the intelligentsia interested in history and political science. Zhelev joined the dissident movement only after it shifted from the province to the nation's capital.

Minev's activity and his demands of the defence of human rights imposed limitations on where the dissidents could find their place in social consciousness. The human rights question had already been 'engaged'; hence, another topic had to be chosen. As in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, environmental issues mobilised the dissidents and members of the public.

The dissident movement started in the town of Ruse situated on the Danube, on the Romanian border. A chemical factory operated on the other riverbank, in the town of Giurgiu (Bulgarian: *Gyurgevo*). The factory emitted especially toxic and malodorous vapours, which was a bane for the residents of Ruse. The Bulgarian authorities half-heartedly

and unsuccessfully tried to make the Romanians deal with the problem; until the time of perestroika this was to no avail. There were no social protests, even though the quality of life in Ruse was constantly in decline; children were especially at risk.

The first rally against the pollution of the natural environment by the fumes generated by the Giurgiu factory took place in Ruse on 27 September 1987. It was started by women, concerned about the impact of the pollution on their children's development. Attended by a small crowd,<sup>[45]</sup> the rally, covered by the local media, attracted the interest of a group of intellectuals and filmmakers from the capital. These included the philosopher Stefan Gaytandzhiyev, scriptwriter Georgi Avramov, and director Yuri Zhironov. They came to Ruse and shot a documentary about the environmental risks and protests against the Romanian factory. The movie proved to be a turning point for the dissident movement in Bulgaria.

The film, entitled *Breathe (Dishay)*, directed by Yuri Zhironov on the basis of a script by Georgi Avramov, presented the pollution problem of Ruse from the scientific and social perspectives. It showed a staged protest of mothers, interviews with the participants of the events, and a long sequence depicting a march of Ruse residents to the local administration office. The crowd at the rally was addressed by Georgi, a.k.a. Grisha, Filipov (prime minister between 1981 and 1986, and until the collapse of Zhivkov one of the highest party executives), who promised to solve the problem of environmental pollution through negotiations with the Romanian authorities. This promise was greeted by the protesters with the shouts: "Filipov! Filipov!" before the film comes to a close.<sup>[46]</sup>

It is hard to find here any subversive content, especially that Filipov, one of Zhivkov's most trusted men, is portrayed as a positive figure. It is not completely clear why the authorities consented to the shooting of this documentary; work on it could have been discontinued at any moment had such an order been issued. In turn, if it was supposed to promote Filipov, why did he play a different role later?

The film premiered a few months later, during which time successive rallies took place in Ruse (4 protests and 3 failed attempts at rallies took place by 10 February 1988; the last rally was attended by a few thousand people). The issue was covered also by national press; for example, on 18 February

1988 an article on the matter was published by the *Literary Front* (*Literaturnen Front*). The question of environmental pollution in Ruse became known among Bulgarian intelligentsia, with the ensuing outrage caused by the damaging effect of the Ceaușescu regime becoming commonplace.

The Bulgarian regime also sent a signal encouraging dissident activity. During the national conference of the Bulgarian Communist Party (28–29 January 1988), Zhivkov observed, “It is not right and proper to oppose the creation of independent groups, autonomous associations and other autonomous forms of people’s organisations”.<sup>[47]</sup> Soon it was to become clear, however, that the establishment of such groups, even if they were composed exclusively of party members, would be seen as treason.

The screening of *Breathe* took place on 8 March 1988 at the Cinema Centre in downtown Sofia. The authorities did nothing to prevent it. The Cinema Centre, a venue popular among the local intellectual elites, occasionally hosted film screenings followed by discussions. Still prior to the premiere, a steering group met in the Institute of Philosophy of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to set up a committee for the environmental protection of Ruse. It consisted of Stefan Gaytandzhiyev, sociologist Petko Simeonov, and Zhelyu Zhelev. They agreed that after the film screening, an informal environmental organisation should be launched. The show, watched by close to 400 people, was followed by a debate and then signatures were collected under the appeal *Let us Save Ruse* (*Da spasim Ruse*). Over thirty were gathered that day; the same people set up the first dissident organisation called the Civic Committee for the Environmental Defence of Ruse (*Obtsetven Komitet Za Ekologichna Zashchita na Ruse – OKEZR*), chaired by the writer Georgi Mishev.<sup>[48]</sup> 33 people were elected as members of OKEZR management, with only 11 having no party affiliation. Mishev would later recall, rather exaggeratedly, that they were like the “Eskimos of democracy at the end of a polar night”.<sup>[49]</sup> The ‘Eskimos of democracy’ included Sonia Bakish – the wife of Stanko Todorov, a high-ranking dignitary – as well as the actor Petar Slabakov and physicist Ivaylo Trifonov.

Despite significantly contributing to the launching of the organisation, Simeonov and Zhelev did not join it, probably because of failed ambitions. In hindsight it turned out, they were right, as a half-year later they

set up a much stronger group where their opinions were heeded to with greater aplomb.

The OKEZR adopted narrow goals. Theoretically, upon reaching the demands for reducing emissions of hazardous substances by the Giurgiu factory, the committee was to dissolve and thus 'temporary operation' actually formed part of its name. That the above demands were not met until the collapse of communism did not prevent the OKEZR from losing its initial impetus, however.

Within days of being established, the committee became an object of fierce criticism by the highest party echelons. The question was discussed during two Politburo meetings, held on 24 and 27 March 1988. Top party leaders spoke about the 'negativism and pessimism' of both the authors of the movie *Breathe* and OKEZR members. Grisha Filipov, who was so favourably presented in the film, unleashed scathing criticism, and warned during the Politburo meeting that the committee was driven by "anti-party and anti-state forces". Similar arguments were raised by plotters against Zhivkov. Defence minister Dobri Dzhurov said that this was an "organised force" directed against the party and authorities, while the minister of foreign economic affairs Andrey Lukanov stressed that the OKEZR should be "crushed" and "smitten with all might".<sup>[50]</sup>

Before long, a relatively powerful attack was launched against the people connected with the committee. Many were excluded from the party, including Georgi Mishev and Sonia Bakish; her husband Stanko Todorov was made to resign as a Politburo member, but nevertheless remained a party member. Furthermore, administrative measures were taken, such as the order to dissolve the Institute of Philosophy of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, which ultimately did not take place. A propaganda campaign was unleashed against the OKEZR whose main unintended result was the promotion of the committee and the directing of public attention to the environmental threat to Ruse and the entire country. The ecological agenda grew popular in society and proved an opportune motif for further dissident activity.

The reprisals against OKEZR activists were not as severe as the ones waged against NDZPC members and sympathisers (at least those of the Septemvri group). However, they led to the complete suspension of the Committee's

activity. Therefore, the actions of this organisation were exclusively twofold: the drawing up and signing of the *Save Ruse appeal*. It seems that the dissidents realised that the OKEZR formula was too narrow to attract a more generous social support. Successive initiatives were more open, although the issue of the Giurgiu factory continued to be an item on the agenda. The Bulgarian authorities in fact tried to pressure Ceauşescu on the matter; to no avail, however.

Another major initiative took place over half a year later, which did not mean, however, that there was a void following the reprisals of people involved with the OKEZR. The intellectuals, especially those connected with the Sofia University, were ever bolder in proclaiming the Soviet ideas of glasnost and perestroika. It might have seemed incomprehensible, e.g. from the Polish perspective, that such proclamations should have been seen as 'subversive', yet in the terrorised Bulgarian society even a minuscule deviation from the strict political line of the regime was examined closely by the party agendas and the DS. Since a liberalisation of the system did take place under Gorbachev's influence, the espousal of Soviet ideas was no longer a punishable offence, although not everyone knew about it. Decades of intimidation and intellectual collapse took their toll, and even the most educated Bulgarians were afraid to address some issues openly, moreover, they often did not feel the urge. Therefore, the dissidents believed that they were first and foremost to awaken the critical spirit among the intellectuals.

This was to be attained by a series of meetings, seminars and lectures held after the storm surrounding the OKEZR subsided. As early as March 1988, Zhelev and his colleagues began such activities, initially at the Sofia University (with a big role of the university cafeteria, named Egg (*Yaytseto*), a traditional meeting place of both university faculty members and intellectuals from the whole of Sofia), and later also in other towns. Of great importance was the summer school of young historians held in Primorsko in early June 1988, where Zhelev delivered a lecture on the 'role of the intelligentsia in the reorganisation'. In July that year, Varna hosted an international school of philosophy, during which similar ideas were raised, and rather bold theses – given the situation in Bulgaria at the time – were put forward.

In the autumn, it turned out that the dissidents' tactics were fit for purpose. Growing numbers of intellectuals were increasingly critical of reality and some were no longer afraid to stand up, emboldened by the progress of perestroika in other countries of the Communist Bloc, and which was widely covered by the Western media and reached Bulgaria, in addition to Soviet press and television. If changes were possible in other countries and Zhivkov formally supported them, why was everything to stay the way it had been in Bulgaria? Such questions were no doubt posed at that time, not only by the intelligentsia, but also by increasingly broad circles of society.

After the summer campaign of the 'awakening' of the intellectuals, circles close to Zhelev started to toy with the idea of establishing a debate-oriented political organisation. Those participating in the meetings where the above issue was discussed recalled that initially there was no clear concept of its ideological profile. Two possible areas of activity had already been 'reserved': the NDZPC (before Vodenicharov's coup) had human rights on their agenda, whereas the OKEZR was involved in environmental protection. However, a political struggle that made use of the protection of the natural environment showed its evident weakness. Furthermore, it was hard to raise issues which were prominent in other communist countries, such as nationalism (exploited to the full by the Zhivkov regime during the 'Revival Process'), Christianity (the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was totally compromised and agent-infested, and did not enjoy an appropriate social prestige), or trade unions (it is hard to image a trade union movement created by intellectuals without the participation of the working class).

Under the above circumstances, the only relatively coherent and yet unexploited concept was the Soviet perestroika and its adjunct glasnost. This was a wide enough formula to accommodate human rights, environmental protection, a certain rehabilitation of Christian values (which occurred in the Soviet Union), a trade union movement, and even a moderate form of nationalism (exemplified by the various national fronts, which had been established here and there throughout the Soviet republics). Furthermore, Zhivkov theoretically backed perestroika and repeatedly, in evoking pluralism, made it understood that he did not want to hold a monopoly over it. At one moment, the lack of such an organisation could have been a drawback for him, as it would have weathered his credibility in the Kremlin's

eyes, as such groups or debating societies had already been established in many countries of the Soviet Bloc.

Groups centered around Zhelev and his colleagues initially considered the foundation of the Gorbachev Club. To establish an organisation named after a Soviet leader had its advantages and drawbacks. On the upside, the Bulgarian regime would have found it difficult to persecute the intellectuals associated with a club bearing his name. This would have probably secured more extensive visibility and possible support of the Soviet Union's representatives residing in Bulgaria. It seems, however, that the disadvantages would have prevailed. Firstly, to call a club after Gorbachev would have stressed the temporary aspect of the situation and in the event of the Soviet leader's deposition, the participants of the club would have found themselves in an untenable position. After all, everyone still remembered Khrushchev and his attempted reforms. Secondly, there was a somewhat purely theoretical possibility of the club being taken over by another faction. After all, it was Zhivkov, and no one else, who was Gorbachev's 'governor' in Bulgaria. Thirdly, the Gorbachev Club would have had problems changing their political line in the future, as ideologically they would have been too dependent on the Kremlin. In the event of any discrepancies (which could not have been excluded and, ultimately, turned out very real) between the position of the Soviet leader and the need to react to the current situation in Bulgaria, its name would have had to be changed. This would have meant the loss of both the efforts dedicated to its promotion and, probably, of its political credibility.

Given the above arguments, the name decided on at the end of the day was the Club for the Support of Glasnost and Reorganisation in Bulgaria (*Klub za podkrepatata na glasnostta i preustroistvoto v Blgariya*), which despite the Bulgarian monicker 'reorganisation', was commonly referred to as the Perestroika Club.<sup>[54]</sup> The programme and organisational documents, such as the list of the founding-members, etc., were prepared over the course of long weeks during debates led mainly at the St. Kliment Ohridski University. The regime, the DS, and other structures (such as academics resistant to the reforms) were able to halt the process or at least hamper it, yet did nothing of this kind. This meant that the initiative had substantial support from 'above'. We can only speculate about the immediate source of this support. Was

it a group of plotters who became active later on, the Zhivkov group (hardly likely), or Moscow directly? We will probably never know for sure.

The foundation meeting of the Perestroika Club took place on 3 November 1988, following a seminar of the Department of Scientific Communism at the St. Kliment Ohridski University. Koprinka Chervenkova read out the programme declaration, announcing the need for an ‘open debate’, calling for open participation, as well as building the organisation through “social elements interested in real democratisation and glasnost”. Debates were to take place in six sub-groups dedicated to the following: the country’s economic situation, human rights and civil liberties, demographic issues, protection of the natural environment, culture and education, as well as ‘problems unaccounted for in Bulgarian history’.<sup>[52]</sup>

A list of the Perestroika Club members was drawn up and its authorities elected. Its most famous members (at that time or later) were the popular satirist Radoy Ralin, Petko Simeonov, Blaga Dimitrova, Georgi Mishev, writer Encho Mutafov, Chavdar Kyuranov, his son Deyan Kyuranov, Aleksandar Karakachanov, and Koprinka Chervenkova. The club gathered a total of 81 people. Christo Radevski, a writer with communist views, headed the grouping’s twenty-person-strong Executive Board, selected from among the members; the six-person-strong Operations Bureau included Zhelev and Chervenkova. The Perestroika Club was in fact governed by Zhelev, whose popularity grew correspondingly. While earlier he had been recognised almost exclusively among intellectuals, after the organisation was set up his name became well known throughout the public and abroad. As Minev was sidelined before long by Vodenicharov, it was Zhelev who was the face of the Bulgarian transformations, which took place within under one year.

It turned out that Zhelev’s and Simeonov’s boycotting of the OKEZR was a proper strategy. The Perestroika Club was joined by important activists of the earlier committee (38 people had had earlier experience with the OKEZR), but they no longer played a significant role. This was first and foremost true of Mishev, the OKEZR chairman, but nevertheless a run-of-the-mill club member. From the outset, the Perestroika Club was the most important dissident organisation in Bulgaria. With proper visibility, notably in Western media, news about its initiatives reached most of Bulgaria’s citizens interested in politics.

The club's activity focused on holding debates and drawing up all kinds of appeals, letters, and documents. The first was a letter of congratulations to Mikhail Gorbachev on the occasion of the Soviet October Revolution. Since members were vociferous supporters of communism and Gorbachev's incarnation of it, the regime had a hard pill to swallow, not only from an ideological aspect. A major mistake was made, as from the point of view of the authorities, the spread of opposition sentiments should have been curbed before the establishment of the club rather than after its formation.

Nevertheless, the regime initially tried to use tactics that had partially worked in the case of the OKEZR. The Perestroika Club was discussed by the Politburo during its meetings on 11, 15 and 16 November 1988. During the first assembly, Ivan Panev, a typical apparatchik, managed to produce reasonably exact information on the establishment of the club and provided an 'ideological' overview of its members. The document concluded with a call for taking concrete measures to crush the organisation and to prevent similar movements in the future. In principle, all the Politburo members concurred with the observations, though some indicated tangible social issues as the root causes of discontent and the dissident movement. These aspects were especially stressed by the future plotters. For instance, Petar Mladenov stressed that the BKP was in a state of crisis and the setting up of the OKEZR and then of the Perestroika Club (which he called a "parallel party") proved it adequately. No binding decisions were taken, apart from calls to withstand the tough situation. In December 1988, according to Mladenov, Zhivkov was testing, however, the loyalty of the Politburo members.<sup>[53]</sup>

The party's reaction to the establishment of the Club was the aforementioned Decree 56 of 11 January 1989, which introduced certain liberalising reforms to the economy. A few weeks beforehand, during successive meetings of the upper party executives, debates had been held about the need to 'put down' and 'scrap' the Perestroika Club, but again no decisive action was taken. The DS kept club members under surveillance, and indeed a dozen or so people were detained for questioning, yet these reprisals were hardly similar to those of the Septemvri Group. Up to 20 people were removed from the party, including Chavdar Kyuranov and Koprinka Chervenкова. Still, the regime's action was irresolute and unclear. State media offered virtually no coverage of the establishment of the club (only a few news items were

aired, and Kevorkian did not mention the organisation's name on his TV show even though he was especially critical of the situation in Bulgaria). The Western mass media gave the matter extensive coverage and broadcast interviews with Zhelev, which the DS could not or would not block.

In the meantime, the dissidents obtained substantial help from abroad. French President François Mitterrand visited Bulgaria on 18–19 January 1989. He consented to this visit solely on condition that he would meet the dissidents and opposition activists from Minev's group. In December the previous year, Mitterrand had met, in similar fashion, Czechoslovak opposition activists, including Vacláv Havel. In the wake of negotiations, the Septemvri Group was not to participate in the breakfast attended by people assigned by the Perestroika Club. The meeting took place in the French Embassy in Sofia on the morning of 19 January 1989 and lasted for around two hours. The club appointed six people, including Zhelev, Chervenkova, Dimitrova, and Ralin. Another six people who took part in the breakfast represented the party; as it turned out later, some were related to the plotters.

While the meeting did not bring about anything new content-wise (the participants aired their views and called for the support of Gorbachev), it did create a new quality in Bulgarian politics: the leader of a major Western state considered Zhelev and his circle (as well as the plotters) as representatives of society. As of that moment, the regime would find it ever harder to combat the growth of the dissident movement. International acceptance for the Perestroika Club and circles associated with it boosted its importance and was a clear signal that Zhivkov's days were numbered.

Mitterrand's visit led to a rejuvenation of dissident circles. New organisations sprang up which tried to address previously neglected issues. One of them was the workers' movement and the trade unions. An embryonic form of a trade union, which was (at least in theory) independent of the communists, was conceived among intellectual circles, but born of a different group than those connected with the capital's humanities universities. The movement owed its momentum to Konstantin Trenchev, born on 8 February 1955 in Stara Zagora. In 1982, he graduated from the Medical University (Higher Medical Institute) in Sofia. He did not stay in the capital, however, and returned to his hometown, where he worked at the local Higher Medical Institute. In late 1988 and early 1989, he decided to become politically

active. He was directly inspired by the hunger strike led in Plovdiv since early 1989 by the poet Petar Manolov. Trenchev got in touch with his friend Tsvetan Zlatarov, then an NDZPC member, and on 7 February, they went together to Plovdiv to meet Manolov. The idea to establish a trade union emerged during the discussions.

On 8 February, Radio Free Europe broadcast an interview with Trenchev, who spoke of Manolov's health. The ideological and organisational tenets of a new political entity were hammered out during the next few days (with the DS taking a step back and not interfering), and on 11 February the same radio station, along with the BBC and Deutsche Welle,<sup>[54]</sup> announced the establishment of 'Support' (*Podkrepa*),<sup>[55]</sup> a trade union of white-collar workers headed by Trenchev.

The trade union formula proved fit for purpose, as it opened its doors not only to limited intellectual circles. During the first months of activity, this was very hard, however, and Podkrepa was a rather small and insignificant organisation. Major activists, such as Trenchev and Manolov, were under DS surveillance and their apartments were constantly under watch. For a few months, reprisals of Podkrepa members were less severe than reprisals with respect to Minev's group, but still more acute than the ones directed at the Perestroika Club. However, the regime decided to deal a stronger blow to Podkrepa in May 1989, when Petar Manolov was forced to leave the country and many people associated with the movement were arrested on 25–26 May, including Trenchev himself. Contrary to expectations, unlike the few detained members of the Perestroika Club, they were not released immediately. The Podkrepa activists remaining at large used various forms of protest to obtain the release of their friends from prison, which was eventually possible in early autumn.

Podkrepa rose in significance due to growing dissident sentiments in society. In the autumn of 1989, the union was joined by a larger group of workers which helped to transform it into a more common organisation and, first and foremost, to cross professional barriers. Workers' participation was of paramount importance, as it enhanced the union's credibility and exemplified the ideological bankruptcy of the communist system, based, by definition, on the 'working class'. Thus what had happened in Poland as early as the mid-1970s, when the KOR was established, became flesh in Bulgaria

only a few months prior to the collapse of Zhivkov, and on a much smaller scale at that. Bulgaria, to the detriment of its citizens, was therefore more enslaved than the other countries of the Soviet Bloc.

In the early spring of 1989, another organisation with an environmental protection agenda was set up, much more powerful than the OKEZR, which was soon neutralised by the regime.<sup>[56]</sup> It was secondary to the OKEZR and composition-wise played second fiddle to the Perestroika Club. It was joined by most of the people earlier involved in the OKEZR. Some, however, were dissatisfied with its formula and resolved to establish an autonomous organisation dealing primarily with environmental issues.

The foundation meeting took place on 6 February 1989 in the home of the famous actor Petar Slabakov. During a tempestuous debate, it was determined that the activity had to kick off with some conspicuous open-air project and that, unlike the Perestroika Club, the organisation should focus on one particular issue. Since the matter of the Giurgiu factory had not been resolved, it offered an opportunity for political action. Protection of the natural environment was an especially underdeveloped political question of the communist regime in Bulgaria (as well as in the other countries of the Soviet Bloc) and therefore the identification of other areas where there was dramatic pollution was not difficult.

The organisation was formally set up on 11 April 1989 at the home of Aleksandar Karakachanov. He was born in 1960 in Sofia and his father, Panaiot, was a high-ranking general. Aleksandar graduated from a high school in Moscow and studied at the St. Kliment Ohridski University in Sofia, where he was later an academic. Among others, he was involved in brain research (the project was inspired by Ludmila Zhivkova). In 1987, he became a Sofia city councillor. He was a member of both OKEZR and the Perestroika Club, but played a major role in neither. On 11 April, it was decided during the meeting that the new organisation, known as 'Ecoglasnost', would be formally and legally registered on the basis of the July Concept provisions. At the same time its foundation was announced by Western mass media.

As was to be expected, Ecoglasnost was not registered until after Zhivkov's deposition. For the first few months, the activists confined themselves to drawing up all kinds of appeals, mainly related to the environmental protection. In order to beat the Perestroika Club to the draw, a major rally

in Sofia was planned for the autumn of 1989. The name *Ecoglasnost*, an obvious reference to Soviet ideas, was evidently secondary to the Perestroika Club and therefore the organisation could be seen, policy-wise, as supplementary to the Zhelev group. This was also the intelligentsia's perception of it, as well as the perception of the general public and foreign observers.

The main activists included Slabakov (elected chairman) and Karakachanov (secretary) as well as Georgi Avramov (also a secretary), Pirin Vodenicharov (Rumen's brother), and Petar Beron. Beron was born in 1940 and was involved in zoology throughout his life. He had travelled extensively around the globe; in the 1970s had been a zoo director in Nigeria, and in 1986, he visited Kabul, at that time occupied by Soviet forces.<sup>[57]</sup>

The circles of the Perestroika Club and *Ecoglasnost* overlapped, and Chavdar Kiuranov, Petko Simeonov, and even Zhelyu Zhelev contributed to the work of the environmental organisation. Still, this was a separate organisation, competitive to some extent, and trying to remain independent, also of the club, with individual members' personal ambitions no doubt playing a major role. Nevertheless, they worked in tandem in many fields as they shared a common goal until the deposition of Zhivkov; afterwards, however, the goal was redefined but no open conflict ensued.

Apart from the above groups, some minor movements were set up, or became more active, in the spring of 1989. Some would later play a role during the creation of the first non-communist party in Bulgaria. Dimitar Ludzhev, the author of a monograph dedicated to the systemic transformation, called this period somewhat exaggeratedly "the spring of the Bulgarian dissident movement".<sup>[58]</sup> A notable example of another organisation to enhance its activity at the time was the Christian Union 'Salvation' (*Khristyanski Sayuz "Spaseniye"*), which fought for religious rights and freedoms, as well as the moral renewal of the Orthodox Church.<sup>[59]</sup> It was set up on 19 October 1988, on the fourth anniversary of the assassination of the Polish priest Jerzy Popiełuszko, a fact underlined by the union's activists. Its headquarters was located in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria's spiritual capital, and its leading figure was the cleric Khristofor Sibev, arrested in May 1989 along with Podkrepa activists. Since Salvation was not controlled by people connected with the communist party or the DS, and besides raised issues which were seen as hazardous for the advancement of perestroika,

it was as marginalised as the Septemvri Group, albeit somewhat later than Minev and his colleagues.

In the spring of 1989, the Zhivkov camp, its influence ever dwindling, launched its last counter-offensive. A decision was made to make use, once again, of nationalism and anti-Turkish phobias. The earlier 'Revival Process' had caused a mass emigration of Turks to their 'homeland',<sup>[60]</sup> whose results were not to the satisfaction of party leaders. Furthermore, the progress of perestroika triggered more intense political activity on the part of the Turkish minority, who decided to fight for their rights. Short-lived protests erupted in communities with a significant Turkish presence. Mass rallies took place in the last decade of May 1989; some were brutally crushed by riot police, who dispersed tear gas, and by special units involving karate athletes.

On 29 May, Todor Zhivkov delivered a long address, which was broadcast on radio and television. He called on the Turkish authorities to open up the borders for all those who, because of their nationality, wished to emigrate to Turkey. He announced that the Bulgarian authorities would pose no obstacles as long as these people agreed to leave immediately. This was only a seeming change of tack, as during the 'Revival Process', the Turks had been made to believe that they were in fact Bulgarians, while in May 1989 it turned out that this was not the case and therefore they should relocate to the Republic of Turkey. In practice, the regime wished to get rid of the Turks and the exact means to this effect was immaterial.

The Turkish side reacted without delay. Although to all intents and purposes this was a politically difficult decision for Ankara (the reception of hundreds of thousands of immigrants caused logistical and legal problems), as early as 3 June Turkey opened up its borders. The Bulgarian Turks headed south in great numbers, which marked the onset of the so-called 'Great Excursion', and which continued throughout most of the summer of 1989. Zhivkov did not mince his words about his objective, and on 7 June made it clear that 200,000–300,000 people should emigrate, or else Bulgaria might share the lot of Cyprus "or something similar".<sup>[61]</sup>

Indescribable chaos reigned supreme along the Turkish border. The situation was hardly better in Turkey itself, where the authorities, despite substantial effort, were unable to provide adequate living standards.

Ankara gave up on 21 August, when it sealed the border and announced that the reception of more people was simply unfeasible.

A total of 360,000 Turks emigrated between 3 June and 21 August. In most cases, this was a trip to the unknown, as there was neither accommodation nor work to greet them. Still before Zhivkov was deposed, around 40,000 people returned to Bulgaria, and by the end of 1990 a total of around 150,000 participants of the 'Great Excursion' were repatriated.<sup>[62]</sup>

The mass exodus of the Turks had a negative impact on the image of the Zhivkov regime. Media, not only Turkish, covered human tragedies, showing people forced to leave their households and doomed to a life of uncertainty in a country which most of them knew nothing about. Heart-rending scenes took place on the Bulgarian-Turkish border, which Western journalists did not fail to notice. This whole question helped mobilise circles opposing Zhivkov, first and foremost the dissidents. On 1 August, the Perestroika Club filed a protest to the National Assembly concerning the persecution of the Turkish minority. It goes without saying, that formally it produced no effect, but still gave a signal that the intellectuals of the nation's capital did not support the policy of the regime.

After 21 August and the conclusion of the 'excursion' madness, it became clear that Zhivkov's days were numbered. The plotters from the highest executive levels took more intense action, although their operations remain little known until now. In fact, all that has seen the light of day are memories of people involved in the plot or members of the authorities with whom they had dealings. Only the final act of the plot, the actual deposition of Zhivkov, remains undisputable. All the rest relies on dubious and easily discreditable assumptions. One thing remains certain: it was the plotters rather than the dissidents (let alone opposition activists) who effected the changes of the political system in Bulgaria, and without their involvement, the downfall of the regime's leader would have been impossible. They were able to act more freely and had ample global connections, and thus found it easier to gain the support of both the Kremlin and Western politicians.

The plot was centered around two figures, Andrey Lukanov and Petar Mladenov. Since their biographies overlap from a certain moment and they had both known each other for many years, they were treated virtually like

brothers. Their alliance was stable until the deposition of Zhivkov, after which they took divergent paths.

Andrey Lukanov was born in 1938 in Moscow. His family had extensive communist traditions. His grandfather, Todor Lukanov, was a member of the executive of the pre-war BKP, and then emigrated to the Soviet Union, where he joined the local communist party. In 1946, he was assassinated during the Stalinist purges, yet his son, Karlo Lukanov, continued his father's traditions. In the 1930s, Karlo had taken part in the Spanish civil war and then moved to the USSR, where, among other things, he worked for a radio station broadcasting in Bulgarian. After the communists came to power in Bulgaria he was appointed head of the state radio, was deputy prime minister between 1952–1954 and 1956–1957, and in the period 1956–1962 minister of foreign affairs. Later, until 1966, he was the Bulgarian ambassador to Switzerland. He died in 1982 in Sofia.

As a representative of the third generation of leading communist activists, Andrey Lukanov had a successful career start. In 1963, he graduated from the prestigious Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), and on returning to Bulgaria, he worked in the foreign ministry. Between 1969 and 1972, he worked at Bulgaria's Permanent Representation to the UN in Geneva, in the years 1972–1976 was deputy minister of foreign trade, then subsequently was a deputy prime minister until 1986 and between 1986–1987 was the first deputy prime minister. In 1987, he became the minister of foreign trade and remained in this position until the demise of the regime. In the 1980s, he was a Politburo member and one of the major figures in Bulgaria.

Petar Mladenov began his career under more challenging circumstances. He was born in 1936 in the village of Urbabintsi (now Toshevtsi) in the Vidin province. His father was a communist partisan who was killed in 1944. Initially Mladenov studied in Sofia, but ultimately moved to Moscow, where he graduated from MGIMO in 1963. On returning to Bulgaria, until 1971 he worked in the Regional Committee of the party in Vidin, where he was elected the first secretary. In 1971, he was appointed minister of foreign affairs and remained in this position until 1989. In the 1980s, like Lukanov, he was a member of the Politburo and one of the major figures in the country.

Furthermore, Soviet ambassador Viktor Sharapov played a significant if undefined role in the events. The diplomat, connected with Yuri Andropov for the most part of his career, appeared as ambassador in Sofia in March 1988 and right from the start was extremely active. He met representatives of the Bulgarian elites, attended parties, and was a keen restaurant-goer; it was seen as worthwhile to converse with him about the current problems of Bulgaria, the Soviet Bloc and the world. His inspiration of certain activities (such as the establishment of dissident movements or the plot itself) is hard to ascertain, and so is his personal involvement, yet his role was no doubt significant. Apart from the three above-mentioned individuals, less influential people were also involved in the plot, who came to realise that further support of Zhivkov made no sense and even could pose a threat to their future careers. The group centered around the leader slowly dwindled, and ever-new activists distanced themselves from him, although formally there was unity among the authorities. The scale of influence of the group surrounding Lukanov and Mladenov became apparent, yet only at the time of Zhivkov's actual deposition, when it turned out that the outgoing leader was virtually alone.

Todor Zhivkov was an especially astute politician. Even though his regime was no less brutal as the one of Nicolae Ceaușescu,<sup>[63]</sup> the Bulgarian leader managed to retain a relatively positive image, both domestically and internationally. Down the line, analyses would often describe his astuteness, one of the 'traditional' Bulgarian national characteristics, which was supposed to protect him against complete dependence on the USSR and a loss of power. Walking the tightrope between the various groups of influence was, then, the ultimate manifestation of this characteristic.

It is hard to pinpoint the time when the centre of the plot against the Bulgarian leader emerged. It is likely that Lukanov, Mladenov, and others had negotiated with Moscow long before the appearance on the political stage of Gorbachev and his ideas. In fact, throughout his exceptionally long period in power, Zhivkov tried to balance off his strict allegiance to the USSR and attempted to make use of this situation for his own gains. Consequently, he tolerated the existence of various factions in the leadership and astutely played the game. The vast majority of Soviet leaders acted in precisely this way; in trying to retain complete control over Bulgaria, they had to use

various communications channels and implementation methods of their decisions. It is possible that the circles of Lukanov and Mladenov had also been used for this purpose earlier on.

One way or another, Gorbachev's rise to power provided a new impetus for the various groups. Zhivkov, thanks to some of the security apparatus faithful to him was most likely aware of the plotters' actions, yet found it hard to confront them openly. Neither Lukanov nor Mladenov were marginalised. In fact, both formally supported Zhivkov's line, and were outspoken critics of the OKEZR, and furthermore demanded reprisals against its members.

The aforementioned arrival in March 1988 in Sofia of Sharapov provided another impetus for the plotters. The transformations taking place in other communist states had their impact as well. In May 1988, Janos Kádár, who, like Zhivkov, came to power in 1956, had to step down as communist party leader in Hungary. This meant that changes were possible even at the highest levels of power and that the fate of the Bulgarian leader was by no means secure. We do not know to date the extent of the interrelations between the circles of Soviet representatives in Bulgaria, plotters and dissidents. The two first groups were no doubt in constant touch. The end of summer and the autumn of 1989 mark the end of the process of Todor Zhivkov's ousting.

## The Toppling of Zhivkov

The Turks dealt the first blow to Zhivkov by sealing their borders, thereby demonstrating the total bankruptcy of the policy of the preceding few years. The plotters became active soon afterwards. Of importance here was the appointment of Tadeusz Mazowiecki as Poland's prime minister; irreversible changes in the global communist system became evident. In late August, at least according to eyewitness accounts, the leadership elites openly spoke of a coup that would depose Zhivkov. It is most probable that the leader came to realise that his end was drawing near. This may be evidenced by a letter dated 3 September (provided it is genuine) written by Zhivkov to the deputy minister of the interior, Grigor Shopov, notifying the addressee of the actions of Lukanov and Mladenov and of the Soviet

embassy.<sup>[64]</sup> As of September, Zhivkov was increasingly isolated on the international stage. Only the plotters acted as representatives of Bulgaria, mainly Mladenov, who, for example, reportedly talked with US Secretary of State James Baker on 30 September, assuring him that the Turkish question would soon be resolved in the spirit of respect for international law (which was in fact at variance with the official line). There were more examples of this kind and they related not only to Western diplomats; Moscow, too, started to bypass Zhivkov. This did not mean, however, as in the case of neighbouring Romania, that Bulgaria was isolated internationally, but that Zhivkov was no longer seen as an interlocutor and decision maker.

The fate of the Bulgarian leader was sealed and his deposition was merely a technical process. The operation took place in late October and early November 1989, and was masterminded jointly by the dissidents and plotters. In September, the members of Podkrepa and other associations detained back in May of that year, were released from prison, and immediately took action. Nevertheless, their role should not be overestimated. All organisations, including those forming the opposition, grouped merely a few hundred active people in a country of eight million. Some were well known, although this did not necessarily contribute to the popularity of their ideas.

Dissident organisations, both collaborating and competing with one another, had been staging a major open-air event in Sofia since early autumn. The authorities, or rather the dwindling Zhivkov group, were unable to counter this initiative. This event, known as the 'Ecoforum' took place in Sofia between 16 October and 3 November 1989.<sup>[65]</sup> The most significant events took place in the South Park (*Yuzhen Park*) near the city centre. Theoretically, the Ecoforum was dedicated to the condition of the natural environment in Bulgaria, but in practice, this forum promoted all kinds of ideas, mainly pages taken from the books of perestroika and glasnost. Thanks to extensive coverage by mostly foreign media (Rumiana Uzunova, a journalist of the Bulgarian section of Radio Free Europe, played a major role here<sup>[66]</sup>), the Ecoforum attracted more people, and as a result, for a few weeks Sofia literally lived through the problems raised by the organisers.

Ecoglasnost was the most important entity, yet the many events accompanying the Ecoforum were held by practically all dissident and opposition associations. Even a delegation of the Septemvri Group arrived in the capital,

but the journalists isolated them and therefore their visit went by virtually unnoticed. The Ecoforum included two major events, which led to the growth of popularity of some figures, in particular of Aleksandar Karakachanov.

On 26 October, Ecoglasnost activists collected signatures under an environmental petition near the Crystal restaurant located in downtown Sofia on Tsar Osvoboditel Boulevard. Foreign journalists were also present. At one moment, special forces troops appeared on the square and ruthlessly dispersed the people gathered there, which was duly documented by the journalists present. This was probably a provocation, meant to discredit Zhivkov. The commanding officer of the riot forces committed suicide after the collapse of the regime; so did his wife. Consequently, we will probably never know who ordered the special forces to take action, and why.

Another major event was a rally held at the conclusion of the Ecoforum. It was attended by over 5,000 people, which proved that the few-weeks' long event fulfilled its role and that some Bulgarians became genuinely involved. Under such circumstances, it was easy to stage a formal deposition of Zhivkov.

The plotters managed to stage their final action during the Ecoforum. A Politburo meeting took place on 24 October. It was not attended by Petar Mladenov, who first feigned illness but still that day managed to dispatch an open letter to the party leaders. In this document, he was severely critical of Zhivkov, accusing him of leading the country to the brink of economic collapse and international isolation, "even from the Soviet Union".<sup>[67]</sup> He simultaneously announced his resignation as minister of foreign affairs and member of the communist party Central Committee and the Politburo. Theoretically, Mladenov's letter was an in-house document, yet its contents, or at least the main issues, were leaked to the general public. Zhivkov played for time: he would not accept Mladenov's resignation, and put off the recognition of his letter by the Politburo. The outgoing leader could not possibly win more time, however, and only postponed his political execution for a few more days. It cannot be ruled out that he therefore thwarted some plans of the plotters, who probably wanted to dethrone him before the end of the Ecoforum (which would have benefited their image), but in no way was he able to forestall the inevitable changes.

On 25 October, Lukanov departed for Moscow and the following day was joined by Sharapov. Meetings with representatives of the Soviet leadership probably addressed the division of functions in the Bulgarian authorities to come. On 26 October, Zhivkov announced his position to the other Politburo members, accusing Mladenov of setting up a faction. Two other plotters stood up for the minister of foreign affairs: minister of national defence Dobri Dzhurov and prime minister Georgi Atanasov. Zhivkov therefore decided to resort to run-of-the-mill party members and convened a plenum of the Central Committee for 10 November.

The following two weeks saw tempestuous talks between Zhivkov and different members of the party leadership. The aging leader would not part with his position, but it turned out that he was supported by next to no one. Sharapov himself tried a few times to persuade Zhivkov to resign. On 7 November, the anniversary of the bolshevik revolution in Russia, a delegation of the top leadership traditionally laid flowers at the Lenin Monument, yet Zhivkov was absent as he was engaged in discussions with Sharapov. A photo without Zhivkov was published the following day by all the newspapers and this was a sign that major changes had taken place.

The Politburo convened on 9 November, the day of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Before the meeting, Zhivkov talked with a few of the most influential activists, including Atanasov, who advised him to step down. The last meeting took place at 4.30 p.m. According to witness accounts, Zhivkov was to announce at the time that he was on the brink of tending his resignation. The Politburo session began at 5 p.m. It was not attended by Grisha Filipov, at that time abroad, but who returned to Sofia in the evening. Prime minister Atanasov tabled the motion to depose Zhivkov as the BKP secretary general. There was no unanimity in the vote, but proponents of the change won the majority, thus concluding an era that had begun some 33 years previously. Atanasov introduced the candidacy of Petar Mladenov as the new secretary general, which was unanimously approved. After the meeting closed, Sharapov met with Zhivkov as the losing party, sealing the decision, while Mladenov called Gorbachev, who congratulated him.

Interestingly, the United States embassy had no knowledge of these events. Sol Polansky, US ambassador in Sofia at the time, sent a cable in the late evening of 9 November, notifying headquarters that he did not

expect any major changes during the 10 November plenum. “No one is ready to challenge Zhivkov,” Polansky observed. Furthermore, the US ambassador would not admit his mistake later on. Over ten days after the deposition of Zhivkov, the diplomat informed that “the reasons for the deposition of Todor Zhivkov continue to puzzle us.”<sup>[68]</sup>

The ‘puzzle’ Polansky was trying to grapple with what was announced to the general public on the following day after the vote in the Politburo. The Central Committee plenum took place on 10 November. As usual, it confined itself to approving earlier decisions. Zhivkov was deposed as the secretary general of the BKP and Mladenov was elected to succeed him. Zhivkov therefore lost power as the result of a coup.

## Early Dismantling of Totalitarianism

Zhivkov’s ousting, unlike that of Ceaușescu, did not mark the end of communism in Bulgaria. Formally, it was only a change in the position of the leader of the still ruling party. To a certain extent, Zhivkov’s predecessor Valko Chervenkov had departed under similar circumstances.

In 1989, however, the situation was dramatically different to the one in 1956. Mladenov and his staff were greatly in favour of perestroika, and Bulgaria lagged behind other countries in this respect. Furthermore, the international situation had an impact: Poland had a government constructed on the basis of agreements with the opposition, the Hungarian communist party had changed its name, the Berlin Wall fell a day before the toppling of Zhivkov, and on 17 November, a rally was held in Prague which ushered in the fast decomposition of the communist system. All of the events had their bearing on the developments in Bulgaria.

Under Mladenov, the party began the dismantling of the communist system. It is hard to say whether this was a planned operation and what decisions were taken on an ongoing basis: this is, in reality, immaterial, however. At one moment, hard to ascertain, the scale of transformations surpassed the assumptions of perestroika and the system began to drift, as in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, toward a post-communist democracy.

The first stage of dismantling totalitarianism ended in June 1990, when a relatively free general election was announced.<sup>[69]</sup> This, in fact, concludes the depiction of the collapse of communism in Bulgaria, although this is merely an arbitrary assumption. Between 10 November 1989 and 17 June 1990 (the second round of elections) two major events occurred: the emergence of the first powerful opposition party and the Round Table talks, leading the decision to hold elections, how they should be executed, and on the further shape of the political system.

Mladenov's election as secretary general of the party was favourably received by the public and by the political elites in the East and the West. Everyone expected liberalisation and democratisation, which did happen in the event, yet the much-needed economic reforms, which people had hoped for, failed to materialise. The first signal of liberalisation was a huge rally held on 18 November 1989 at the Orthodox St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia. It was attended by around 100,000 people, that is to say 20 times more than a similar rally which had concluded the Ecoforum. The authorities meant this to be a token of support for the new regime, but it descended into chaos. Apart from Mladenov's people, its organisation involved virtually all the dissident and opposition circles (Minev appeared at the rally but was not allowed to speak). As people started to whistle during a speech made by Rumen Vodenicharov, which included demands for the reinstatement of Turkish names, the organisers dropped this ultimatum from the final declaration. However, the dissidents did not give up their fight for national minority rights, which let the communists easily portray them as representatives of the Turks and other nationalities, which had a negative reception in a society fed for decades on nationalist propaganda.

After 18 November, a wave of mass rallies spread across the country. Citizens were greatly involved politically, and as a result, many parties were created. Some reactivated pre-communist structures, such as the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union-'Nikola Petkov' (*Blgarski Zemedelski Narodn Sayuz* – BZNS-NP), named after one of the major party leaders who had been sentenced and executed by the communists.<sup>[70]</sup> Since the original BZNS mostly included people connected with the regime and was a front for BKP, the activists who led to the reactivation of the group decided to add the Nikola Petkov moniker to the party name. Theoretically, BZNS-Petkov

was reactivated back in early 1989 (a few former activists had gathered and applied to prime minister Atanasov to rehabilitate Petkov), but it was only the November rallies that provided a significant impetus for its development. BZNS-Petkov grew to include a few hundred people and began to pressure the authorities to lift the ban on the party's activity, which finally happened on 15 January 1990. At the same time Nikola Petkov was rehabilitated. A conference of BZNS-Petkov took place on 3 February in Sofia and was attended by as many as over 2,000 people.

Intense activities, which aimed to unite a few dissident organisations into one strong group, had been taking place since early December 1989. At the same time the Perestroika Club called for immediate elections to parliament, which would then carry out political and economic reforms through the adoption of a new constitution. In theory, such a solution was justified, yet in practice, it would have retained the BKP in power at least until the first elections after the adoption of the constitution.

The emerging party was joined by over ten organisations. The most influential here was the Perestroika Club (which, after Zhivkov's deposition, changed its name to the Club of Glasnost and Democracy but remained known commonly as the Perestroika Club) and Ecoglasnost. Others included the NDZPC (led by Vodenicharov), BZNS-Petkov, Podkrepa, and a few smaller groups. Thus, on 7 December, the Union of Democratic Forces (*Sayuz na Demokratichnite Sili* – SDS), the first really powerful opposition party, was created at the Institute of Philosophy of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.<sup>[71]</sup> Its power was relative, however: compared to the communists, it was less numerous and did not enjoy extensive social support, yet relative to earlier organisations it was very strong.

Activists of the Perestroika Club played leading roles in the SDS. Zhelev became the party leader with Simeonov as deputy. Beron from Ecoglasnost was elected the Union's secretary. The three individuals, at least for a time, took the major decisions. Vodenicharov, who became the party spokesman, played a significant role, too. Activists of other organisations received lesser positions. As is evident, the first leadership of the SDS was a far cry from anti-communist attitudes. Zhelev was the most consistent in the group yet he was no radical, either. A large percentage of SDS activists were members of the still existing BKP, or were DS agents, both former and

contemporary. This caused a problem of dual loyalty of some people. In years to come, the friends of that time repeatedly accused one another of treason or being agents, thus wishing to shed the blame for the little successful onset of SDS. Some, who quickly noticed the problem of the programme's discrepancy between the SDS and BKP, decided to return to their former party. The most notable example was Chavdar Kiuranov, who first opposed the participation of the Perestroika Club in the Union, and then left that milieu to return to the party led by Mladenov.

The SDS, however, was a very dynamic structure, and before long, people with other views began to have their say in it. For the first few months, right up until the June 1990 election, it was Zhelev, Simeonov, Beron, and to a certain extent Vodenicharov and Trenchev who decided on the party's direction.

The first major SDS project was the organisation of a rally in front of the parliament building on 14 December. Approximately 50,000 protesters demanded the removal from the constitution of the provision on the leading role of the communist party, although other, more radical slogans such as 'Down with BKP!' were also heard. The turnout during the demonstration was half that of the 18 November protest, but the rally demonstrated the strength of the opposition. During the event, Petar Mladenov is said to have observed: "The tanks had better come!", which was filmed by Evgeni Mikhailov connected with the SDS.<sup>[72]</sup> At that time these words did not trigger any reaction, but in the summer of 1990 they contributed to the deposition of Mladenov.

Another step was the establishment of a newspaper connected with the SDS. The first issue of the *Democracy (Demokratsiia)* daily came out on 12 February 1990, with Jordan Vasilev as the editor-in-chief. *Democracy* evolved similarly to the SDS in so far as it was initially a cautious newspaper supporting perestroika, yet later it quickly radicalised.

Under a new secretary general, the communist party slowly liberalised the system and removed Zhivkov's people. The Central Committee plenum took place on 11–13 December; the recently deposed leader and his closest aides were removed from the party. A draft amendment of the constitution was adopted and the provision of the leading role of the party was struck out; the following day this was demanded by the protesters gathered by the SDS.

Finally, the constitution was amended on 15 January 1990. This was a move in favour of the opposition, which received it with understanding, and for a few weeks, negotiations on the further transformations of the system ensued. No bigger rallies took place at that time, since the SDS was focused on talks with the communists.

In the meantime, Nicolae Ceaușescu met his tragic end in neighbouring Romania, with the events being closely monitored in Bulgaria. The Romanian TV signal was broadcast live for three days, with interpretation into Bulgarian undertaken by Vladimir Bereanu, a Romanian journalist who had married a Bulgarian and had moved to Sofia. Society and the political elites sought analogies and differences in the situation of both countries. The situation in Romania probably impacted the position of both the authorities and the opposition; talks which were geared towards the hammering out of an agreement of both camps, and a compromise such as the one seen in Poland, sped up after the collapse of Ceaușescu. In Bulgaria there was technically no probability of the Romanian scenario repeating itself, yet the psychological effect of the shootings in Bucharest and other cities was tremendous.

Late 1989 saw the Turkish minority stage a number of protests. The demands put forth by the demonstrators concerned the return of Turkish names and a reversal of the effects of the 'Revival Process' and the 'Great Excursion'. Reacting to those signals, the Bulgarian nationalists held anti-Turkish counter-rallies. The Union for Rights and Freedoms was set up on 4 January 1990 (*Dvizheniye za prava i svobody* – DPS, Turkish: *Hak ve Özgürlükler Hareketi*), led by Ahmed Doğan, famous for his actions in the 1980s. The nationalists, who protested against the Turkish demands, strengthened the DPS as they consolidated this specific community, in turn dealing a blow to the SDS, who also fought to settle old scores with Zhivkov's minorities policy.

In the late 1989 and early 1990, the BKP and SDS elites agreed on the organisation of a Round Table, which was supposed to forge the foundations of the new system. In the wake of transformations taking place throughout the entire Soviet camp, the Bulgarian communists discarded their dreams of rebuilding the system and were increasingly prone to democratising the country. It is, however, important to stress that from mid-November

1989 until February 1990 more than fifty different organizations were established, the majority of them were not particularly important, and were rather short-lived, but we can say that during these months democracy erupted in Bulgaria.<sup>[73]</sup>

Official talks in preparation of the Round Table began on 3 January, whereas the last session took place on 15 May.<sup>[74]</sup> The meetings were attended by a total of 151 people from the BKP, SDS as well as other organisations and political parties. During the Round Table sessions, the BKP changed its name to the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), which happened on 3 April by means of a referendum among party members. Earlier, during the congress, which took place on 30 January-2 February, the party leader was changed to Aleksandar Lilov, who started to play an ever-greater role after the ousting of Zhivkov.

Todor Zhivkov and a few of his close aides were arrested on 18 January on charges of embezzling money obtained through credits in the late 1980s.

The somewhat cosmetic changes went hand in hand with certain systemic reforms and the recomposition of the government. On 5 February, prime minister Atanasov was removed and succeeded by Andrey Lukanov. On 3 April, Parliament voted in favour of amendments to the constitution: it was now possible to set up democratic political parties and to hold free elections. Mladenov, who, since 17 November 1989, had presided over the State Council (Zhivkov's earlier position), became Bulgaria's President on 3 April 1990.

As is evident, the main democratisation reforms were led not so much by the participants of the Round Table talks but by communists, and the talks were in fact meant to legitimise the communist-led reforms. The Round Table talks helped hammer out such issues as election regulations, the way the public media were supposed to function, etc. The Bulgarian Round Table was less significant than the one in Poland, however. The SDS did not need it to gain legitimacy, or even to gain media exposure – this role may have been played by the mass demonstrations. The Union's leaders wished to postpone the election date as they correctly suspected that time was running out for the communists. BSP representatives pressed for holding the election as soon as possible, raising the argument for the need for the general public to legitimise the factual state. Ultimately, elections were scheduled to be held on 10 and 17 June 1990.

Following the conclusion of the Round Table talks, the political parties embarked on their electoral campaigns. Despite calls for peace and respect for the rule of law, acts of violence did occur, triggering protests from opposition circles. Despite the above reservations, which were fully justified, one can say that the June elections marked the end of the communist era in Bulgaria. This was by far the most democratic vote after the Second World War and in practice since the 1930s. For this reason, it is hard to define the time after the elections, despite the victory of former communists, as communism.<sup>[75]</sup> We should, however, keep in mind that society had been deprived of free elections for a couple of decades and the opposition forces were not fully prepared to take part in the electoral campaign, which, according to some analysts, might have influenced the final result.<sup>[76]</sup>

With a huge turnout of 90 per cent, the BSP won 57 per cent of the ballot, and was rewarded with 211 seats in a 400-strong parliament. The SDS won 36 per cent of votes, gaining 144 seats, while the DPS won 23 seats, and BZNS (communist regime-linked, not the BZNS-Petkov) 16 seats.<sup>[77]</sup>

The post-communists won a clear victory, although compared to neighbouring Romania, where Ion Iliescu won over 80 per cent of votes, it was not all that spectacular.

On 11 June, following the first round of elections, demonstrations erupted in Sofia against election rigging. The band Shturtsite encouraged protests with their best-known protest-song, written especially for this occasion. The song "I am just a man", starting with the words "I am no communist and will never be one" became the anthem of the rebellious youth, with the band's leader Kiril Marichkov becoming elected to Parliament on the SDS list. On 14 June, Bulgarian television screened a film by Evgeni Mikhailov dating from 14 December 1989, where Mladenov spoke about the tanks. This gave rise to a huge scandal, which probably had its impact on the second round of the general election. Growing pressure made Mladenov tender his resignation as president on 6 July. On 1 August, the parliament elected Zhelyu Zhelev as president, with the support of a large part of the BSP.<sup>[78]</sup>

One of the most important topics, which was also discussed fiercely during the Round Table talks, was the reform of the national economy.<sup>[79]</sup> It was obvious that communism or state socialism, however one named it, could not prevail and some changes were absolutely necessary. Generally, both sides

(the BSP and the SDS) agreed on “shock therapy”, but the implementation of that was very problematic. The first attempts, made by the BSP government of Dimitar Popov, were blocked by a wave of strikes and protests. A new effort was made by the SDS and the right-wing government of Filip Dimitrov; as trade union leader said, it was the real beginning of the reforms.<sup>[80]</sup> Dimitrov managed to implement land reforms which gave the land back to peasants, but the overall outcomes of these reforms were disputable. Real property in cities was also privatized, as well as many state owned companies. However, the Dimitrov government fell rather quickly and his successors slowed down the reforms. Zhan Videnov, prime minister from 1995 to 1997, introduced a programme of mass privatisation. The implementation of that program, along with other economic moves, led to a crisis as mass protests erupted and the resignation of Videnov soon followed.

The next attempt at economic reform was made by Ivan Kostov, the prime minister between 1997 and 2001.<sup>[81]</sup> Kostov stated clearly that his aim was to speed up the integration of Bulgaria with European structures; he also introduced a series of free-market reforms and decided to privatise many state-owned companies. These moves were marked with corruption scandals, but helped to meet EU market standards.

When Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, it was, together with Romania, one of the poorest and most corrupt countries in the Union. After a decade of turmoil and restructuring, in the first years of the new millennium Bulgaria had good GDP growth, but was still relatively poor. The country was seriously affected by the global economic crisis, and saw falls in GDP in 2009 and 2010, but then recovered and currently is rather stable.

One of the main problems the Bulgarian economy faces is the massive emigration of Bulgarian citizens and the extremely low fertility rate: the population fell from almost 9 million in 1990 to approximately 7 million by 2016.

## In Search of the End of Communism

When did communism in Bulgaria end? The answer to this question is by no means obvious. In this respect, the Germans have the date of 9 November 1989, the Czechs 17 November, and the Romanians 22 December. The above

dates denote the breakthrough moments in history, even if this is a rather mythologised image of the world. In Poland, for example, it is possible to indicate a number of dates: the onset of the Round Table talks, the partially-free elections of 4 June 1989, the appointment of the Tadeusz Mazowiecki government, or the 1990 presidential elections. Irrespective of the contentions about the official date of the collapse of communism, the other countries of the Soviet Bloc were able to refer to certain symbolic and significant events.<sup>[82]</sup>

Bulgaria does not have this 'luxury'. Debates on this issue, if held at all, usually associate the end of communism with the collapse of Zhivkov, the establishment of the SDS, the June 1990 election, Zhelev becoming president (the first time an opposition figure gains power), the adoption of the constitution in July 1991 (the most important moment from a legal perspective), the formation of the Filip Dimitrov government (1991–1992) and its failed attempts to break free of the communist legacy, the collapse of the Zhan Videnov government in 1996 and the taking-over of power by the SDS, and finally the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union on 1 January 2007.

Each of the above dates marks some major event in Bulgarian history. Still, can we really associate them with the end of communism? In talking with Bulgarians, one realises that only two proposed answers are logically justified. One is that there never was any communism in Bulgaria. The other is that communism in Bulgaria never ended, and it is still ongoing. The proponents of the first assumption (such as, for example, professor Iskra Baeva, a historian from the St Kliment Ohridsky University in Sofia) argue that communism as an ideological system never appeared in Bulgaria. To them, Georgi Dimitrov was a true communist, yet what was implemented by Moscow was something totally different and had little to do with the underpinnings of communism. Baeva called her flagship book (written in collaboration with professor Evgeniya Kalinova) *The Bulgarian Transitions: 1939–2005*,<sup>[83]</sup> stressing that the political system in Bulgaria is unstable and in a constant state of flux. Another edition of the book came out in 2011 and additionally addressed the period 2005–2010. The start of the dictatorship of the communist party, Chervenkov's rule followed by Zhivkov, and the latter's fall and later post-communist transformations did not create

any new values in this view, which corresponds in a way with the aforementioned idea of striving towards communism, widely promoted among society. A more classical approach, stating that transition in Bulgaria started more or less in 1989, was presented in a book edited by Ivaylo Znepolski, Koprinka Chervenкова and Alexander Kiossev.<sup>[84]</sup>

From the logical point of view, there is nothing wrong with the above argumentation. If there was no communism in Bulgaria, we cannot try and pin down its end. In this way, however, we miss the radical character of the changes, which took place slowly but steadily during the two decades between 1989 and 2009.

The opposing view, claiming that communism has never ended, is rather widespread among the Bulgarian intelligentsia and the general public, even though it is hard to indicate which group subscribes to it in full. The proponents of this thesis raise a number of significant arguments, such as the presence of many former DS officers and agents in key areas of public life. The lists of agents, which have been published for some time now on the Internet, demonstrate that the presence of former agents in state institutions is far higher in Bulgaria than in the other countries of the region. Those convinced of the continued presence of the communist system maintain that former communists and their children continue to rule in Bulgaria. This line of thinking is not completely true, either, although some of the issues raised are credible. If communism has indeed never ended, why do we pay attention to 1989? Do things really look the same in 2019 as, say, in 1980?

The absence of an unequivocal conclusion to communism has persisted in Bulgaria to date. Twenty years after the dismantling of the totalitarian regime, there was no date to celebrate. A small event of an inner circle of people was held on 3 November 2008 to commemorate the establishment of the Perestroika Club. A seminar dedicated to this event and the fall of communism was held on 19 January 2009, an anniversary of the meeting between the dissidents and Mitterrand. It attracted only slightly more interest on the part of the media, possibly because of the attendance of representatives of the French embassy. Other dates have not sparked excitement, either. The celebrations are attended virtually by those who were active in 1989 and earlier, in essence just a handful of politicians (or former

politicians), journalists, and artists. Things looked only a bit different in 2014, when the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the transformations was celebrated. A number of celebrations and scholarly conferences dedicated to the anniversary were held under the auspices of President Rosen Plevneliev, but social reception was negligible. The collapse of communism does not interest the media, intellectuals, and run-of-the-mill citizens. Bulgaria focuses on the here and now, on the economic and social problems related to EU integration, etc. Communism seems to be a thing of the past, as are Nikopolis,<sup>[85]</sup> San Stefano,<sup>[86]</sup> the Berlin congress,<sup>[87]</sup> and the world wars. At least this is the impression one has when reading the Bulgarian press, listening to the radio, or watching television. A poll conducted for the purpose of a commission dealing with access to DS and military services files showed, however, that Bulgarian society is more interested in these topics than might be implied by ongoing media coverage. For example, as many as 58 per cent of respondents answered negatively to the question if former state security agents should have access to positions in state administration.<sup>[88]</sup> The results of the survey, however, do not change the general perception.

When one looks at Bulgaria from the position of a foreigner, one might be tempted to concur with the opinion of the émigré writer Iliya Troyanov: “[T]here is evidently a link between reassessing the past, learning from the past, putting the past to rest, and building a new future. In Bulgaria, the first step hasn’t started, we are still living the past because in all levels of society you have an elite, which has grown out of the old nomenclature, which now is a new oligarchy and mafia.”<sup>[89]</sup>

Troyanov is right. The totalitarian regime was not adequately taken to justice and the people who sustained it were not held accountable (apart from Zhivkov and a few of his closest aides) for their actions. While a similar situation took place in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in Bulgaria the scale is relatively greater. Since the anti-communist opposition did not play any role in the dismantling of communism, its representatives, at least until the time of Filip Dimitrov, did not assume major positions in post-communist Bulgaria. A similar situation occurred on the other levels of hierarchy, also in areas not related to politics. Add to this the dire poverty, which was all too visible throughout the 1990s. This triggered mass emigration to the West, especially among young people.

According to various estimates, around 1–1.5 million Bulgarian citizens found temporary or permanent employment abroad, often working illegally in menial jobs.

The country's economic standing improved greatly in the following decade, but at the same time, thanks to European integration, new possibilities of legal emigration emerged and thus the exodus of the Bulgarians was not curtailed.

The situation of not settling old scores with communism, or even a more profound reflection on the essence and legacy of the system, were not the most important causes of this state of affairs, yet no doubt had a very negative impact on the country's political and social life. Add to this the loss of significance of the Orthodox Church. Esoterism, charlatanry, and thoughtless superstition fuelled by new-age ideas are far more conspicuous in Bulgaria than in the other countries of the region, a direct legacy of the communist era.<sup>[90]</sup>

Over the two decades after the collapse of Todor Zhivkov, a few attempts to break free from the communist past were taken. For the first ten years or so, such initiatives were launched by groups originating with the SDS, joined later, first of all as to the vetting law, by some factions of BSP, which in effect resulted in one of the more bizarre vetting laws across Central and Eastern Europe.

Issues dealt with immediately, or with relative haste in other countries of the region, dragged on for years in Bulgaria. The removal of the communist symbols took an immeasurably long time. While in neighbouring Romania on the day of ousting Ceaușescu, national flags with the communist emblem cut out appeared on streets, in Bulgaria this question was raised only after the June 1990 elections. The rallies taking place at that time demanded the removal of red stars and other totalitarian symbols from state institutions and other places. The authorities, at that time controlled by the BSP, were extremely reluctant to such demands, and decided on limited concessions only under the pressure of protesters; for instance in July, the corpse of Georgi Dimitrov was removed from his mausoleum. Only on 15 November 1990 was the state's official name changed: the communist Bulgarian People's Republic was replaced by the more democratic Republic of Bulgaria.

The change, extremely important from an ideological perspective, took place much later than similar reforms in other countries of the region.

The adoption of the 12 July 1991 Constitution was a democratic milestone. The new law brought an end to a temporary situation taking place in Bulgaria since the deposition of Zhivkov, and from the legal perspective, it marked the end of the communist era. In fact, this reform took place in Bulgaria earlier than in some other countries (such as in Poland, for instance, where the so-called 'small constitution' went into effect in 1992, while a completely new constitution was adopted only in 1997; in Romania a democratic constitution was adopted in November 1991). According to the law of December 2006 on access to the archives of the communist secret police, communism in Bulgaria finished precisely at the moment when the new constitution entered into force.

Decommunisation gained momentum when Filip Dimitrov's government came into being in November 1991. The politician, who for a time cooperated with Beron, later became independent of him and grew decisively anti-communist. During his term, the SDS-backed *Democracy* daily published lists of agents and called for justice to be meted out on people connected with the BKP and state security apparatus. However, Dimitrov proved too weak in confrontation with the post-communists, and his aggressive policy earned him enemies, too many to withstand, and all the more so in the face of the country's economic downturn. The Dimitrov government collapsed in the last days of 1992, and the socialists took over power for the following four years.

During the post-communist government, the topic of settling scores with the past was never raised by the authorities, although was put to the fore by the opposition centred around the SDS, whose politicians demanded the vetting of public servants and other people in charge of the state. The Bulgarian approach to vetting differs a bit from the Polish method, coming close to the Czech understanding of the term. It means not only the declassifying of former agents, but also a ban on their holding of responsible positions (at least for a specified time). This was the form of vetting law that was part of the SDS's political agenda.

The post-communists' economic policy brought about a true disaster in 1996. Mass protests known as 'Videnov's winter' were staged at the end

of the year. Zhan Videnov, the then prime minister, was made to step down and SDS took over power.<sup>[91]</sup> The zeal of the anti-communist politicians of the Union quickly subsided, even if in some areas more radical steps were taken than during the Filip Dimitrov government. One of these was a decision to get rid of the Georgi Dimitrov Mausoleum. This was done on 21–27 August 1999, following the orders of the minister of regional development Evgeni Bakardzhiev, who was accused of an assault on the national tradition, yet symbolically this was a very important decision. The removal of the mausoleum of the main Bulgarian representative of the criminal totalitarianism from the city centre marked the end of an era.

Moreover, the SDS government tried to introduce vetting in a number of ways and morally assess the communist past. However, all these initiatives were incomplete, inconsistent and ill-advised. One was a parliamentary resolution of 5 May 2000 on recognising the communist regime in Bulgaria as ‘criminal’. According to the resolution, the communist regime concluded on 10 November 1989 with the deposition of Zhivkov, rather than after the adoption of the 1991 constitution. The document is blunt and calls, for example, the communist party a ‘criminal organisation’. The SDS did not secure this issue sufficient coverage, and the resolution went unnoticed, its impact virtually non-existent.

A law was adopted in 1997 on the access to communist secret police files and a commission was set up, led by Bogomil Bonev. Its activity revealed that 23 politicians had been security agents in the past. In 2001, the work of the commission was discontinued and two other commissions were set up: a permanent one led by Metodi Andreev, and a temporary one led by Georgi Ananov. They vetted the candidates for state offices yet their activities did not result in the banning of former agents from holding these offices. After the following election, taking place soon afterwards, the SDS was no longer in power and the former tsar, Simeon Borisov Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (a local version of the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha name), became the prime minister.<sup>[92]</sup> His party was uninterested in vetting even though the opposition politicians raised the issue on numerous occasions.

The law on access to the files of communist secret police was adopted only during the next parliamentary term. Interestingly, the post-communists then held a parliamentary majority. The law of 19 December

2006, amended a few times subsequently, set up a body with a lengthy and precise name: The Commission for Declassifying Documents and Announcing the Membership of the Citizens of Bulgaria in State Security and in the Intelligence Service of the Bulgarian People's Army. Commonly referred to simply as the Commission, as the name implies it is not meant to carry out the vetting procedure the Bulgarian way, but solely to provide information on citizens' background as agents.

The Commission, set up on 5 April 2007, is the first fully professional body entrusted with access to the DS archives. Its members (consisting of a chairperson – the first person to hold the position was Evtim Kostadinov – and eight members) are appointed by Parliament, *ergo* based on a political nomination, but in a rather balanced representation. Its main task is the publication of lists of former agents employed in various state and public institutions. They are proclaimed in the form of Decisions (*Resheniye*), concerning employees of particular institutions born prior to 16 July 1973. By the end of 2016, the Commission issued more than 800 Decisions, revealing hundreds of DS agents or agents of military intelligence. The lists of agents are published in the form of bulletins; they are also available at the Commission's website,<sup>[93]</sup> which contains relevant statutes and other relevant information. Lists of agents are made available exclusively for informational purposes, as the persons entered there do not assume any political liability.

The documents make plain not only the magnitude of DS infiltration under communism, but also the omnipresence of former agents in contemporary administration. Despite an absence of any political sanctions for people related to the DS, the Commission contributes to revealing a substantial truth of the nature of the communist and post-communist system in Bulgaria.

Historians dealing with the communist era in Bulgaria face graver problems than do their colleagues in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Within the first few years after the collapse of communism, the only available source of these memories were the memoirs of the immediate participants, kicking off with high party and state officials.

All kinds of books were published based on interviews with DS officers and party officials, for example, yet dissidents published their memoirs, too.

It is commonly known that such sources have limited credibility, as those connected with the secret services often purposely misinform readers, while former opposition activists and dissidents tend to exaggerate their contribution and omit many of their friends, who, by that time, may have become their ideological opponents.

One of the most valuable memoirs from the first half of the 1990s is *The First Floor* by Kostadin Chakarov,<sup>[94]</sup> Zhivkov's aide. The book has been used by virtually all the scholars of the time.

The first academic studies and critical texts emerged only in the latter half of the 1990s. This was largely thanks to the Washington-based Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, which, within the Cold War International History Project, began undertaking research on the communist systems of Central and Eastern Europe. One of the aspects of the project was to gather a group of historians examining communism in Bulgaria; worthy of mention here are professors Kostadin Grozev and Jordan Baev, whose texts contributed tremendously to the comprehension of the character of the governmental system in Bulgaria. Another group is centred around Iskra Baeva and Evgenia Kalinova, who have published many precious texts, both separately and in collaboration with each other.

Another noteworthy project is the Institute for Studies of the Recent Past (*Institut za izslevane na blizkoto minaloto*).<sup>[95]</sup> Established in 2005 and headed by Professor Ivailo Znepolski, the Institute not only publishes historical texts (many excellent academic books have been published under his auspices), but also collects testimonies of the witnesses of the time and holds many events, often in collaboration with cultural and educational institutions.

The communist era, in many aspects, is present in contemporary Bulgarian pop culture. There are two main currents here. Nostalgia is by far the dominant sentiment. For decades following the collapse of communism, the propaganda series *Every Kilometre*, originally from the late 1960s and early 1970s, enjoyed stable popularity.<sup>[96]</sup> The series recounts the adventures of communist partisans fighting the fascist regime in the last years of the Second World War. The popularity of the series was reflected in political life. One of the leading actors, Stefan Danailov, was appointed minister of culture in 2005, whilst the most recognisable song of the series, *A Bulgarian Rose*, became the BSP's anthem. The song's performer, Pasha Hristova, has

remained one of the best-known singers to date, although more than four decades have elapsed since her tragic death in a plane crash. There are also many more examples of products of communist mass culture in Bulgaria. Also in historiography, we can find many nostalgic works.<sup>[97]</sup>

Another impetus for seeking the bright side of the totalitarian regime was a mass influx of tourists, which began more or less at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the 1990s, the tourist industry was in tatters, but in the late 1990s and early 2000s it was revamped enough to attract vast crowds. The first to arrive in Bulgaria were those who remembered this country from the 1970s and 1980s, and yearned for that time. They had vivid memories of the iconic 'holidays in Bulgaria' where one could unwind and forget the dark monotony of real life. A few years later, such tourists were in the minority and were replaced by those who simply wished to relax among the beaches and discotheques.

The other current of communism's presence in culture is exceptionally bleak, represented by films about repression: genocide, prisons, labour camps, and rampant poverty. A case in point here is Evgeni Mikhailov's 1993 film *Canary Season* (*Sezonat na kanarchetata*), with stories of concentration camps, psychiatric wards, where the regime sent its enemies. The director poses questions about the limits of compromise with the criminal regime. Another such film is *Zift* (*Dzift*), a 2008 blockbuster shot by a young director and radio announcer, Javor Gardev (b. 1972). The amount of cruelty is shocking even for the contemporary viewer, used to brutal crime stories and horrors. The message is clear, especially that the pre-communist Bulgaria shown in a few scenes is presented as a land of carefree bliss.

The dark side of the declining Zhivkov regime was shown also by Kiran Kolarov in the 2006 film *The Rebel of L.* (*Buntat na L.*). Its protagonist, a young boy called Loris, tries to escape to the West on the day of obtaining his high school diploma. Denounced by a girl in love with him, he lands in prison and spends three years there, until the ousting of Zhivkov. On leaving prison, he does not return to his previous way of life but begins a life of crime. The spiral of violence and mobster activities eventually causes his death. The director did not limit himself to criticising the communist regime, but also provided an equally negative evaluation of the first years after

its collapse – a time of easy fortunes emerging at the nexus of business, politics, and organised crime.

A well-known 2008 film based on a book by Iliya Troyanov takes a middle-road position. *The World is Big and Salvation Lurks around the Corner* (*Svetata e golyam i spasenie debne otvsiyakade*), directed by Stefan Komandarev, tells a story of forced emigration from communist Bulgaria to West Germany. A descendant of a refugee family returns to his homeland, which affords a chance for memories and reflections on the state of the country under Zhivkov and his successors. The director critically, yet rather objectively, demonstrates the complicated problems of identity and freedom of the Bulgarians under communism and in the post-communist era.

This is the direction taken also by some popular initiatives meant to make audiences familiar with communist reality. The most active in this respect is the most popular young-generation writer (b. 1968) and literary theorist Georgi Gospodinov. He was a co-author of two valuable projects. The first of these is the *Inventory Book of Socialism* (*Inventarna kniga na sotsyalizma*), a 2006 album with photographs of everyday objects hailing from communist times, showing both the awkward and somewhat likeable countenance of Bulgarian communism. This is also the underlying idea of the project *I Survived Socialism* (*Az zhivyakh sotsyalizma*). Its idea is to collect memories of people who lived under communism. Anyone can upload a story describing his or her most important experiences related to communism at the project's website.<sup>[98]</sup> The most interesting ones were gathered in a book.<sup>[99]</sup> It demonstrates the tragic and yet sometimes comic absurdity of everyday life in communist Bulgaria.

The main figures of 1989, with a few exceptions, are no longer the protagonists of the country's political and social life. A generational shift took place throughout virtually all the available political options during the time of Simeon Saksoburggotski. Some still attempt to pose as figures of authority, with varying degree of success.

The opposition activists suffered the most. Iliya Minev, following a few years of unsuccessful attempts to return to politics, abandoned all public activity and lived until his death on 6 January 2000 in oblivion and in dire poverty. However, his funeral was a great celebration. All of a sudden right-wing politicians remembered him. Arguably, the most active in this sad and

hypocritical celebration was Konstantin Trenchev, who tried to position himself the closest to the coffin of the deceased hero. A small monument dedicated to Minev was erected in 2002 in Sofia, and in 2008 his bust was unveiled in Septemvri.

Former dissidents fared much better, although they were greatly divided, and accused one another of being DS agents in the past. In August 1990, Zhelyu Zhelev became president and held his office until January 1997. On leaving active politics, he set up a foundation named after him, mainly involved in documenting the dissident and opposition activities of the 1980s. The Zhelev Foundation has published many interesting works, such as the Round Table minutes, memories of former activists, as well as DS documents about the dissident movements. Zhelyu Zhelev died in January 2015.

Other former dissidents left politics sooner or later as well. Petko Simeonov was tied with different parties in the first half of the 1990s and finally joined the BSP, if only for a short spell. Later he concentrated on academic and research activities. Petar Slabakov returned to acting very quickly. He died in 2009. Aleksandar Karakachanov continued his political career, oscillating around the SDS, to support the BSP in 2000. Later he lost prominence and focused primarily on academia.

Many former dissidents, initially active in the SDS, were tied with the ultra-nationalist party *Ataka* (Attack), set up in 2005. It was led by Volen Siderov, who had participated in the operation, aimed at deposing Minev. *Ataka* was joined, moreover, by Beron (who in the first half of 1990 was SDS chairman), later a member of Parliament from this party, and by Rumen Vodenicharov.

Only two people representing former dissident circles continue to play significant roles in Bulgarian politics. Konstantin Trenchev continued to lead *Podkrepa* until 2015, which has remained one of the most powerful trade unions in the country. The other former dissident is Ahmed Doğan, former president of the Turkish minority party, still active on the political arena. Over the past twenty years, Doğan's party entered all possible alliances save, naturally, with the nationalists, who have never held power in Bulgaria, however. In January 2013, Doğan ceased to be his party's chairman and was

succeeded by Lütfi Ahmet Mestan, but has continued to be the honorary president of the party.

The major communist protagonists from 1989 are no longer alive. In September 1992, Todor Zhivkov was sentenced to seven years in prison for embezzlement of state funds. Because of his poor health, he served the term under house arrest. In 1996, the sentence was revoked. Zhivkov published his memoirs<sup>[100]</sup> and tried to return to politics, but to no avail. He died on 5 August 1998.

On being deposed, Petar Mladenov went into retirement and no longer played a role in the state. In 1992, he published his memoirs. He died in 2000.

In December 1990, Andrey Lukanov stepped down as prime minister, but remained an important BSP figure. He left the party leadership after the Moscow coup (August 1991) and went into business. He was tied to the Multigroup conglomerate that was being accused of breaking the law. Arrested in July 1992, Lukanov was released in December that year. He, too, published his memoirs.<sup>[101]</sup> On 2 October 1996, he was shot dead in front of his home; the case has not been properly solved to date.<sup>[102]</sup>

Bulgarian political life evolved rather dramatically in the 1990s, but then, until accession to the EU in 2007, the tensions lessened. A few years later, however, Bulgaria fell into political turmoil which led to violent protests, even a couple of self-immolations by young people and rapid changes of coalitions and governments during the last few years. The main demand was the improving of the country's financial situation, fighting corruption and giving the opportunities to young people.

The migration crisis that has affected the entire European Union hit Bulgaria in a particularly severe way. Although the main migration route did not go through Bulgarian territory, some migrants had been crossing the border and that demanded significant efforts from local authorities. It also worsened anti-immigrant feeling in the country. It had, however, only a minimal effect on the presidential election in 2016, which was won by a socialist postcommunist politician named Rumen Radev.

Minev's death in oblivion and poverty and Lukanov's assassination are symbolic of Bulgarian post-communism. Still, the question of settling old scores with communism is only a segment of Bulgarian social and political life. It seemed that at the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the country

had risen after the economic crisis of the 1990s, which is the most important question from the point of view of the citizenry. However, in subsequent years, living standards dropped again, which led to radical social protests, during which as many as six persons performed self-immolation. Young people in Bulgaria protested against a lack of perspectives, corruption in politics, and a lack of employment opportunities for those not heralding from top-ranking families. Not settling scores with communism no doubt strengthens the tendencies for protest. Possibly, in the foreseeable future, when emotions subside and the archives have been opened, the collapse of communism will become as widely discussed as the San Stefano peace treaty is today.<sup>[103]</sup>

[1] In fact not only from Central and Eastern Europe; many people from Western Europe also visited Bulgaria as tourists, but Bulgaria never gained the same popularity among Western tourists as Yugoslavia.

[2] An interesting account on everyday life in Bulgaria can be found in Frederick B. Chary, *Chutzpah and Naïveté: An American Graduate Student Bursts Through the Iron Curtain to Do Research in Bulgaria*, Xlibris, 2014; a more scientific account is offered in Christopher Scarboro, *The Late Socialist Good Life in Bulgaria: Meaning and Living in a Permanent Present Tense*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD 2012.

[3] For a concise history of Bulgaria, see: R. J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2005; an interesting account of Bulgaria is presented by Wojciech Roszkowski, *East Central Europe. A Concise History*, Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2015.

[4] About Dimitrov, see: Marietta Stankova, *Georgi Dimitrov: A Biography*, I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., London-New York 2010.

[5] About those events, see: А. Везенков, *9 септември 1944 г.* [Alexandr Vezenkov, *9 septemvri 1944 (9 September 1944)*], Siela, Sofia 2014.

[6] For more about those events, see: Iliyana Marčeva, “Change of the Guard. The Struggle for Power in Bulgaria 1953–1962”, *Études balkaniques*, 1–2/2000.

[7] About Yugov, see: Мария Радева (съставител), *Български държавници 1944–1989* [Mariya Radeva (ed.), *Blgarski drzhavnitsi 1944–1989*] (*Bulgarian Rulers 1944–1989*), Skorpyo vi., Sofia 2005, pp. 142–155.

[8] For an interesting biography of Todor Zhivkov, see: Христо Христов, *Тодор Живков. Биография*, 2-ро издание [Khristo Khristov, *Todor Zhivkov. Biografiya (Todor Zhivkov. Biography)*], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Siela, Sofia 2010.

[9] One should keep in mind, however, that despite being traditionally pro-Russian, in both World Wars Bulgaria joined coalitions with the enemies of Russia and the USSR.

[10] During the Stalinist period, and even afterwards, there were many detention labour camps, such as, for example, the one in Belene. For more about that camp see, among many other sources: Петър Байчев, *Спомени от лагерите. Портрети на лагеристи от Белене (1948–1953)* [Petar Baichev, *Spomeni ot lagerite. Portrety na lageristi ot Belene (1948–1953)*] (*Memories of the Camps. Portraits of Belene Inmates (1948–1953)*), Siela, Sofia 2014.

[11] The secret services of Bulgaria and the USSR also worked together closely. See: Йордан Баев, *КГБ в България. Сътрудничеството между съветските и българските тайни служби. 1944–1991* [Yordan Baev, *KGB v Blgariya. Strudnichestvoto mezhdu s'vetskite i b'lgarskite tainy sluzhby. 1944–1991*] (*KGB in Bulgaria. Cooperation between Soviet and Bulgarian Secret Services 1944–1991*), Voенно Izdatelstvo, Sofia 2009.

[12] An interesting account on that aspect can be found in: Пепка Бояджиева, *Социалното инженерство. Политики за прием във висшите училища през комунистическия режим в България* [Pepka Boyadzhieva, *Sotsyalnoto inzhenerstvo. Politiki za priem v' visshite uchilishcha prez komunisticheskiya rezhim v Blgariya*] (*Social Engineering. Politics of Admission in Higher Education Institutions by the Communist Regime in Bulgaria*), Siela, Sofia 2010.

[13] The whole story of the communist period in Bulgaria can be found in: Ивайло Знеполски (общ. ред.), *История на Народна република България. Режимът и обществото* [Ivaylo Znepolski (ed.), *Istoriya na Narodna republika Blgariya. Rezhim't i obshchestvoto*] (*History of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. The Regime and the Society*), ИИМ (ИРРХ), Sofia 2009.

[14] Мартин Иванов, *Реформаторство без реформи. Политическата икономия на българския комунизъм 1963–1989* [Martin Ivanov, *Reformatorstvo bez reformi. Politicheskata ikonomiya na blgarskiya komunizm 1963–1989*] (*Reformation without Reforms. Political Economy of Bulgarian Communism 1963–1989*), Institute for Studies of the Recent Past, Sofia 2008, p. 297.

[15] Евгения Калинова, Искра Баева, *Българските преходи 1939–2005* [Evgeniya Kalinova, Iskra Baeva, *Blgarskite prehodi 1939–2005*] (*Bulgarian Transitions 1939–2005*), Paradigma, Sofia 2006, p. 219. The question of foreign debt throughout the 'communist' period is addressed in: Даниел Ванков, Мартин Иванов, *Българският външен дълг 1944–1989. Банкрутът на комунистическата икономика* [Daniel Bankov, Martin Ivanov, *Blgarskiyat vnshen dlг 1944–1989. Bankrut't na komunisticheskata ikonomika*] (*Bulgarian Internal Debt 1944–1989. Bankruptcy of Communist Economy*), ИРРХ, Sofia 2008.

[16] Evgeniya Kalinova, Iskra Baeva, *Blgarskite prehodi 1939–2005*, op. cit., p. 219.

[17] Martin Ivanov, *Reformatorstvo bez reformi...*, op. cit., p. 298.

[18] Христо Христов, *Тайните фалити на комунизма*, [Khristo Khristov, *Taynite faliti na komunizma*] (*Secret Bankruptcies of Communism*), Siela, Sofia 2007, p. 25.

[19] Evgeniya Kalinova, Iskra Baeva, *Blgarskite prehodi 1939–2005*, op. cit., p. 219.

[20] Костадин Чакъров, *Вторият етаж* [Kostadin Chakrov, *Vtoriyat etazh*] (*First Floor*), Пламык '90, Sofia 1990, p. 77.

[21] The company was reopened in 2014.

[22] A joint venture is a company with the joint stock of a domestic and foreign company. Similar legal solutions were also introduced in other Soviet Bloc countries.

[23] The DS has been the topic of many books; however, the majority of them presented a sensationalist approach rather than academic one. Among the academic books are: Момчил Методиев, Мария Дерменджиева, *Държавна сигурност – предимство по наследство. Професионални биографии на водещи офицери* [Momchil Metodiev, Maria Dermendzhieva, *Drzhavna sigurnost – predimstvo po nasledstvo. Profesionalni bigrafii na vodeshti ofitseri*] (*State Security – an Advantage of Inheritance. Professional Biographies of Leading Officers*), Siela, Sofia 2015; Димитър Иванов, *Кратка история на държавна сигурност 1907–2013* [Dimitar Ivanov, *Kratka istoriya na Darzhavna sigurnost*] (*A Brief History of State Security 1907–2013*), Siela, Sofia 2013; various texts by Jordan Baev are also worth reading.

[24] For more about the Sixth Department, see: Димитър Иванов, *Шести отдел* [Dimitar Ivanov, *Shesti otdel*] (*The Sixth Department*), TRUD Publishers, Sofia 2004.

[25] For more about the relationship of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church with the communist state, see: Момчил Методиев, *Между вярата и компромиса. Българската православна църква и комунистическата държава (1944 – 1989)* [Momchil Metodiev, *Mezhdu vyarata i kompromisa. Blgarskata pravoslavna tsrkva i komunisticheskata drzhava*] (*Between Faith and Compromise. Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Communist State*), Institute for Studies of the Recent Past, Sofia 2010.

[26] Михаил Груев, Алексей Кальонски, “Възродителният процес”. *Мюсюлманските общности и комунистическият режим* [Mikhail Gruev, Aleksey Kalonski, “Vazroditelniyat protses”. *Musyulmanskite obshtnosti i komunisticheskiyat rezhim*] (“Revival Process”. *Muslim Communities and the Communist Regime*), Siela, Sofia 2008, p. 116.

[27] Момчил Методиев, *Машината за легитимност. Ролята на Държавна сигурност в комунистическа държава* [Momchil Metodiev, *Mashinata za legitimnost. Rolyata na Darzhavna sigurnost v komunisticheska drzhava*] (*Machine of Legitimacy. The Role of the State Security in the Communist State*), Siela, Sofia 2008, p. 183.

[28] An interesting account regarding the Turkish community in Bulgaria (but mainly relating to the period after 1989) can be found in: Kristen R. Ghodsee, *Muslim Lives in Eastern Europe: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Transformation of Islam in Postsocialist Bulgaria*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 2009.

[29] Mikhail Gruev, Aleksey Kalonski, “Vazroditelniyat protses”..., op. cit., p. 119.

[30] Ibid., pp. 131–133.

[31] Димитър Луджев, *Революцията в България 1989–1991*, книга 1 [Dimitr Ludzhev, *Revolyutsiyata v Blgariya 1989–1991*] (*Revolution in Bulgaria 1989–1991*), Vol. 1, Institute for Historical Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia 2008, p. 28.

[32] *Комисия за разкриване на документите и за обявяване на принадлежност на български граждани към Държавна сигурност и разузнавателните служби на Българската народна армия, „РЕШЕНИЕ”, № 14/ 04.09.2007* (*Commission for Disclosure of Documents and Announcing Affiliation of Bulgarian Citizens with the State Security and the Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian National Armed Forces*, Decision No. 14/04.09.2007).

[33] The fact that Ahmed Doğan had been a communist agent was used against him many times after 1989; see, for example, Петър Япов, *Доган. Демонът на ДС и КГБ* [Petar Yanov, *Dogan. Demonat na DS i KGB*] (*Dogan. The Demon of State Security and KGB*), Anabel, Sofia 2009.

[34] Димитър Луджев, *Революцията в България 1989–1991* [Dimitr Ludzhev, *Revolyutsiyata v Blgariya 1989–1991*] (*Revolution in Bulgaria 1989–1991*), Vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 24–25.

[35] A very detailed description of Markov's life and the assassination is given in Христо Христов, *Убийте "Скитник": българската и британската държавна политика по случая Георги Марков* [Khristo Khristov, *Ubiyte "Skitnik": blgarskata i britanska dr'zhavna politika na sluchaya Georgi Markov*] (*Kill the "Wanderer". Bulgarian and British Policy on the case of Georgi Markov*), Ciela izd., Sofia 2006; a journalistic account of the story can be found in Ангелина Петрова, *Убийте котката на Георги Марков* [Angelina Petrova, *Ubite kotkata na Georgi Markov*] (*Kill the Cat of Georgi Markov*), Foundation Arete-Fol, Sofia 2006. Among the English language publications, I suggest John Emsley, *Molecules of Murder: Criminal Molecules and Classic Cases*. Royal Society of Chemistry, London 2008, pp. 13–23.

[36] For more on Minev, see: <https://news.bg/comments/balgarskata-1989-a-otkaz-ot-komunizam.html>

[37] Калин Йосифов (ed.), *Началото. СДС – политически обзор и хронология*. [Kalin Yosiphov (ed.), *Nachaloto. SDS – politicheski obzor i khronologiya*] (*The Beginning. SDS – Political Overview and Chronology*), Zhelyu Zhelev Foundation, Sofia 2008, p. 21.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 19–48.

[39] In Bulgaria, albeit to a lesser extent than in Romania, there is a difference between opposition activists and dissidents. Generally speaking, opposition activists are people not related to the communist party, whereas dissidents are party or party-related intellectuals. When the Union of Democratic Forces was founded (December 1989), the term 'opposition activist' meant something else and came close to its democratic meaning, i.e. a supporter of a group which is not in power at a given moment.

[40] Such claims were even made by Rosen Plevneliev, the President of Bulgaria from 2012 to 2017. In 2014, he claimed that in 1989 he had participated in the meetings held to oppose communist power. In fact, he had been the head of the BKP organization in the Technical University in Sofia, where he had worked at the time. His claims in 2014 whipped up a storm on Bulgaria social media. For more see: <https://www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/politika/rosen-plevneliev-v-tuityr-za-tova-kyde-e-bil-na-10.11.1989-6027258> (accessed on 12.09.2017).

[41] Kevork Kevorkian continued to be popular after 1989. He is still a well-known journalist, and the writer/author of numerous television shows and books. His website's address is <http://www.kevorkkevorkian.com/index.php>

[42] An interesting collection of pro – and anti-Zhelev viewpoints can be found in *В света на огледалата. Сборник от материали „за“ и „против“ д-р Желев от вестници, списания и книги* [V sveta za ogledata. Sbornik ot materialii "za" i "protiv" Dr. Zhelev ot vestnitsi, spisaniya i knigi] (*In the World of Mirrors. Collection of Materials "for" and "against" Dr. Zhelev from Newspapers, Magazines and Books*), Zhelyu Zhelev Foundation, Sofia 2007.

[43] Although the book was not reprinted after 1989, fragments of it can be found on the internet.

[44] There was a special term for such punishments, often used in reference to party activists guilty of certain irregularities. The punishments varied, depending on the magnitude of the offence; expulsion from the party and redundancy were by far the gravest.

[45] *Шесто управление срещу неформалните организации в България 1988–1989 г.* [Shesto upravleniye sreshtu neformalnite organizatsii v Blgariya 1988–1989 g.] (*The Sixth Department among Informal Organizations in Bulgaria 1988–1989*), Scorpion, Sofia 1999, p. 23.

[46] I would like to thank Mr. Georgi Avramov for making the movie *Breathe* available.

- [47] Dimitar Ludzhev, *Revolyutsiyata v Blgariya 1989–1991*, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 35.
- [48] Kalin Yosiphov (ed.), *Nachaloto. SDS...*, op. cit., pp. 49–50.
- [49] Dimitar Ludzhev, *Revolyutsiyata v Blgariya 1989–1991*, op. cit., p. 33.
- [50] *Ibid.*, pp. 33–34.
- [51] For a collection of documents about the Perestroika Club, see: Kalim Yosiphov (ed.), *Nachaloto. SDS...*, op. cit., pp. 51–100.
- [52] *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- [53] Боян Трайков, *Превратът 10 ноември 1989* [Boyan Traykov, *Prevratyat 10 noemvri 1989*] (*Coup d'Etat 10 November 1989*), TRUD Publishing, Sofia 1999, p. 114.
- [54] Deutsche Welle is a German radio station broadcasting in various languages for listeners abroad.
- [55] Historiography recognises two dates for the establishment of *Podkrepa*: 8 and 11 February 1989. It was officially launched on 8 February, with the event publicly announced on 11 February. Therefore, the second date is also correct.
- [56] Kalim Yosiphov (ed.), *Nachaloto. SDS...*, op. cit., pp. 129–148.
- [57] Petar Beron published his memoirs: *Живот ли бе да го опишеш* [Petar Beron, *Zhivot li be da go opishesh*] (*Life as You Describe It*), Geya-Libris, Sofia 2004.
- [58] Dimitar Ludzhev, *Revolyutsiyata v Blgariya 1989–1991*, Vol. 1, op. cit., p. 75.
- [59] For an account regarding cleric Khristofor Sibev, see: Kalim Yosiphov (ed.), *Nachaloto. SDS...*, op. cit., pp. 51–100.
- [60] I use the word in parentheses since it is hard to consider today's Turkey to be the homeland of the Bulgarian Turks. Virtually none of the Turks living in Bulgaria in the 1980s had known their 'homeland' and neither had their ancestors. Turkish persons, although in fact immigrants, had lived in Bulgaria for centuries and saw it as their genuine homeland (even if often only geographically rather than politically).
- [61] Mikhail Gruev, Aleksey Kalonski, *Vazroditelniyat protses...*, op. cit. p. 185.
- [62] *Ibid.*, p. 193.
- [63] Until December 1989, there was nothing in Romania which would have been comparable to the 'Revival Process' or the 'Great Excursion'. One might only mention here the tearing down of a large part of Bucharest and the destruction of the province as part of the so-called systematisation of the countryside, yet no people died or families were torn apart in its wake. This is not to justify the unquestioned criminality of the Romanian dictator but to provide a comparative scale.
- [64] Костадин Чакъров, *От втория етаж към нашествието на демократите* [Kostadin Chakarov, *Ot vtoriyat etazh kam nashestviето na demokratite*] (*From the First Floor to the Invasion of the Democrats*), TRUD Publishers, Sofia 2001, pp. 158–159.
- [65] For more about Ecoforum, including descriptions and original interviews from there, and some documents collected by Rumiana Uzunova, see: *Някога, в 89-а Интервюта и репортажи от архива на журналистката от „Свободна Европа“ Румяна Узунова. Съставител е Лиляна Александриева* [Nyakoga, v 89-a. Intervyuta i reportazhi ot arkhiva na zhurnalistikata ot "Svobodna

*Evropa*". *Sastvatel e Lilyana Aleksandrieva*] (Never, in '89. Interviews and reportages from the "Free Europe" Archives. Collected by Lilyana Aleksandrieva), Zhelyu Zhelev Foundation, Sofia 2007, pp. 437–564.

[66] A. Ross Johnson, R. Eugene Parta (eds), *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: a Collection of Studies and Documents*, Central European University Press, Budapest 2010, p. 273.

[67] Boyan Traykov, *10 noemvri 1989...*, op. cit., pp. 65–66; "Letter from Foreign Minister Petar Mladenov to the Bulgarian Communist Party Central Committee," October 24, 1989, *History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of the Bulgarian Parliament, Sofia*. Obtained by the Bulgarian Cold War Research Group. Available at: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112510>.

[68] I was able to access the contents of these documents courtesy of Prof. Jordan Baev. See also: Jordan Baev, "1989: Bulgarian Transition to Pluralist Democracy", *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 12/13, available at: [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHPBulletin12-13\\_p1\\_o.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHPBulletin12-13_p1_o.pdf) (p. 162/166).

[69] A very detailed description of the events was presented by Dimitr Ludzhev. The following part is written according to, among many others, Dimitr Ludzhev, *Revolutsiyata v Blgariya 1989–1991*, Vol. 1, op. cit.

[70] For a collection of documents, see: Kalim Yosiphov (ed.), *Nachaloto. SDS...*, op. cit., pp. 183–207.

[71] From this moment on, I use the term 'opposition' in a democratic meaning, that is, in reference to a 'group which is not in power'. The dissidents from communist times became opposition members after the collapse of Zhivkov and the establishment of the SDS.

[72] Evgeniya Kalinova, Iskra Baeva, *Blgarskite prekhodi 1939–2005*, op. cit., p. 264.

[73] Нася Кралевска, *Без заглавие. Комунизм в битка с демокрацията* [Nasiya Krlevska, *Bez zaglaviye. Komunizm v bitka s demokratsiya*] (Untitled. *Communism in Fight with Democracy*), Sofia 2011, p. 214.

[74] Round Table talks were very well documented in the publication *Кръглата маса. Стенографски протокол (3 януари–15 май 1990)* [Kraglata masa. Stenografski protokol (3 yanuari – 15 mai 1990)] (*The Round Table. Transcripts (3 January – 15 May 1990)*), Sofia 1998.

[75] The term 'post communism' and questions of the change of the political and socio-economic system are addressed in detail by: Jan Kofman, Wojciech Roszkowski, *Transformacja i postkomunizm (Transformation and Post-communism)*, Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (ISP PAN), Warsaw 1999; and Jadwiga Staniszkis, *Postkomunizm. Próba opisu (Post-Communism. Attempt at Description)*, Publ. Słowo/obraz terytoria, Gdańsk 2001.

[76] Васил Проданов, Антоний Тодоров, Йосиф Аврамов, Ваня Ангелова Иванова, *Българският парламент и преходът* [Vasil Prodanov, Antonyi Todorov, Yosif Avramov, Vanya Angelova Ivanova, *Blgarskiyat parlament i prekhodat*] (*Bulgarian Parliament and the Transition*), Siela, Sofia 2009, pp. 35–37.

[77] Albert P. Melone, *Creating Parliamentary Government. The Transition to Democracy in Bulgaria*, Ohio State University, 1998, p. 112.

[78] For more about the revival of parliamentary politics in Bulgaria, see: Мария Пиргова, *Българският парламентаризъм в условията на глобалния преход* [Mariya Pirgova, *Blgarskiyat parlamentarizam v usloviyata na globalniya prehod*] (*Bulgarian Parliamentarism in the Conditions of the Global Transformation*), Paradigma, Sofia 2003.

[79] An interesting approach with regard to the Round Table discussions, and also debates in the media on economics, was presented by Dimitir Ludzhev, see: *Революцията в България 1989–1991*, книга 2 [Dimitir Ludzhev, *Revolyutsiyata v Blgariya 1989–1991*] (*Revolution in Bulgaria 1989–1991*), Vol. 2, Ivan Bogorov, Sofia 2012, pp. 127–147.

[80] Dimitir Ludzhev, *Revolyutsiyata v Blgariya 1989–1991*, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 846.

[81] Ivan Kostov was also an interesting commentator of political and economic life of Bulgaria. See: Найо Тицин, *Иван Костов – Отговори* [Nayo Titsin, *Ivan Kostov – Otgovori*] (*Ivan Kostov – Answers*), Siela, Sofia 2006.

[82] There are a few books on the transition in Bulgaria, among those are Vesselin Dimitrov, *Bulgaria. The Uneven Transition*, Routledge, 2001; Jenny Marika Engström, *Democratisation and the Prevention of Violent Conflict*, Routledge, 2009; John D. Bell, *Bulgaria In Transition: Politics, Economics, Society, And Culture After Communism*, Westview Press, 1998; James Dawson, *Cultures of Democracy in Serbia and Bulgaria: How Ideas Shape Publics*, Routledge, 2014; Nevena Nancheva, *Between Nationalism and Europeanisation: Narratives of National Identity in Bulgaria and Macedonia*, ECPR Press, 2016; Kristen Ghodsee, *Lost in Transition: Ethnographies of Everyday Life After Communism*, Duke University Press, 2011.

[83] Evgeniya Kalinova, Iskra Baeva, *Blgarskite prekhodi 1939–2005*, op. cit.

[84] Ivaylo Znepolski, Koprinka Tchervenkova, Alexander Kiossev (eds), *Penser la Transition. Rethinking the Transition*, St Kliment Ohridsky University, Sofia 2002.

[85] During the 1396 battle of Nikopolis, the Western knights were defeated by the Turks, who thus strengthened their dominant position across the Balkans. This was the last crusade in European history.

[86] In 1878, Russia defeated Turkey and they signed a peace treaty in San Stefano. Pursuant to the provisions of the treaty, the territory of Bulgaria was greatly expanded. Ever since, many Bulgarian nationalists have dreamed of the San Stefano borders.

[87] A few months following San Stefano, a peace congress in Berlin stripped Bulgaria of much of the territory it had been accorded earlier.

[88] *Комисия за разкриване на документите и за обявяване на принадлежност на български граждани към Държавна сигурност и разузнавателните служби на Българската народна армия, Година по-късно* (Commission for Disclosure of Documents and Announcing Affiliation of Bulgarian Citizens with the State Security and the Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian National Armed Forces. One Year After), no data, p. 32.

[89] German-Bulgarian writer Iliya Troyanov, *Bulgaria Must Learn from Finland*, novinite.com, 18 March 2009.

[90] It is evident in Bulgarian bookstores, where, in many cases, esoterism is the largest section.

[91] Георги Карасимеонов, *Партийната система в България* [Georgi Karasimeonov, *Partiyната sistema v Blgariya*] (*Party System in Bulgaria*), Goreks Pres, Sofia 2006, pp. 85–94.

[92] Simeon Saksokoburggotski published his memoirs: Симеон II, *Една необикновена съдба. Автобиография*, [Simeon II: *Edna neobiknovena sadba. Autobiografiya*] (*An Unusual Fate. Autobiography*), Siela, Sofia 2014.

[93] The website can be found at: <https://www.comdos.bg>

[94] Kostadin Charakov, *Vtoriyat etazh*, op. cit.

[95] The Institute has a very interesting website: [www.minaloto.org](http://www.minaloto.org), available in Bulgarian and English.

[96] All of the series has been put on the internet and is publicly accessible.

[97] Such as, for example, the biography of Todor Zhivkov: Боян Кастелов, *Тодор Живков – мит и истина* [Boyan Kastelov, *Todor Zhivkov – mit i istina*] (*Todor Zhivkov – Myth and Reality*), TRUD, Sofia 2005.

[98] The website can be found at: <http://www.spomeniteni.org>.

[99] *Аз живях социализма. 171 лични истории* [*Az zhivyakh sotsializma, 171 lichni istorii*] (*I Lived Socialism. 171 Personal Stories*), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Zhanet-45, Plovdiv 2006.

[100] Todor Zhivkov, *Мемоари*, „SIV” AD, Sofia 1997.

[101] Андрей Луканов, *Луканов За кризата* [Andrei Lukanov, *Lukanov za krizata*] (*Lukanov on the Crisis*), Khristo Botev, Sofia 1992; Андрей Луканов, *Социалната демокрация* [Andrei Lukanov, *Sotsialna Demokratiya*] (*Social Democracy*), Pleven 1992.

[102] An interesting account regarding Lukanov’s assassination can be found in Ангелина Петрова, *Виновните – невинни. Делото срещу убийците на Андрей Луканов* [Angelina Petrova, *Vinovnite – nevinni. Deloto sreshtu ubiytsite na Andrei Lukanov*] (*Guilty – Not Guilty. The Case against the Murderers of Andrei Lukanov*), TRUD, Sofia 2008.

[103] San Stefano has to date been seen by many Bulgarians as the greatest lost opportunity in Bulgarian history and is therefore a frequent subject of debate.



## Concluding remarks

The debate on the *Autumn of Nations* and its legacy is ongoing. Still, in attempt to answer the question on similarities and differences in the release of the nations from the Soviet subjugation, the researcher faces a methodological problem, i.e. the lack of a clear and coherent common denominator that could serve as a measuring instrument or a parameter allowing for an assessment of the effects of events of 1989. Clearly, the key problem, identified as far back as the 1990's,<sup>[1]</sup> concerns different conditions that existed in various member states of the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact towards the end of the 1980's, and – consequently – serious differences which characterised the process of dismantling of the communist regime and (to an even greater degree) its follow-ups. It is enough to recall that East Germany was absorbed by West Germany. Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic, which underwent quick and rather efficient reforms, and Slovakia, where some transformational delays were noted in the 1990's. Poland was the first to introduce radical market reforms, although political reforms were slower in coming. The opposite is true in the case of Hungary, which decided on „gradualism” with slow economic reforms. Romania and Bulgaria, in the first half of the 1990's, languished in stagnation, while reforms introduced later appeared ineffective and incomplete. As a result, they were late in being included in the Euro-Atlantic structures and both Bulgaria and Romania are the two of the least developed member states of the European Union. On the other hand, one should note, that all the countries discussed above joined both the EU and NATO, which is not so obvious for other countries that overthrew the communist system.

Yet in spite of serious differences between the analysed countries, some sort of common denominator can be identified. If we were to try to describe

the essence of *the Autumn of Nations* with a single word, it would be “rejection”. And this is a question worth pondering over a while longer.

## The Roots

Since 1945, all the Central and East European countries (including East Germany) had remained within the Soviet sphere of political, economic, and military influence. In case of some of them, the dependency was greater, while others disposed of a larger room for political manoeuvre – this factor was changing in time, and was dependent on the role of particular state ascribed to it by the Soviet foreign policy. This is why the degree of the Soviet Union’s interference in domestic matters and foreign policy of its satellite states varied from one country to another and that the end of the Stalinism era entailed various attempts to reform the system.<sup>[2]</sup> However, two issues must be remembered. Firstly, while communists – for pragmatic reasons – were ready to accept some diligently cared concessions from the Marxism-Leninism dogmas, at the same time, they paid a lot of attention not to overstep certain cardinal principles. More importantly, some of those fundamental rules, treated by the red rulers as “sacrosanct” were just part of Stalinist totalitarian legacy. These were:

- 1) the monopoly of political power strictly reserved for the communist party or its organs;
- 2) preventive censorship, drastic reduction of civil freedoms and liberties;
- 3) an all-powerful role of apparatus of repression (even if its role in day-to-day practice could have varied from one country to another);
- 4) the key role of state administration in the economy, and
- 5) an open acceptance of the geopolitical realities – i.e. the factual subordination of external relations to the political will of the USSR.

These elements played the role of the doctrinal “hard core” of political systems of the communist dictatorships and can be seen as “the common denominator” in all the countries analysed in this book, as they remained intact until 1989. The problem was that on the verge of the *Autumn of Nations* the official

state ideology of Marxism-Leninism was unable to sustain its role of a factor mobilising society to sacrifices, thus it was no more than an “empty ideological ritual”.<sup>[3]</sup> And here is where the official state ideology met the “squaring the circle” point: on the one hand, the ruling elites sought to introduce some new elements into the sphere of ideology, but on the other hand, they were always limited by the abovementioned rules. Those limitations in all cases (either more liberal attitude, like in Hungary or Poland, or more orthodox, like in the GDR or Czechoslovakia) made the concessions unable to perform the task they were to achieve. They could eventually slow down the erosion of the regime but could not prevent its collapse. The essence of the events may be brought to just one point: populations of all the countries discussed in the book decisively rejected the above-enumerated constraints imposed upon them by the communist doctrine. Thus, the rejection of foundations of the communism is the essence of the phenomenon, which was determined thereafter as *the Autumn of Nations*.

To be noted: 1989 was not a sort of “one day event” which may be understood as something which happened suddenly, a set of uncoordinated riots which could occur everywhere e.g. because of economic troubles. It was – at the end of the day – a collapse of the political system as such. This dramatic change could not have occurred without a previous, long-term process, touching all social groups in countries of East-Central Europe. Searching for the causes of this mass acceptance for the *Autumn of Nations*, it should be underlined that (unlike in Yugoslavia and the majority of the republics of the Soviet Union) in all the countries analysed in this book communism was a system imposed following military invasions (exported revolution) hence it was never fully internalised by the majority of the population.<sup>[4]</sup> Since the 1970’s, however, a gradual erosion of the established communist base was ongoing and communism as a system was gradually rejected by everyone, including the communist functionaries. This is why in the 1970’s they tried to introduce some last-minute reforms based on economic models of state socialism, and in the 1980’s they abandoned this approach and began to set up enterprises with distinctly capitalistic features.

The mere fact that all the Comecon Member States rejected the system during the same period is by no means a pure coincidence. The factors that made the communist regime crumble and then brought it to the final end, were very similar in all these countries. These certainly included: a) transformation in international relations on a global scale and its consequences (the gradual loss of position of a superpower by the Soviet Union, and the constant growth of the position of the United States in the world); b) globalisation understood as the process transgressing the fields of technology, economy and communications, and c) an acute economic and social crisis within the Soviet Bloc, combined with the sharp decrease of attractiveness of communist ideology.

The loss of faith in communism and an apparent reluctance of the Soviets to maintain the existing *status quo* in the region, as well as the dream of “life as in the West” explain not only the support for a change of the regime widespread within the societies of Central and Eastern European countries, but also the indifference with which social groups constituting up to 1989 the pillars of the regime (the military, the police, diplomats, etc.) observed the ousting from power of the incumbent rulers.<sup>[5]</sup> It follows that, in the late 1980s, virtually no group existed that might have been interested in backing up the *status quo*. Hardliners were marginal and the majority of the party functionaries greeted the fall of the Iron Curtain either with indifference or with outright relief, hoping for the opportunity to enrich themselves thanks to the chaos sparked by the collapse of the regime.

The answer to the question, why the rulers failed to develop an appropriate remedy and did not carry out the relevant reforms at the time, is by no means easy and needs several factors to be pointed out. The catastrophe of the Prague Spring and the purges that it triggered in Czechoslovakia and other Warsaw Pact countries constituted “a strong lesson” for communist party members.<sup>[6]</sup> Hence, at the beginning of the 1970’s, party members in all the analysed countries were divided in two groups: passive careerists who took the party card for some opportunistic reasons, and increasingly ageing dogmatists unable to catch up with changing realities dictated by the progressing globalization. Such a passive mass, even if still

quite impressive in total number of its members, was unable (and usually unwilling) to play the role of the catalyst of change within the system.

To add bad to worse, the lapse of time made the concept originally submitted by communist reformers (decentralisation of decision-making process within the state-owned enterprises as a key element of the proposed reform) more and more outdated. What communist reformers had in common with hardliners was the unmovable faith in the strong role of state machinery and the active role of administration in general. This ran exactly against the ideological climate of the 1980's – the period strongly influenced by neo-liberalism, with strong role of the personal freedom (both in private and professional life), rejecting the Keynesian economics. Thus, the programmes of Nyers or Dubček were too deeply anchored in the leftist ideology to attract the same popular support as it had attracted 20 years earlier, as the younger generations were completely dominated by the “Western dream”.<sup>[7]</sup> Keeping in mind that in the 1980's the leftist ideology entered the stage of visible stagnation, or – as in the case of the UK and the USA – of open regress, one should not be surprised that in the realities of the 1980's, reformed communism was unable to spark any enthusiasm in the region.<sup>[8]</sup>

Thus, the legacy left by the turn of the 1960's and the 1970's, when under the Soviet pressure the communist reformers were ousted from power, created within the communist regime a sort of “reformists vacuum”. This is not contradicted by the fact that, until 1989, not all reform-minded communists were ousted from power, even if until the Gorbachev era the pressure from Moscow to put all substantial reforms on hold was very strong. In countries like Poland and Hungary, it was not possible to expel all of them, simply because concessions made to the society after 1956 were too far-reaching. And still, the mere fact that some of the reformers remained members of the communist party does not influence the general conclusion. Although it is true that in the late 1980's there were some functionaries who understood that the existence of the political system was in danger and sometimes (in Hungary and Poland only) they were strong enough to sustain the life of the “liberal wing” within the communist party, they were too weak to overcome stagnation and immobilisation

in the communist parties, and to take control over the party and implement a “reformed communism” they dreamt about.

The external factors, which contributed largely to this state of affairs, should also be remembered. By jettisoning the idea of internal reforms, the communists drastically limited the room of manoeuvre in external relations. The refusal to adopt even gradual changes, made their economies dependent on the foreign assistance and credits. In theory, the money could have flown from the USSR itself as well as from the West. Since the mid-1970's, however, it was more and more apparent that Moscow was unwilling to offer sufficient assistance to its satellites countries.<sup>[9]</sup> Thus, the sole solution to save the system could have been credits granted by West – the solution with visible inconveniences. On the one hand, financial assistance granted by the institutions controlled by the countries belonging to the bloc declared by Soviets as “enemy”, made the Warsaw Pact countries more susceptible to the political pressure exerted by the donor states. On the other hand, the political system in communist countries, due to its inherent nature to control every aspect of economic life, made it impossible to invest the financial assistance resources in the most efficient manner. Needless to add, the last characteristic was even strengthened in the 1970's, when all apparatus was effectively purged of “reformist tendencies”. Even if the level of control performed by the apparatus over the societies was not as great as it had been under the Stalin era, it was strong enough to protect from establishing an effective economic environment.

By the late 1980's, all communist rulers (including the Kremlin itself) were facing the same problem. On the one hand, the West was still less ready to pay for the stability in the East without clear promises of political reforms. On the other hand, the debt contracted thus far, because of the increasing interests, became an unaffordable burden threatening the further existence of the regime. In this context, it is noteworthy that the position towards the western credits adopted by the regimes was not uniform. Some dictators (e.g. Honecker, Kádár) failed to see any serious challenges that external debt might have posed for the political survival. At the other extreme was Ceaușescu, who sought to repay it as soon as possible. However, this

policy was implementable only at the expense of the drastic limitation of domestic consumption and visible deterioration of the standard of living of the local population. Zhivkov also attempted to pay back the whole debt, but in the mid-1980's, he decided to withdraw from that path. Finally, the intermediate tactic adopted by the regime in Czechoslovakia also led to nowhere. Husák, apparently because of his fear to be dependent from the capitalist world, did everything possible not to increase the debts contracted abroad but this caused the lack of innovation that was more and more necessary to the economy which had to compete on global markets. Still, as the events of 1989 proved, none of those strategies secured further existence of communist regimes in the Comecon countries.<sup>[10]</sup>

Taking the above into consideration, another question arises: if the reform wing of the communist party was to a large extent annihilated, and the opponents of any substantial changes remained at the helm in the Soviet bloc, how to explain the fact that Central-Eastern European countries entered the year 1989 so differently prepared for the upcoming rejection of the “old regime”, and (more importantly) for the transformation which was to lead to the “general happiness” (landmarked by the full membership in the UE and the NATO)?

Looking for the roots of those differences we should once again go back to 1956 or (at least in certain cases) even to “the before 1945” period. Although the countries belonging to the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact were exposed to the enormous pressure of communist indoctrination, and the USSR made a lot (if not all) of efforts possible to “sovietise” them, this programme was not fully successful. It follows that, even before 1956, the degree of the implementation of the communist doctrine had significantly varied from one country to another: in some countries the real degree of sovietisation of the state and the society attained a high point, in others much smaller one, and this difference in the legacy left by the Stalinist era weighed down considerably on further developments. It is enough to compare the Polish case (where not only the Catholic Church remained an independent social player), with the case of Bulgaria or Czechoslovakia, where the progress of Stalinism gained much greater ground. More importantly: after 1956,

with the passing of time, this level of difference between the doctrine and realities was becoming even greater. On the one hand, the destruction of the reform wing within the parties after 1968 almost automatically set on the reversal process – to bring back the existing social relations in line with the Marxist-Leninist dogmas (as far as it was only possible). On the other hand, the pressure of the society and (since the mid-1970's) external factors, did not allow the communist rulers to reverse all the concessions made after Stalin's death. Both those factors had a different impact in different countries. In Poland, with the passing of time the social resistance was getting stronger and the full backtrack appeared impossible even after the eradication of the reformers' wing of the party. Conversely, in Czechoslovakia the catastrophe of the Prague Spring led to a restoration of "Stalinism" but this time "with the human face". The same was not true for Hungary, where Kádár was able to eliminate from the Politburo Stalinist hardliners but – a bit later – he also destroyed politically those reformers who trespassed the margin of manoeuvre dictated by the will of the "Big Brother from Moscow".

Therefore, several intertwined factors influenced the situation of particular countries: the differences between them that had existed before 1945, upon which overlapped different legacies left by the period of Stalinism, combined with the different levels of concessions made to societies in the 1950's and the 1960's coupled with the capacity of the communist party to eradicate these concessions in the 1970's. As this "back and forth policy" was implemented at the different social grounds with different levels of pressure exerted on the party by the internal and external factors, one should be not surprised that – as a result – the societies of Central and Eastern Europe entered *the Autumn of Nations* with the baggage of significantly different experiences collected during the communist era. Thus, even if in 1989 the countries of the region decisively rejected "the communist shell", this rejection disclosed a differentiated picture of the legacy left by the previous 40 years. And this is why the societies that, since the late 1940's, had lived under dictatorships operating according to the scheme imposed by the Kremlin, remained differentiated enough to trigger in 1989 different modes of the transfer of power and – more importantly – to adopt different

courses of their economic and political transformation, aiming at getting closer to the Western standards.

Those differences existing at the outset of the transformation are noteworthy as they help to explain the role of democratic opposition under communism and the process of its dismantling. No doubt, the phenomenon of dissidents resisting against the regime was a part of the common picture for all countries analysed within this book. It is also true that their influence on the course of events was strictly determined by the conditions in which they were pursuing their activities. On the theoretical level, among different groups of dissidents there was a general conviction that they were fighting against the same enemy. This is why some efforts were occasionally undertaken to foster a closer cooperation. However, the ideological background and the goals stated by different groups were more or less deeply enrooted in the social ground of a given country, its pre-war legacy, and previous experiences collected by its founders. No surprise then that in the late 1980's the dissident movement in Central and Eastern European countries constituted a sort of plethora of different initiatives: starting from the extreme left (different sorts of anarchism, deep ecology, radical feminism etc.) passing through more moderate versions of socialism or Christian democracy, or liberalism (including extreme libertarianism) up to the nationalism or different sorts of radical far right ideologies. This enormous differentiation made impossible setting up an "umbrella organization" to coordinate the efforts of those groups at the national, not to mention the supranational level. It was not possible, not only because of the omnipresent control performed by the communist secret police, but also because different conditions existing in a given country almost automatically determined the goals formulated by the local opposition groups and these varied from one country to another. Thus, the dissident movement, which got its political momentum in the region since the mid-1970's, has never formed a monolith.

It is quite difficult to assess the actual role of the dissident groups before 1989. It seems that – at a general level – they were not particularly dangerous for the regime (even if in certain periods the secret police functionaries

and the party itself could have thought the contrary). As long as the opposition was unable to find a mass support for its programme within the society, there was no problem to control its activities. Even if in Poland in 1980 Solidarność effectively bridged the gap between the dissidents and the society, after the declaration of martial law in December 1981, the government managed to reduce considerably the Solidarity's influence among the population (although the government failed to eradicate it completely).<sup>[11]</sup> On the other hand, the role of the democratic opposition in the region of Central and Eastern Europe – in spite of its limited influence before 1989 – remained non-negligible. After all, in those countries where before 1989 dissidents were able to set up a permanent organizational structure, the process of transfer of power as well as the transformation took a significantly different course than in those, where only isolated individuals sought to contest the reality of the communist regime.

The circumstances outlined above are worth noting also because they form a partial answer to the question of why the task to find a common denominator for the trajectories of economic and political transformation that took place in the whole region after 1989 is all but an easy one. Hence, if the bottom line of the *Autumn of Nations* may be brought to the rejection of the system in place, the same is not necessarily true for the political and economic transformation.

## Revolution, transformation, restoration, or counterrevolution?

Looking for answers to the question on the essence of the *Autumn of Nations*, the traditional reading of the events of that particular year usually sought to place it within the limits determined by the terms *revolution/refolution*, and *transformation/reform/evolution*.<sup>[12]</sup> Conventional wisdom supported by numerous authorities seems to be of the view that both descriptions of *the Autumn of Nations* are essentially weak as they are not able to offer the complete picture of all origins, courses and consequences of the events which took place

in 1989. Thus, according to Dragoş Petrescu or Friedbert W. Rüb revolutions include some great ideals, which are then meant to shape a new order. In this perspective, the October 1917 in Russia must be qualified as having a revolutionary character since a radical and sudden change of social and political system was imposed, based on a singular, coherent, and holistic ideology. In contrast, the essential nature of the events of 1989 was in turn solely the rejection of residues of revolutionary ideas as understood up until then but this ideological vacuum was not replaced by another utopian vision.<sup>[13]</sup> Nor may the term *transformation* claim the universal applicability to all processes started in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 as this term put an emphasis on the element of continuity and/or the peaceful character of the developments of the *Autumn of Nations* correlated with the elements of political and economic reforms. In this perspective, it would be very difficult to label the Romanian revolt as an event having this character, keeping in mind the execution of the Ceauşescu couple as well as further developments in this country.<sup>[14]</sup>

While it is true that the traditional terminological apparatus is a bit misleading, on the other hand there is no better idea, how to describe the essence of the *Autumn of Nations* with just a single word. In our opinion, it is a daunting task, as at a closer look one can quite easily notice in the events of 1989 not just one but at least three different but intertwined elements, namely, a revolution, a transformation (transition), and – what is not too frequently acknowledged in the literature – a restoration (with elements of counterrevolution). Let us analyse the role of those three elements.

**Revolution.** Although very often the *Autumn of Nations* is denied to have a revolutionary character, herewith we would like to caution against too hasty conclusions. The rejection of communism as a certain political, economic, and social system, which took place in 1989, left behind it a certain ideological vacuum. It was filled however, in the way of acceptance, on the one hand with the values of market economy, democracy, human rights and civil society, and on the other with national and Christian tendencies, all followed by ever greater sections of East-Central European societies, including the communist nomenklatura. Hence, looking for an ideology

being of a utopian character that could have played the role of the catalyst of the change triggered by the 1989, it was a liberal democracy. This idea served as a sort of ideological cement throughout the span of the *Autumn of Nations*, even if its influence on the course of political developments could take a different form. Still, no matter if the transition of power took the form of round table negotiations (Poland, Hungary) or was the effect of mass protests and street fights (Romania), at the end of the day the core ideological elements, which the new incoming political elite promised to the public were exactly the same, and accepted both by the opposition and the communist nomenklatura. No matter then whether the general elections (on democratic basis) were called as a result of months-long negotiations or as a result of the bloody fights, what counts is that in 1989 liberal ideology had an appeal strong enough to force the politicians of both sides to accept this mechanism. And more importantly: they accepted it because it was the sole solution allowing to avoid the prolongation of the political gridlock which could have terminated in an uncontrolled turmoil or – on the contrary – because it was the sole solution that the people protesting on the streets were ready to accept.

The general elections opened the door for the adoption of further elements of liberal democratic ideology, such as abolishment of censorship, introduction of the multiparty political system based on the checks and balances principle, freedom of association, freedom of speech, protection of property etc. Most of them were anchored – as a legal principle – in the constitution (no matter whether its text was a newly drafted one or substantially modified only). True, not all abovementioned liberal hard cores were introduced at once. The pace of reforms was determined by different timings. What counts here, however, is not the question, which country completed the political reform as first, but the fact that all of them started it at a similar time and those changes were considered by the international community to be irreversible: by 1993, all analysed countries acquired full membership in the Council of Europe.

One could eventually deny the revolutionary character of the year 1989, arguing that by the 1980's the liberal democracy might not have

been qualified as utopia at all. What is more: the final goal aimed for by the changes introduced after the fall of the Iron Curtain in all the former member states of the Comecon and the Warsaw Pact was the rapprochement with the political, economic, social and cultural standards of Western Europe and the USA. By continuing this line of reasoning, one can reach the conclusion that – merely because of its imitative character – those changes were deprived of the utopian character, which is the core element of every revolution. Although this line of reasoning has certain rational elements, it may not be accepted as a whole. It is true that in the 1990's policies of all the governments in the region were influenced or at least inspired by the Western standards and wanted to improve the economic and social conditions in the region and to close the gap between their countries and the rest of the Old Continent. It is also obvious that in 1989 liberal democracy was everything but a new political project. However, it is not enough to state that the *Autumn of Nations* was deprived of a utopian ideological fundament. In 1989 for most countries of the region, the project of liberal democratic regime was a political novelty or a sort of experiment. The final success of its implementation remained unwarranted. Thus, even if the events of the *Autumn of Nations* did not bring any project, which similarly to the 1789 or 1917 could eventually claim its totally original character (i.e. completely unknown in the previous history of political doctrines), one should not forget that most of reforms may be treated as a sort of an abstract idea, with which societies of Central and Eastern Europe were not familiar in their previous history. To sum up: searching for arguments undermining the revolutionary credentials of the *Autumn of Nations*, we conclude that the liberal democratic project was sufficiently strong to qualify it as a substitution of a future-oriented ideology, which usually plays the role of the catalyst of change introduced by a revolution.

The argument denying a revolutionary character of the *Autumn of Nations* because of the heterogeneous character of political forces, which were pushing for reforms is also unpersuasive. The forces that in February 1917 deposed Tsar Nicholas II from the Russian throne were not only pursuing visions, which were diametrically opposed to one another, but also the anti-tsarist politicians were acting in dispersion. In spite of that – they were

able to change the existing regime in the irreversible manner in a revolutionary way. In 1989 (with one notable exception of the GDR), most forces aiming at the removal of the incumbent dictatorship were unified within the specially created political platform (e.g. EKA in Hungary, OF in Czechoslovakia etc.), i.e. their degree of unification was much greater than a degree of unification of many other revolutionary forces.

More certain doubts arise if we focus not on the *ideology declared* but on the *results achieved*. Parts of societies and nomenklaturas did not accept liberal democratic values and the extent of this disagreement depended on the country. If this political void was sufficiently potent, it formed the basis of hybrid regimes such as those of Vladimír Mečiar in Slovakia 1994–1998, or not fully democratic governments in Bulgaria or Romania in the first half of the 1990's. Yet, while discussing this argument one should strictly distinguish between the mere ideology, which was used as a source of political inspiration for a change, and the results of its implementation in practice. Besides, in time, most of post-communist parties wholly accepted the postulates of social democrats, while groups calling for various forms of nationalism were marginalised and the nostalgia for communist systems was subject to complete erosion. Hence, the forces aiming at re-establishing the *ancien régime* were never successful and acceptance of liberal democracy became a precondition for electoral success of any political group.

To sum up: the events of 1989 assuredly had many characteristics typical for a revolution. No doubt, the rejection was the key element determining the very essence of the *Autumn of Nations* and the liberal democracy played a constant role of an ideological vehicle steering the change as well as the first set of reforms. Hence, what disallows to qualify the processes described in this book as revolutionary ones is not the lack of ideology, but rather the way of proceeding, or the method of handling the crisis adopted by the main political actors in 1989. Thus, according to Rüb, contrary to a classic revolution, during the *Autumn of Nations* – with one notable exception of the GDR – there is no question of total collapse of the state order existing up to then. Thus, neither the old system was replaced with a set of completely new (previously unknown) institutions, nor the old

bureaucracy was totally removed from key position they had held in public administration, economy, judiciary or media and replaced exclusively by revolutionaries or their followers. Besides, in the classic model of a revolution, the mobilisation of the crowd serves as a key tool to gain power and defend it against restoration forces. The same is not necessarily true for the events of 1989: depending on the country in question, the mobilisation of masses played a very different role in the process of the transfer of power. Finally, the role of ideologically motivated violence is important, as the classic revolution model starts from the premise that the ruling elite is ready to defend its positions even by the use of military power, thus the sole possibility to gain the power by revolutionaries goes by the use of force.<sup>[15]</sup> The same is usually untrue about the processes discussed in this book, as in most countries of the region the political actors made a clear effort to canalise the process within the previously negotiated framework (which took as a basis the existing *status quo*), only to open the channels for the planned change. This self-limiting revolution (where both the ruling elite and emerging newcomers in politics were seeking to impose a sort of self-limitations to attain the negotiated goals) is indeed something new, which differentiates remarkably the *Autumn of Nations* from the classic models of revolution known from the experiences of the past. Herewith we come to the conclusion that although in the events of 1989 there were certain elements of a revolution, it is more than certain that – in general – these events did not have a revolutionary character, at least in the classic understanding of revolution.

**Transformation.** The answer to the question of what were the goals of the political and economic changes introduced in East-Central Europe after 1989, seems to be quite clear: the return (as soon as possible) to the sphere of influence of the Euro-Atlantic world corroborated by the full membership in the EU and NATO considered as a sort of “certificate of belonging” to the western civilisation, as well as a warrant of future welfare and security of the region. Still, while the idea to treat “the Western dream” expressed unconditionally by the masses in 1989 as a common denominator for social processes triggered by the fall of the Iron Curtain is indeed intellectually attractive, it is questionable, as neither the transfer of power that took place

in 1989, nor the political and economic transformation followed the same or even an easily comparable course. The difference between the eruption of violence in Romania, which – according to Ash’s thesis – was pretty close to a classical revolution, and transfer of power, which was negotiated at the Round Table in Poland or Hungary differ in both form and substance. Setting aside the moral aspect of the execution of the Ceaușescu couple, the violent collapse of the regime in Romania not only heavily burdened the pace of reforms introduced later, but also prolonged the path to the EU and influenced the date of Romania’s accession, as well as the scope of its membership within the Union.<sup>[16]</sup> On the other hand, those countries where political actors adopted more evolutionary approach seem to have been better prepared for the membership in the European Union.<sup>[17]</sup> In addition, even though the analysed countries are at present under obligation to observe standards adopted at the level of the EU (and the standards of the Council of Europe as well), actually the degree of compliance of domestic provisions, as well as judicial and administrative practice, with norms stemming from the European legal system vary strongly from one country to another. Thus, it appears clearly that even thirty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, some countries are closer to the idea of functioning democracy and market economy and some – further.

Therefore, in our opinion, the EU and NATO standards may be treated as the common denominator for the assessment of political and economic transformation only to a degree. The gap between the pursued goals and the reality is too big to treat them as a unique measure tool of social and economic processes discussed above. Still, while it is not possible to construct just one common pattern of assessment, it is possible to indicate some factors, which influenced directly or indirectly the pace and the course of the transformation in all six countries. As regards the course of transformation process as such, we would like to restructure and further develop some arguments submitted in 2009 by German author Uwe Backes<sup>[18]</sup> and to propose the thesis as follows:

1) If before the developments of 1989:

a) reforms in the sphere of economy or changes aiming at the factual enlargement of the scope of personal freedoms, which after the end of Stalinist era communist party sought to introduce (if any such efforts actually took place) were totally or to a large extent abolished,

b) despite the thaw of the 1950's and the 1960's the scope of the repressions against people treated as the regime's enemies remained high up to the last day of the existence of the communist system,

c) despite a growing gap between the living standards in the West and the country in question, the communists were able to "buy up" the social peace and guarantee a passive obedience of the masses, thus making the real influences of the democratic opposition scant or non-existing,

then usually the course of the events in 1989 took the form of the more or less violent protests or riots ending up with the overthrowing of the power of the communist hardliners under the visible pressure exerted by the masses on incumbent rulers (cases: Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Romania).<sup>[19]</sup>

2) Conversely, if before 1989:

a) the communists sought to add some flexibility into the system in place, and those reforms (be as modest as they were) were not revoked in their substance in the 1970's (e.g. freedom to travel abroad, relaxation of censorship, some accommodation in the field of economy or religion etc.),

b) the role of the repression was significantly diminished compared to the Stalinist era,

c) the opponents, though persecuted, still had certain margin of tolerance, which enabled them to develop (legally or on the edge of the law) some activities aiming at the change of existing political and social *status quo*,

then usually in 1989 the transmission of power took place in a more peaceful manner i.e. in the form of a "negotiated revolution" (Hungary, Poland, to some extent also Bulgaria).<sup>[20]</sup> It should be underlined that even if the events of 1989 were a true political earthquake in all the USSR satellite states, the collapse of communism did not necessarily brought to power the former activists of democratic opposition. It is true that usually the first non-communist

government, which emerged after the demission of the incumbent rulers, was composed of persons who before 1989 had not held communist party card. Still – as it is clearly shown in the case of Romania or the GDR – this rule was not free of exceptions as in both countries the role of the former dissidents was very limited and their influence remained very low.<sup>[21]</sup>

**Restoration.** As every sudden change which is close to the classic revolution, the *Autumn of Nations* was not past-oriented but – on the contrary – future-oriented i.e. looking towards “the big promise” that was to be fulfilled by new governments as quickly as only possible. In spite of this, one can notice in the events of 1989 also elements of counterrevolutionary character (the abovementioned rejection of the Soviet revolution is the best proof of that thesis) and an attempt to restore certain elements of statehood that had existed before the Soviet invasion in 1945.<sup>[22]</sup> Of course, there could be no talk of a simple return to a pre-communist past. Still, the restoration of national emblems and other symbols or restoration of property confiscated by communists to private individuals (or repayment of damages for the lost property) should be qualified as past-oriented effects of 1989 aiming at the restitution of the pre-1945 state of affairs. Hence, the restoration understood as one of the key elements constituting the very essence of the *Autumn of Nations* truly existed. However, its influence on the course of events remained limited. In 1989, people were not interested in restoration of social relations that had existed before the WWII but in a quick catch up with standards of living of Western Europe. This future-oriented dimension was much stronger and the political parties, which were anchoring their ideological fundament in the legacy of parties acting in interwar or just after WWII periods usually terminated their political life very quickly. This was because those political doctrines that had been attractive in the 1930’s or the 1940’s were – in most cases – out of date in economic, social, and technical realities of the globalizing world of the late 1980’s. Thus, such “nostalgic” parties could politically survive only if they could anchor their actions in social relations that had not only survived, substantially unmodified, in the period of communism, but those that could also resist the pressure exerted on the “old world” by the process of globalization and reforms launched by the reformist governments aiming at the adaptation of their

countries to the Western standards. In practice, both conditions were usually very difficult to be met. Some were successful, however – e.g. despite strong communist pressure, and setting aside the problem of confiscation of landlords' property, which took place in the 1940's, the rural segment in Poland survived the communist period relatively unchanged. Thus, millions of small farms, so typical for the Polish villages and small towns, offered the social basis strong enough to anchor deeply the PSL grassroots organizations and to allow it to enter the Sejm, in which its deputies have been sitting until now. Because of similar reasons, after the collapse of communism, thanks to the surviving pre-war industry in the Czech Republic, the Social democrats could restore their influence and play a major role in the Czech politics even today. Still, those are rather exceptions. Usually the “nostalgic parties” were unable to find a broader support and after some years of activity disappeared from the political scene.

## The Aftermath

The communist rule collapsed in all six countries discussed above three decades ago. As stated already, in spite of differences among them during the dictatorship period and the specific paths of transition, in the long term all of them were subordinated to similar processes – reforms towards the liberal democracy, rule of law and market economy. The reference point was membership in the EU and NATO. Despite the turbulences along that path, all of them reached the goal and the process was finalized in 2007.<sup>[23]</sup> Even though they still remain poorer members of the Euro-Atlantic world, they have managed to develop at a good (and sometimes very good) pace, which resulted in narrowing the gap between them and the Western countries. Membership in both organisations was also perceived as a way out of a “grey zone” of security. One could state that unquestionable successes should please societies of the region and make them look into the future with serenity. However, the reality does not look that optimistic, and we can distinguish two waves of dissatisfaction with the effects of the reforms and the direction of development in the countries.

**The first wave of discontent.** It came soon after the change of rule, when it appeared that the rejection of the *ancien régime* did not bring immediate improvement of the economic situation. The problem was that, basically, the principal cause of the collapse of the communist regime was just the economic one: budgets were unable to afford to provide the previous standards of living which – to add bad to worse – in the second half of the 1980's were deteriorating and this caused enormous social frustration. Hence, the essence of the problem, which the new rulers faced since the moment of their coming to power, was the visible discrepancy between the masses' expectations and the political realities.

In the realities of the turn of the 1980's and the 1990's in Central and Eastern Europe, the necessity to adopt (at least to a certain degree) the policy of tightening the belt had to entail not the "immediate improvement" but, rather, further aggravation of the "temporary difficulties". The necessity to cut spending almost automatically put on the question of further functioning of hundreds of state-owned factories, that – until then – were employing thousands of persons. The problem was that because of the shortage of money, low level of innovativeness and outdated mode of production, up until the end of communism those factories usually were operating without any substantial modernization. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, many (or perhaps even most?) of them faced an enormous challenge – to survive in the more and more globalized world ruled by the free market economy principles, where the goods and services offered by foreign competitors were of much better quality and usually sold at the prices affordable for domestic customers. The problem of industries, which under communism had been producing goods of such a low quality that after the collapse of the regime no one was interested to buy them any more – remained acute in all the analysed countries.<sup>[24]</sup> Many of the factories failed and went bankrupt. Thus, after the fall of the Iron Curtain the necessity of employment reduction and its effects (the rise of unemployment rate) ceased to be a "science fiction" characteristic of the capitalist countries only. Suddenly it started to be one of the greatest social problems, which had a strong impact in all the former satellite countries of the USSR. The problem was deepened by the policy of the World Bank and the IMF, which were unwilling to grant credits

for restructuring, remembering previous bad experience with countries of the region.<sup>[25]</sup> Therefore, the economic conservatism had a strong impact on the policy of the global finance institutions summarized in the so-called “Washington consensus”.<sup>[26]</sup>

The requirements declared by the World Bank and the IMF were for some governments really hard to accept, as they exerted pressure to slash the public funding on many social programmes which meant temporary deterioration of such cardinal public services as health care, education or pension systems. This is the most probable explanation why the reactions of the governments of the analysed countries to those demands were not uniform. If Poland adopted the “shock therapy” in close cooperation with the IMF and the World Bank Group,<sup>[27]</sup> the Czechoslovak government remained much more cautious on the issue of possible assistance from both institutions,<sup>[28]</sup> and the Hungarian elite decided to relinquish the communist legacy gradually.<sup>[29]</sup> However, at the end of the day it appeared that both Leszek Balcerowicz and Václav Klaus (later followed by their Hungarian, Romanian or Bulgarian counterparts) had no other option but to implement austerity measures, liberalize trade, deregulate barriers to entry; finally, they had to adopt an FDI-friendly policy, as well as to open their domestic markets for the goods and services coming from abroad. More importantly, the prolongation of the *status quo* inherited from the communist era did not lead to the improvement of the economic situation and – in the light of the materials analysed in this book – seems that the strategy based on more gradual approach adopted by the Hungarian government, or total refusal to accept economic realities (the case of Romania and Bulgaria) brought even worse results and a deeper crisis than the shock therapy adopted by Balcerowicz and his team, or a conservative approach implemented by Václav Klaus and his colleagues.<sup>[30]</sup> Thus, sooner or later, all the governments came to the conclusion that there was no option other than to adopt at least a part of the package contained on the list of the Washington consensus.

It did not lead (and could not, not only in the short, but also in the medium term) to the full equalisation of living standards with those in place in Western Europe. Even though in macroeconomic terms it brought rather

positive effects, it is also clear that the therapy programme entailed a non-negligible social cost, namely the unemployment. People losing their jobs in the rapidly diminishing public sector were not able to find new ones, which was due to different factors. Firstly, the over-employment under communism,<sup>[31]</sup> which meant too many people on the labour market. Secondly, skills of the unemployed people (often, communist bureaucrats, Marxism lecturers or unqualified workers) were in complete contradiction with the market needs, which often “sentenced” them to “life unemployment”.

Thus, after 1989 the mass unemployment constituted a serious problem in every country analysed in this book. It is true that the plague of unemployment hit these countries in a different manner: if in Poland or East Germany this was a huge challenge, in contrast in Romania (perhaps because of the illegal mass emigration of Romas to Western Europe which – at least temporary – could have diminished the pressure on the labour market) or the Czech Republic, the rise of the number of people seeking a job hopelessly was not so spectacular.<sup>[32]</sup> The problem had yet another variable: geographical differentiation. Suffice it to state that if in some regions finding work was not a problem as such (e.g. capital cities), the situation in others (e.g. German Mecklemburg Vorpommern, Czech Moravia, Polish Warmian-Masurian region), was much more dramatic. It led to creation of big enclaves, where it was almost impossible to find a job and the social frustration reached the top.

The change of economic and social system triggered “a new set” in the process of social stratification: for thousands of people the change of 1989 opened the channel for a professional career and a considerable improvement of their material status. This remark concerns not only the former members of the communist nomenklatura, but also those who decided to quit their previous jobs and join the private sector (e.g. hoteliers, restaurateurs, shop-keepers, barristers in law, physicians etc.). They were the “winners” of the *Autumn of Nations*. On the other hand, as mentioned above, huge groups of “losers” were created. The pauperisation of unqualified clerks, workers, and farmers led to exclusion of their traditional place within the society. In the eyes of the “losers”, 1989 and its aftermath not only failed to improve

anything but – conversely to the expectations raised by the revolutionary dreams – led to the visible deterioration of their personal standards of living.

The increasing frustration over policies pursued by new governments was further bolstered by another factor – the modus of privatisation. The key challenge was the problem of adoption of adequate criteria determining all mechanisms of privatisation, as no example of such process on a similar scale was to be found in the world's history. As budgets of all the countries of the region urgently needed some additional inflows to cover growing deficits and/or to pay back credit interests, the highest price offered was in the vast majority of cases the only decisive factor,<sup>[33]</sup> which was not necessarily an optimal solution in the long term, as no other elements were taken into consideration (i.e. the conditions of maintaining employment, strategy of development of a company in question and so on).<sup>[34]</sup> The problem was multiplied by a permanent lack of clear legal framework, which could have served as a legitimisation of the transfer of property.<sup>[35]</sup>

Due to a lack of trust from foreign capital (and unclear decisions made by the rulers), most of bidders stemmed from the circles of home-grown emerging business elite.<sup>[36]</sup> There is no doubt that in most cases the privatisation process was not transparent, where the simple corruption, contacts with a decision maker or legal loopholes played the role of the decisive factor in the process of transfer of stated-owned company to a new proprietor.<sup>[37]</sup> At the turn of the 1980's and the 1990's "old comrades" "appropriated" numerous small and medium-size state owned companies, although the scale of these "appropriations" varied from one country to another. This factor played – no doubt – a very important role in a smooth and peaceful character of transition and allows to understand why in most countries of the region the reforms launched by the new governments were not directly opposed by all forces stemming from the *ancien régime*.

However, the above-mentioned problem had a dramatic impact on the perception of the events of 1989, as the frauds and mistakes in the privatisation happened after collapse of communism, i.e. under the rulings of new governments, which made them responsible for that in common perception.

Therefore, increasing belief appeared that this apparent turning of a blind eye to the fraudulent practices undertaken by the former nomenklatura members was not a pure coincidence but an effect of a secret deal allegedly struck between the communists and the emerging new power elite. This cost new governments not only loss of credibility but it also put into question the moral legitimacy of the emerging new regime. It was almost impossible for the new elite to defend on moral ground the final result achieved during the transformation, where the functionaries of the old regime (very often bearing enormous responsibility for the crimes committed during the communist era) not only went unpunished for their deeds, but also emerged considerably enriched.<sup>[38]</sup>

As the enrichment of the emerging elite was going in pair with more and more visible pauperisation of large segments of the Eastern and Central European societies, the brilliant careers of former apparatchiks were felt by the general public even more painfully as until the collapse of communism egalitarianism was treated as one of the theoretical fundamentals of the existing system. Thus, the emerging social stratification and its consequences (above all, the increasing income gap between the highest and the lowest earnings) had to contribute to the eruption of the social frustration, which could slow down reforms, or at least complicate them.

As it was mentioned above, the economic factors that influenced the first wave of social frustration were intertwined with moral ones. Here, we come to another crucial point: the retribution (or, rather, the lack of it). Although usually every revolution goes in pair with demands for punishment of at least some members of the former ruling elite (which in the opinion of general public bears a responsibility for the deeds of the overthrown regime), one of the most astonishing characteristics of the consequences of the collapse of communism is a rather mild approach to the people who were ousted from power in 1989, even if some of the acts they had committed in the past were generally known and – keeping in mind the law in force – who should have been brought before a court. However, this happened relatively rarely.<sup>[39]</sup>

This was due to several reasons. Firstly, the former oppositionists and dissidents demanded the state reform in the vein of the rule of law doctrine (*Rechtsstatlichkeit*) treated as a fundament of the liberal democracy, which after the fall of communism complicated the effective retribution (as no collective guilt or retroactivity of law could have been considered).<sup>[40]</sup> In addition, applying some very cardinal principles of the democratic criminal procedure proved challenging in such cases; for example, the collection of evidence supporting a case against former communist functionaries was very often a Herculean task. “Comrades” themselves had deliberately destroyed many documents before the power in a country in question was taken over by the new government. Against this backdrop, one could even ask if this sort of pseudo-retribution policy was solely motivated by the rule of law principles or perhaps by some other factors of a clearly political character. Although there is lack of a decisive proof, the second answer could be the correct one.

Another reason for refraining from the large-scale retribution was much more trivial and involved the lack of qualified staffers in the camp of the opposition, who could eventually replace those persons, who were removed from office because of their alleged deeds. The mere fact that (Poland set aside) in most of the countries in question the opposition activities had been undertaken by narrow circles of democratically oriented intellectuals, made the new governments vulnerable on the lack of experts in many areas, who are usually absolutely indispensable to sustain the day-to-day work of state machinery. In such a situation, the new governments had to decide whether to remove the old-staffers from their posts immediately and replace them with unqualified newcomers,<sup>[41]</sup> or to keep the bureaucrats in place until new, trained staff appeared.<sup>[42]</sup> This dilemma was anything but easy to solve; however, no government established in the aftermath of the *Autumn of Nations* decided to carry out mass replacements of staff in public administration, which undermined the public confidence in the state. The other side of the same coin is that if mass replacement in broadly understood public administration were pursued, unqualified newcomers making errors and mistakes could have also undermined the public confidence. However, the “old staffers” were often not flexible (unable to catch up with the rapidly

changing world), and – even more importantly – in many cases, they were clearly at the service of organized crime.<sup>[43]</sup>

Finally, the situation faced by new governments was further exacerbated by some additional factors. It would be naïve to state that corruption was the plague that hit post-communists only. Sooner or later, former opposition members were also drawn into embezzlements scandals, which additionally undermined their political credibility and drastically diminished the faith of citizens in the future-oriented project of state reforms.

In collective memory, the first years after the collapse of communism are even now assessed not necessarily as “a difficult start” to “a better future”, but rather as a period of growing disillusion, where the big dreams of 1989 were gradually replaced by the growing frustration of large segments of the respective societies. The problem is that the framework of democracy, which started to emerge after 1989, was amalgamated with personal experiences, where a common citizen was facing some or all of the pathologies described above. Consequently, the image of the state and its institutions not only failed to improve but also, on the contrary, even further deteriorated. This went in pair with an increase of social apathy. To add bad to worse, all those processes proceeded parallel to the drastic economic and political change. No surprise then that the scale and the pace of the *refolution* brought about an erosion of family relationships coupled with the adoption by large segments of society of the extreme individualistic approach, which entailed a general decline of interest in public affairs. Keeping all this in mind, it is not surprising that the average voter turnout in all the countries analysed in this book has never attained the figures in Western countries, and that membership in political parties, NGOs, and associations also remained considerably lower.<sup>[44]</sup>

The circumstances described above brought about the “first wave” of social frustration, which led to nostalgia for overthrown communism. It helps to understand why the communists were able to set up political parties, which – at least in some countries – safeguarded their influence on the political scene even after their countries’ accession to the EU. There is no doubt

that this clash between people's dreams and hard realities was at the source of the growing nostalgia for the *status quo ante*. After all, everybody knew that the living standards granted by the previous system were rudimentary at best and that the civic rights were drastically limited. Still, at the same time, in the eyes of many people that system granted certainty regarding very basic economic and social rights. And even if this conviction was only partly true, nevertheless the chaos created by the *Autumn of Nations* was at the same time a decisive factor which allowed the post-communists to regain (at least in part) political power.

The influence of the post-communist parties differed. While in some countries (e.g. Hungary, Poland) they were strong enough to play a crucial role in some governments, the same is not true about the Czech Republic or the former GDR, where – although present in the respective Parliaments – they were treated to political isolation by the parties of the political mainstream. The difference also appears regarding the level of their transformation into democratic parties. In Hungary or Poland, they were flexible enough to play the role of social democrats, and fully accept the transition towards liberal democracy, while in Czechoslovakia they were not able to transform. Thus, a paradox occurred whereby post-communists in countries where they were able to participate in power were not ready to fulfil expectations of nostalgic feelings of a part of the electorate. Therefore, if the key problem of the political forces rooted in previous opposition was their inability to fulfil the promise of a better life in the future, the key problem of the post-communists (if in power) was their inability to restore “the lost paradise” claimed by their voters.

One could expect that the failure to catch up with “the Western standards” immediately and the failure to restore “the lost communist paradise” should have had a heavy impact on the domestic policy. Over many years, this hypothesis was only partially true, as hope to attain the living standards of the EU was sustained by the prospects of the accession to the Union. Since the early 1990's, the chances to acquire the full EU membership were constantly increasing; therefore, the people were still ready to believe that

once their countries accede to the EU, their personal situation would radically change. This expectation appeased their frustration to a certain degree.

**The second wave of discontent.** The full assessment of all the effects of accession of former Eastern bloc countries to the EU and NATO has never been done and is still waiting for its author, and we are not in a position to give here a full analysis of the issue. However, it is more than certain that membership in the EU entailed many positive consequences: a visible and constant improvement of standards of living of many inhabitants of the region (especially those in rural areas, who thanks to the subsidies of the Common Agricultural Policy could quite quickly improve their individual situations); a decline in unemployment, or development of modern infrastructure. In this sense, the accession to the European Union was a logical result of the breakthrough, which had taken place in 1989 simply because the processes triggered by the collapse of communism were further continued and further strengthened after joining the EU by these countries. Simultaneously however, the accession could not overshadow the sad realities that despite reforms launched before these countries were accepted as full members, the discrepancy in standards of living between the East and the West of the Union has remained a problem. In our opinion, this is the source of the growing frustration. Herewith we would like to submit certain points, which may allow to better understanding of this new phenomenon.

- 1) **The crisis of the EU.** The accession of the former Eastern Bloc countries to the EU coincided with the next phase of stagnation of the Union itself. The 2008 financial crisis further exacerbated its situation and after over 10 years, it is still unclear whether the political forces aiming at the disruption of the EU in its contemporary shape will be strong enough to implement their programme. Be that as it may it is enough to state that as early as some years ago, having observed the progressing erosion of the EU, some countries of the region silently re-evaluated their previous “euro enthusiasm”.<sup>[45]</sup> This political trend was even further strengthened by the impact that the crisis had on the economies of the new member states. As Wojciech Bieńkowski correctly observed, even if during a couple

of years just after the accession the process of convergence was quite easy to observe, the same is not true after 2008.<sup>[46]</sup> Moreover, it is self-evident that it is at least reasonable to assume that the financial crisis did not contribute to an improvement of the image of Brussels.

- 2) **Low level of innovation.** It is open for debate whether the membership in the EU contributed to the significant improvement in the area of scientific research and innovation (and when so – to what extent).<sup>[47]</sup> Without dwelling on this point, it is enough to draw attention to two aspects. Firstly, it is not a secret that the total expenditure on the R&D within the EU's budget has played only marginal role.<sup>[48]</sup> Secondly, although this hypothesis should be further verified, it looks like the leading scientific or research centres within the EU have always been located outside the territories of the new members of the Union. This gap is not only not diminishing but, rather, it has still grown.<sup>[49]</sup> It needs to be pointed out that the “improvement in scientific research” must be clearly distinguished from the modernization as such, which happened after the accession with a great role played by the EU. This is true to a different degree depending on country. As the projects implemented in Poland significantly improved the chances of its economy and diminished the gap between this country and the West of Europe, the same is not necessarily true about other countries of the region. Some, even before the collapse of communism had been more advanced as far as infrastructure is concerned (the current Czech Republic) or – just on the contrary – were unable to set up an appropriate apparatus to absorb the EU funding (e.g. Bulgaria). This may explain to some extent, why the perception of the EU is usually more positive in Poland than e.g. in the Czech Republic.<sup>[50]</sup> If in some countries the effects were immediate and impressive, in others those effects are not widely known to the general public.
- 3) **The role of the foreign capital and the middle-income trap.** The hope that the accession would spur the foreign capital inflow appeared – in principle – correct.<sup>[51]</sup> The question is, however, whether (and when so – to what a degree) the FDI invested in the countries analysed in this

book contributed to improve the innovative character of domestic economies, and this issue is also open for further debate. In our opinion, there is no question about a linear connection between these two occurrences. On the one hand, the mere presence of the foreign capital played a vital role in a dramatic change of such factors like organization of companies, effective allocation of resources (including human resources), and – finally – application of new (totally unknown under communism) technologies. All in all there is no doubt that the buyout of companies that had been state-owned prior to 1989 or greenfield investments largely contributed to the improvement of quality of goods and services placed on the domestic market and to exporting them abroad. On the other hand, the FDI inflow to Central and Eastern Europe spurred by the EU enlargement was stimulated not by the conviction of the innovative attractiveness of the region but was based on the low labour costs. As a result, investors preferred those branches, which promised quick and unproblematic returns (e.g. supermarkets chains). In the medium term, it had to spark a problem on two different levels. Firstly, although it is undeniable that in some countries (e.g. Poland) the presence of the foreign capital was a factor contributing to curbing (and later diminishing) the mass unemployment, the salaries paid to the employees remained significantly below the average in Western Europe. Secondly, the entrance of the global giants on the markets of the region was very often tantamount to a “death sentence” to many SMEs active in the 1980’s and the 1990’s, which were too weak to compete. Finally, the attractiveness of the countries analysed in this book for FDI had also its shadow price (with privileges granted to attract them, which were not accessible to the domestic companies).<sup>[52]</sup> Therefore, we subscribe to the view that, keeping in mind the slack off, the convergence coupled with the low level of innovation poses a serious threat of the middle income trap for all the countries in the region (perhaps with the one exception of the Czech Republic).<sup>[53]</sup>

- 4) **Demographic crisis.** Domestic salaries stagnation (which was further exacerbated by the global crisis of 2008), entailed a serious threat for all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe caused by the free

movement of persons principle within the EU. Even if some of the old members of the Union laid down a transitional period clause into the text of the Accession Treaties, others did not. Today it is clear that just those legal pillars of the UE triggered the enormous migrant flux from the East to the West. Suffice it to state that at the end of 2015 the number of Poles living permanently in the UK was c. 1 million, the number of Romanians totalled in 233 000, and Hungarians – 92 000.<sup>[54]</sup> The prospect of earnings 2.5 or 3 times higher than the salaries offered at home<sup>[55]</sup> acted like a magnet attracting hundreds of thousands of young people from Central and Eastern Europe to England, Germany or Scandinavian countries. The mass migration drastically accelerated the ageing of Central and East European populations. This process has been further exacerbated by the parallel decline of fertility rates. The consequences of these processes pose a real threat to the stability of the pension system but this is just an example of a plethora of different problems caused by the phenomenon of ageing of populations.<sup>[56]</sup>

- 5) **The day-to-day practice of the functioning of the EU.** There is no question that the accession to the EU (and some years earlier to NATO) significantly improved the level of external security of the countries analysed in this book. Still, the experiences gathered during the last decade by the political elites of countries of the region often caused their frustration even if they seldom expressed their doubts publicly. The Franco-German motor of the European integration was not in a hurry to take into due account specific problems of Central and Eastern European partners.<sup>[57]</sup> Hence, the open preference for the interests of the “big countries” over the concerns of the “small countries” has been the point of persistent controversy between the East and the West. This is why the strong reaction of Visegrad Group against German plans to relocate migrants arriving *en masse* to the West of Europe to the new member states is everything but surprising. This reaction is still more understandable if one takes into account an open crisis of national identity in contemporary Europe. In the case of countries analysed in this book, the problem is much more acute if it is compared with the same process of erosion of nationhood occurring in countries like Germany or France.

Keeping in mind that in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries most of the countries analysed in this book had enormous problems to safeguard their independence (or – at least some of them – their very existence), one should not be surprised that the increasing role of the EU bureaucracy was considered by most of them with mixed feelings at best.

Specific factors that played a role in both waves of frustration in Central and Eastern Europe differ, as different are the symptoms within societies of the region. One fundamental basis which is a root for the whole dissatisfaction lasting (with level changing in time) since 1990 in all the countries discussed above must be stressed here. This basis is hope (or expectation) to catch up with the Western standards of living, which has been impossible to achieve in the 30 years following the *Autumn of Nations*. The visible improvement of living standards appeared to be unsatisfactory, as it did not mean equalizing with the West, which for many years was seen as a “paradise”.

“Going back to Europe” is not a popular phrase in Central and Eastern Europe, as inhabitants of the region usually claim they have always been Europeans – noted Polish historian Wojciech Roszkowski. Nevertheless, the accession to NATO and the European Union are in fact turning points on these countries’ road to political pluralism and economic prosperity, the two objectives that usually enjoyed a widespread support. Whether NATO and the European Union will meet the expectations of people from the region is a different matter. Frustration over high hopes has frequently been an important factor of change not only in the region, but also elsewhere.<sup>[58]</sup>

The “second wave” of frustration in the countries analyzed in this book is a complicated problem. It is overlapping with the global change of the post-Cold War system of security, the crisis in the European Union (possibly, the biggest one in its history), as well as with the challenge faced by the Western idea of liberal democracy. It should be seen in this broad context, which shows (at least to some extent), that turbulences and frustrations of the Eastern and Central European societies are nothing exceptional. The popularity of parties emphasizing the need of strengthening role of the political

will over the liberal democratic institutions is visible.<sup>[59]</sup> Still however, it is hard to answer the question, whether this is a long term and deep systemic change or a mere turbulence. And – more importantly – whether it is a Central-Eastern European phenomenon or a part of a greater, global change of the foundations of Western civilization. Fortunately, it is not our task to answer those questions, at least not in this book.

[1] Timothy Garton Ash, *Refolution...*, op. cit. Cf. Chapter Preface, supra note 2.

[2] Cf. Introduction.

[3] See e.g. Havel, *The power...*, op. cit., discussed in the chapter on Czechoslovakia.

[4] Cf. Introduction.

[5] It is true that the question of the real mood that prevailed during *the Autumn of Nations* in these milieus is even today one of the problems that has not been definitely settled yet. The fact remains that in 1989 power ministries did not opt clearly on the side of the old regime. This argument holds the water also in the case of Romania. Ceausescu indeed tried to push the army against the demonstrators, but the army joined the protesters relatively quickly and by the end of December 1989, the dictator and his wife were betrayed by the top army officers. Cf. Chapter on Romania.

[6] In the case of Hungary, the same happened de facto after 1956, and in the 1970's Budapest was already in another phase of the cycle.

[7] Another problem, which probably was a non-negligible hurdle on the road of communist reformers, was the economic reliability of the programme they wanted to set in motion. Without dwelling on if (and when – yes, to what extent) a decentralisation of decision making process within state-owned enterprises could have improved the overall economic performance of a state governed by communists in the 1950's and the 1960's, one should not forget that the erosion and collapse of the Yugoslav model (which, not coincidentally, occurred in the 1980's) may serve as a strong argument that any programme of reform of communism was in the 1980's a utopian one.

[8] This conclusion is true even if (as it was the case of some groups being active in East Germany) similar concepts could have found support in a part of the opposition circles. No matter then, who wanted to reform the communist system (member of the communist party or members of opposition). At the end of the day, such a group had to lose: the progress of globalization was too advanced and Western ideas too widely aired, thus usually the projects elaborated in the 1950's and the 1960's seemed to most voters as too old-fashioned.

[9] Adam Zwass, *Economies of Eastern Europe...*, op. cit., p. 147.

[10] At the margin of the consideration above, another question arises: if Gorbachev was not successful in his operation to secure the existence of the USSR, how to explain the case of China under the rule of Deng Xiaoping? It is not our task to dwell on this problem in the monograph dealing with Eastern and Central Europe; however, some possible factors should be mentioned

here. The different starting points in both cases seem to be crucial in understanding the differences. The stalemate in the Soviet Union caused by the Brezhnev era created sufficient internal pressure for some reforms, which, at least at the beginning, could count for support from a part of the Soviet bureaucracy, apparently interested in improving their living standards even if this improvement could have been attained at the cost of the concessions in the field of ideology. When in 1981 Deng Xiaoping took power, the expectation of the population was not necessarily connected with the political liberalisation of the regime, rather in stabilisation. This is probably why Deng's programme, coupling political stabilisation with limited concessions made in the field of economy, could find a broad support. Another crucial difference is the problem of ethnicity and nations, which appeared in the USSR and did not in China. While in the Soviet Union the pressure for gradual changes raised national issue and in the end led to the dissolution of the USSR, in China no such problem was noted. Thus, the different situation in Soviet Union and China created the different paths of further developments, where the former disappeared from the map of the world and the power of the latter seems to be in constant increase.

The above view does not claim to be fully original. The role of political stability as a sort of precondition for efficient reform in China was noted as early as in the mid-1990's. See: Adam Zwass, *From Failed Communism to Underdeveloped Capitalism: Transformation of Eastern Europe, the Post-Soviet Union, and China*, M. E. Sharpe: Armonk, NY. 1995, p.202. The same author seemed to be of the opinion that the different goals determined by the significant differences in living standards existing in both countries also played significant roles in the different paths of further developments in the USSR and China. (id. pp. 194–202).

[11] The Polish case has indeed certain specificity, which makes it substantially different from other countries analysed in this book: the main difference is the independent role of the third force, (the Catholic Church) which played the role of an efficient intermediary between the communists and the society.

[12] Cf. Preface and the authors quoted therein.

[13] In this sense, we can state that the words of Dragoş Petrescu quoted above: "There are at least three major differences between the 1989 events and the "great" revolutions, which can be summarized as follows: the 1989 transformations were not inspired by utopian visions, did not have a class character and were not violent, the Romanian exception notwithstanding." See also: Friedbert W. Rüb, "'1989' Revolutionen oder koordinierte Transformationen?", [in:] Clemens Vollnhals (ed.), *Jahre des Umbruchs...*, op. cit., pp. 261 – 263.

[14] However, Rüb apparently seeks to prove the contrary. See: Rüb, 1989..., op. cit., p. 257.

[15] Ibid., p. 245.

[16] Even more than 10 years after accession, Romania and Bulgaria remain outside of the Schengen Treaty provisions, and the question when both countries will be allowed to accede to it must be left without a clear answer.

[17] It is true only according to political reforms. Taking into consideration economy, harsher reforms (e.g. in Poland and Czechoslovakia) seem to prepare countries better for the accession.

[18] Uwe Backes, "Strukturwandel realsozialistischer Autokratien – vom Totalitarismus zur Transition" ("Structural change in Real Socialist Autocracies – from Totalitarianism to Transition"), [in:] Clemens Vollnhals (ed.), *Jahre des Umbruchs...*, pp. 141–158.

[19] Of course, of all those cases the one of Romania was the most drastic one, as the “transmission of power” occurred in much more dramatic and chaotic circumstances than in the case of Czechoslovakia and the GDR.

[20] Uwe Backes, *Strukturwandel...*, op. cit., p. 154, arguing that there is a visible correlation between the character of the dictatorship and the model of transformation adopted after 1989 and its results: *Je starker die totalitäre Prägung erhalten geblieben war, desto mehr konnte diese den Transformations- und späteren Konsolidierungsprozess (...) belasten. Umgekehrt wurde die Transition (und etwaige spätere Konsolidierung) durch eine weiter fortgeschrittene Detotalisierung erleichtert.* Cf. also further analysis of this author, id. pp. 154–158.

[21] In our opinion, it is not a pure coincidence that before 1989 in both countries the communists excluded any dialogue whatsoever with the opposition forces and – instead of negotiations – up until the last minutes refused to accept the realities seeking to sustain the existing system as it had been with no modification at all.

[22] For the first time this thesis was presented in the discussion organized by the Institute of National Remembrance magazine. See: “Rok 1989 w państwach Europy Środkowej. Dyskusja z udziałem Adama Burakowskiego, Antoniego Dudka i Pawła Ukielskiego” (“The Year 1989 in Countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Discussion With Participation of Adam Burakowski, Antoni Dudek and Paweł Ukielksi”), [in:] *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość*, nr 2(18)/2011, p. 82.

[23] In the first phase of NATO enlargement (1999), the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were admitted, while in the second phase (2004) – Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia. Accordingly, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia became members of the EU in 2004, while Bulgaria and Romania – in 2007. The GDR entered both the EU and NATO at the time of unification with West Germany in 1990.

[24] This was one of the principal dilemmas of the privatisation: as Károly Attila Soós correctly observed no buyers could have been found for a significant share of the enterprises (or parts thereof). Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies in Post-Communist Transition: Primary and Secondary Privatisation in Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, CEU, Budapest 2011, p. 21.

[25] John Nellis, *The World Bank, Privatization and Enterprise Reform in Transition Economies: A Retrospective Analysis*, The World Bank, Washington D.C. 2002, p. 6. See also: *25 years of transition: post-communist Europe and the IMF*, James Roaf, Ruben Atoyán, Bikas Joshi, Krzysztof Krogulski and an IMF staff team. – Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund 2014, p. IX.

[26] These premises (at least in their original form) were a) Fiscal discipline; b) A redirection of public expenditure priorities toward fields offering both high economic returns and the potential to improve income distribution, such as primary health care, primary education, and infrastructure; c) Tax reform (to lower marginal rates and broaden the tax base); d) Interest rate liberalization; e) A competitive exchange rate; f) Trade liberalization; g) Liberalization of inflows of foreign direct investment; h) Privatization; i) Deregulation (to abolish barriers to entry and exit); j) Secure property rights. Cf. John Williamson, *A Short History of the Washington Consensus Paper* commissioned by Fundación CIDOB for a conference “From the Washington Consensus towards a new Global Governance,” Barcelona, September 24–25, 2004, p. 2–3. Document available at: <https://piie.com/publications/papers/williamson0904-2.pdf>.

[27] Tamás Réti, *East Central European Economic Transition and the West*, Macalester International vol. 2, 1995, art. 9, s. 54–56; available at: <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1031&context=macintl>.

[28] Cf. Marek Dąbrowski, *Western Aid Conditionality and the Post-Communist Transition*, Foundation CASE, Warsaw, April 1995, p. 8.

[29] Tamás Réti, *East Central European...*, op. cit., pp. 57–59.

[30] Cf. Marek Dąbrowski, *Western Aid...*, op. cit. (passim), arguing that gradual approach offered worse outcome than the one achieved as the result of the “shock therapy”.

[31] János Kornai, *Economics of Shortage*, North Holland, Amsterdam 1980, p. 254. (arguing that in socialist economy one could have been “unemployed in job”).

[32] Cf. chapters on Poland, GDR, Romania, and Czechoslovakia respectively.

[33] However, see: Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies...*, op. cit., pp. 20–21 (who clearly demonstrates that the question of how to set this price was in the privatisation process also debatable).

[34] Cf. also the remarks of John Nellis on the case of Poland (John Nellis, *The World Bank...*, op. cit., pp. 10–11). It seems, however, that this dilemma did not form a part of “Polish specificity” but – as it was stressed by an expert of the World Bank Group – was a part of the general problems concerning the essential requirements which should be met so that the privatisation could be (in economic terms) maximally effective. (id.)

[35] The same problem had further consequences – lack of transparent and stable legal framework as well as political instability often influenced potential investors, who treated involvement of the capital in East-Central Europe as a “risky game”. See: Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies...*, op. cit., p. 22.

[36] This is not true, however, about Hungary, where the foreign capital was present since the early stage of privatisation. Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies...*, op. cit., p. 23. The specific case of the former GDR also seems to be a separate case, although one should not forget about the role of the former communist functionaries in the process of “saving” the SED property (cf. the Chapter on the GDR).

[37] John Nellis, *The World Bank...* op. cit., p. 49. This conclusion holds the water even for those countries, where – in Hungary – the privatisation took more orderly forms. Cf. Maté Szabó, *Ungarns Weg von der fröhlichsten Baracke des Ostblocks zur neuen Wohnanlage der EU (1956–1989–2006) (Hungary’s Path from the Happiest Barrack in the Eastern Bloc to the New EU Housing Complex (1956–2006))*, [in:] Clemens Vollnhals (ed.), *Jahre des Umbruchs...*, op. cit., p. 80.

[38] The intensity of maladministration or abuse of power in privatisation varied clearly from one country to another: if in Hungary the problem seemed to be relatively minor, in other countries, (e.g. Poland or Romania) the scale of those fraudulent practices was much greater. See: Károly Attila Soós, *Politics and Policies...*, op. cit. (passim).

[39] Helga A. Welsh, “Dealing with the Communist Past: Central and East European Experiences After 1990”, [in:] *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (May 1996), pp. 424 – 425; see also chapters on respective countries.

[40] The breach of procedure in the proceedings launched against former functionaries against the letter and spirit of law could have been badly received by Western politicians. The ruling elite of the USA adopted a rather cautious approach aiming at the avoidance whatsoever what could (potentially or actually) jeopardise, first and foremost, the stability in the region and – secondly, Perestroika and Gorbachev himself. After all, until the very end of the existence of the Soviet Union this part of the world was considered by the US diplomacy as the sphere of direct Soviet interests. And on many occasions, the Bush administration officials and the President himself

did everything possible to assure their Soviet counterparts that whatever was to be done by US diplomats in Central and Eastern European countries the US would honour the special interests of the Soviets in this region. See: Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition. American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C. 1994, pp. 379, 399–400. Today this position is officially acknowledged by the State Department: While Bush supported these independence movements, U.S. policy was reactive. Bush chose to let events unfold organically, careful not to do anything to worsen Gorbachev's position. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/collapse-soviet-union> See also, Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, op. cit., pp. 399–400. Keeping those principles of the US foreign policy in mind, is it not unreasonable to suppose that the retribution policy was hampered – at least to a degree – by the concerns of foreign policy, even though there is no direct proof to this effect.

[41] Here, another problem appeared – a lack of will to enter the public administration, while many new opportunities of enrichment emerged in the newly established business sector. Many young people, who could have been taken into consideration, were not interested in the public service.

[42] This dilemma was realized as early as in 1990. Cf. Jiří Pehe, “The controversy over communist managers”, *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, no. 36, 7 September 1990, pp. 6–10. Although Pehe was a bit overoptimistic in his views on the possible solutions to the problem and the scope of his article focused on the Czechoslovak experiences only, still even today his contribution can serve as a valuable resume of the greatest problems with the administrative officers and staffers faced by all the governments of the region in the early 1990's.

[43] Maria Łoś, Andrzej Zybortowicz, *Privatising the Police-State. The Case of Poland*, Palgrave Macmillan 2016 (cf. notably pp. 154 –185). See also: “Slovakia Politics: Secret Service Scandals”, *Economist Intelligence Unit – ViewsWire*, 16 June 2003; Jovo Nikolov, “Crime and Corruption after Communism – Organized Crime in Bulgaria”, [in:] *East European Constitutional Review*, Vol. 6, No. 4, Fall 1997, pp. 80–85.

[44] Pascal Delwit, “The End of Voters in Europe? Electoral Turnout in Europe since WWII”, *Open Journal of Political Science* 2013, Vol. 3, No.1, p. 48. If one talks about NGOs development, cf. however, Grzegorz Ekiert and Roberto Foa, who argue that the causes of the weaker participation of citizens in the civil society sector are much more complicated than the causes traditionally acknowledged. Grzegorz Ekiert and Roberto Foa, “Civil Society Weakness in Post-Communist Europe: A Preliminary Assessment”, *Carlo Alberto Notebooks*, No. 198, January 2011, pp. 35–38.

[45] E.g. although all countries, which acceded to the Union in 2004 were under obligation to join the common currency; in fact, only few decided to fulfil this commitment, others became much more cautious about the matter.

[46] Wojciech Bieńkowski, “Post Communist Countries of Central Eastern Europe, Facing Middle Income Trap Problem: Preliminary Findings Based on Statistical Data and Some Factor Analyses for 1990–2014”, [in:] *Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna MEiP* 2(53) 2016) 4, pp. 66, 74.

[47] It was not a secret at the time of the EU enlargement that the low level of innovation was one of the Achilles heels of all the economies in the region, and in the longer term, the Central and Eastern European countries would be forced to cope with this problem. Marek Tiits, Rainer Kattel, Tarmo Kalvet, and Dorel Tamm, “Catching up, forging ahead or falling behind? Central and Eastern European development in 1990–2005”, [in:] *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, Vol. 21, No. 1, March 2008, pp.80–82.

[48] This underinvestment is openly acknowledged by the EU Commission itself. Cf. *Science, Research and Innovation performance of the EU – A contribution to the Open Innovation, Open Science*,

*Open to the World Agenda*. European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation 2016, pp. 8–12.

[49] As Bienkowski states: Another factor which has scaled down CEEC's growth and effectiveness for that matter has been a relatively low level of innovativeness resulting from very low level of expenditures laid down for research and development – R&D in these countries since the beginning of the systemic transformation process, staying at the level well below 1% of GDP in these countries as opposed to Germany or Sweden where it has been 3–4 times higher for decades (....). This negative tendency has been changing in recent years, yet the level difference of the expenditures compared to EU countries is still huge, hampering growth, effectiveness and competitiveness greatly. Wojciech Bienkowski, *Post Communist Countries...*, op. cit., p. 89. Regarding the Polish case, see: Kamil Pruchnik, Jerzy Toborowicz, "Low Level of Innovativeness and the Middle Income Trap – Polish Case Study", [in:] *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation (Jemi)*, Vol. 10, Issue 2, 2014, pp. 141–157. See also: Anna Golejewska's interesting study on the differences within the particular regions of the countries analysed in this book. Anna Golejewska, *Human capital, innovation and institutions versus the competitiveness of regions in Central and Eastern Europe*, the Natolin European Center (CEN), Warsaw 2011.

[50] Jose Ignacio Torreblanca and Mark Leonard with others, *THE CONTINENTWIDE RISE OF EUROSCEPTICISM*, Policy-Memo of the ECFR, access: [http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR79\\_EUROSCEPTICISM\\_BRIEF\\_AW.pdf](http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR79_EUROSCEPTICISM_BRIEF_AW.pdf).

[51] Marian Gorynia, Jan Nowak, Radosław Wolniak, "Foreign direct investment of Central and Eastern European countries, and the investment development path revisited", [in:] *Eastern Journal of European Studies*, Vol. 1, Issue 2, December 2010.

[52] This aspect of the FDI inflow should be further examined and we are not in the position to submit here any solid data documenting the real scope of this problem and its impact on the overall performance of the economies in the region.

[53] Wojciech Bienkowski, *Post Communist Countries...*, op. cit., p. 93. Cf. Maria Fic, Edyta Ropuszyńska-Surma, "Pułapka średniego dochodu – implikacje dla krajów grupy wyszehradzkiej" ("Middle Income Trap – Implications for the Visegrad Group Countries"), [in:] *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu* no. 455 (2016), pp. 77–78.

See also: Karine Szotowski (ed.), *Middle-Income Trap in V4 Countries? – Opening Theses*, The Kościuszko Institute, Cracow, January 2015 (passim); Toivo Tanning, Lembo Tanning, "Why Eastern Europe wages are several times lower than Western Europe?", [in:] *Global Business and Economics Research Journal* 3 Vol. 2 (1), pp. 22–38.

[54] Data after the British Office for National Statistics.

[55] Cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_European\\_countries\\_by\\_average\\_wage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_European_countries_by_average_wage) (last accessed: 16.01.2017).

[56] Ruben Atoyan, Lone Christiansen, Allan Dizioli, Christian Ebeke, Nadeem Ilahi, Anna Ilyina, Gil Mehrez, Haonan Qu, Faezeh Raei, Alaina Rhee, and Daria Zakharova, "Emigration and Its Economic Impact on Eastern Europe", IMF Staff Discussion Note, July 2016, SDN16/07. See also: Mukesh Chawla, Gordon Betcherman, Arup Banerji, with Anne M. Bakilana, Csaba Feher, Michael Mertaugh, Maria Laura Sanchez Puerta, Anita M. Schwartz, Lars Sondergaard, and Andrew Burns, *From Red to Grey. The "Third Transition" of Ageing Populations in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, The World Bank, Washington, D.C. 2007.

[57] The division into the “Old Europe” and “New Europe” (CEE countries) was made even before the accession and has been visible for the whole time of the CEE countries’ membership in the EU, waking frustration of the new members, who felt treated as “second-category members”.

[58] Wojciech Roszkowski, *East Central...*, op. cit., pp. 421–422.

[59] It is worth noting, however, that even ruling parties in such countries as Poland and Hungary, often accused of “Euroscepticism”, openly declare their will to remain within the EU, and they voice it even stronger after Brexit.



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He was distinguished, among others, with the Gold Cross of Merit of the Republic of Poland and the Knight's Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit.

# Index of names

## A

- Aczél György – 234, 241, 257, 260  
Adamec Ladislav – 512, 524, 526–533, 535, 543–544, 568–569  
Adenauer Konrad – 337, 444, 445  
Albrecht Hans – 433  
Alganov Vladimir – 205  
Ananov Georgi – 705  
Anders Władysław – 194  
Andreev Metodi – 705  
Andropov Yuri – 59–60, 358, 687  
Antall József – 270, 273, 277–279, 281–288, 290–296, 303, 538  
Antonescu Ion – 633  
Apostol Gheorghe – 598–599  
Ash Timothy Garton – 10, 21–22, 499–501, 736  
Atanasov Georgi – 691, 694, 697  
Avramov Georgi – 672, 683

## B

- Babiš Andrej – 555  
Backes Uwe – 736  
Baev Jordan – 29, 707  
Baeva Iskra – 29, 700, 707  
Bahr Egon – 337–338, 411, 422  
Bajcsy-Zsilinszky Endre – 270  
Bakardzhiev Evgeni – 705  
Baker James – 689  
Bakish Sonia – 673–674  
Balan Radu – 607–609, 613, 616  
Balcerowicz Leszek – 155–158, 160, 164–167, 285, 287, 741  
Bałanda Rydzewski Janusz – 6  
Bankowicz Marek – 27  
Bárány Anzelm – 302  
Barańczak Stanisław – 94  
Barcikowski Kazimierz – 113  
Bareja Stanisław – 101, 199, 653  
Bârlădeanu Alexandru – 623  
Bartončík Josef – 531, 548–549, 552  
Bartoszewski Władysław – 171  
Bartsch Kurt – 373  
Bartuška Václav – 526  
Băsescu Traian – 639–640, 642  
Baťa Tomáš – 535  
Battěk Rudolf – 514  
Bauer Tamás – 250, 252  
Baumgart Piotr – 142  
Beauchamp John – 30  
Becher Johannes r. – 354  
Belodedici Miodrag – 591

Belousovová Anna – 547  
Bence György – 242, 249  
Benda Václav – 523  
Beneš Edvard – 559–560  
Bereanu Vladimir – 696  
Berecz János – 257, 259, 266, 275  
Berend Iván Tibor – 18, 25  
Berghofer Wolfgang – 396, 407  
Beria Lavrentiy – 432  
Beron Petar – 683, 694–695, 704, 710  
Bibó István – 249  
Bickhardt Stephen – 385  
Biedenkopf Kurt – 432, 446–447  
Bielecki Jan Krzysztof – 103  
Bieńkowski Wojciech – 748  
Biermann Wolf – 372, 377  
Bierut Bolesław – 77  
Bihari Mihály – 259  
Biľak Vasil' – 497, 511, 536, 563  
Biró Zoltan – 277  
Birthler Marianne – 433  
Blandiana Ana – 621, 636  
Blažej Anton – 533  
Blažek Petr – 24  
Bobu Emil – 611–612, 614, 620  
Bohley Bärbel – 374, 375, 408, 441  
Böhm Horst – 394, 395  
Böhme Ibrahim – 359, 421  
Boia Lucian – 28  
Bokros Lajos – 250, 295–296, 298, 309  
Bölling Klaus – 338  
Bonev Bogomil – 705  
Boross Péter – 293  
Borowski Marek – 184  
Bozhilov Grigor – 667

Bozóki András – 299–301  
Bór-Komorowski Tadeusz – 194  
Brandt Willy – 95, 337–338, 421–422, 444  
Braşoveanu Gheorghe – 593  
Bratinka Pavel – 523  
Brecht Bertolt – 336  
Brezhnev Leonid – 46–47, 59–60, 69, 98, 264, 348, 351, 510, 517  
Brovikov Vladimir – 150  
Brožová-Polednová Ludmila – 561  
Brucan Silviu – 596–597, 599, 623–625, 642  
Brüsewitz Oskar – 373  
Brzeziński Zbigniew – 96  
Budaj Ján – 523, 525, 529, 531, 571  
Bujak Zbigniew – 104, 105  
Bulany György – 235, 245  
Burakowski Adam – 28, 30  
Bush Sr. George – 12, 145, 600  
Buzek Jerzy – 183, 206

## C

Calciu-Dumitreasa Gheorghe – 593  
Calfa Marian – 528, 530–534, 568, 571  
Câmpeanu Pavel – 28  
Câmpeanu Radu – 625, 628  
Cana Ionel – 593  
Caramitru Ion – 621  
Čarnogurský Ján – 523, 529, 532  
Carter Jimmy – 57, 95  
Cartledge Bryan – 26  
Casaroli Agostino – 514  
Ceaşescu Elena – 7, 588, 598, 611–612, 624, 630, 632, 642

- Ceaușescu Nicolae – 7, 66, 68–69, 152, 238–239, 245–247, 253, 261, 392, 585–605, 607–612, 614–627, 629–630, 632–636, 640, 642–644, 663, 673, 675, 687, 692, 696, 703, 726, 731  
 Ceaușescu Nicu – 631, 642  
 Ceaușescu Valentin – 642  
 Ceaușescu Zoe – 642  
 Černík Oldřich – 498  
 Chakarov Kostadin – 29, 657, 707  
 Chernenko Konstantin – 59–60  
 Chervenkov Valko – 66, 692, 700  
 Chervenkova Koprinka – 678–680, 701  
 Chițac Mihai – 610, 616, 622, 631  
 Chmel Rudolf – 506  
 Chojecki Mirosław – 93  
 Chojnacki Roland – 30  
 Chramostová Vlasta – 504  
 Chytilová Věra – 507  
 Cibulka Petr – 549–550  
 Cierpinski Waldemar – 342  
 Cimoszewicz Włodzimierz – 181, 183  
 Cioran Emil – 643, 645  
 Ciosek Stanisław – 113, 119  
 Codogni Paulina – 25  
 Cohn Ludwik – 93  
 Coman Ion – 604, 609, 611, 614, 616  
 Comănesci Nadia – 602  
 Cooper Gary – 140  
 Coposu Corneliu – 625–626, 632–634  
 Cornea Doina – 593, 603, 623, 626, 634, 643  
 Cozma Miron – 642  
 Crampton R. J. – 25  
 Crawford Keith – 22  
 Csodri Sándor – 246, 249, 252, 255, 270  
 Csurka Istvan – 246–247, 249–250, 252, 254–255, 270, 280–281, 288, 294  
 Curry Jane Leftwich – 24  
 Cywiński Bohdan – 92, 245  
 Czarzasty Włodzimierz – 168, 185  
 Czuma Andrzej – 95–96
- D**
- Dahrendorf Ralf – 18  
 Danailov Stefan – 707  
 Darski Józef – 28  
 Dăscălescu Constantin – 614, 616, 621  
 David Michal – 564  
 Davis John – 145, 149  
 Dąbrowski Jerzy – 113  
 Deletant Dennis – 28, 636  
 Demszki Gábor – 250  
 Dienstbier Jiří – 514, 528, 532  
 Dienstbier Zdeněk – 515  
 Diepgen Eberhard – 433  
 Dimitrov Aleksandar – 666  
 Dimitrov Filip – 699–700, 702, 704–705  
 Dimitrov Georgi – 654, 659–660, 700, 704–705  
 Dimitrova Blaga – 678, 680  
 Dinca Ion – 619  
 Dinescu Mircea – 69, 598, 621, 623, 643  
 Dobraczyński Jan – 105  
 Dobre Constantin – 593  
 Doğan Ahmed – 662, 696, 710

Domokos Géza – 626  
Donáth Ferenc – 244, 252  
Drawicz Andrzej – 153  
Dražská Drahomira – 520  
Drees Erika – 441  
Dubček Alexander – 47, 497–499,  
510, 521, 523, 525, 528–529, 532–537,  
561–562, 570–571, 725  
Duchač Josef – 432  
Duckadam Helmuth – 591  
Duda Andrzej – 173  
Dudek Antoni – 22, 25, 30  
Duisberg Claus – 27  
Dumitrescu Constantin Ticu – 636,  
638–639  
Dvořáček Miroslav – 552  
Dzerzhinsky Felix – 193  
Dzhurov Dobri – 674, 691  
Dzurinda Mikulaš – 541, 546, 563

## **E**

Ebeling Hans-Wilhelm – 422  
Eichel Hans – 338  
Eisler Hanns – 354  
Eisler Jerzy – 25  
Eliade Mircea – 645  
Elisabeth Empress – 310  
Engels Friedrich – 336, 354, 357, 559,  
590  
Enke Karin – 342  
Eppelmann Rainer – 378, 422, 441  
Erlandsson Big Bengt – 193  
Euler Hans – 336

## **F**

Falandysz Lech – 203  
Falcke Heino – 363, 367, 373, 375,  
378, 381  
Falin Valentin – 413  
Falk Barbara – 234, 239  
Falk Feliks – 94  
Fejti György – 269, 271  
Fico Robert – 546–548, 563  
Fiedin Judyta – 30  
Filip Vojtech – 544  
Filipov Grisha – 672, 674, 691  
Filo Julius – 554  
Föck Jenő – 233, 236, 258  
Fojtík Jan – 522  
Fonda Jane – 140  
Forck Georg – 378, 379  
Forman Miloš – 507  
Fortuna Lorin – 639  
Franco – 53, 292  
Franz Joseph – 310  
Frasyniuk Władysław – 104–105  
Frenkel Hans Joachim – 363  
Friedman Milton – 53, 103, 296  
Friedrich Walter – 355  
Friszke Andrzej – 25  
Ftáčnik Milan – 546  
Fučík Julius – 559  
Führer Christian – 391

## **G**

Gabrielescu Valentin – 636  
Gajos Janusz – 201–202  
Gál Fedor – 523, 571  
Ganev Venelin – 29

- Gardev Javor – 708  
 Garlicki Andrzej – 25  
 Gáspár Sándor – 233  
 Gašparovič Ivan – 547  
 Gauck Joachim – 429  
 Gawin Dariusz – 25  
 Gaytandzhiyev Stefan – 672–673  
 Geissler Heiner – 410  
 Genov Eduard – 666–668  
 Genscher Hans-Dietrich – 337, 388, 410–412, 414–415, 421  
 Georgescu Vlad – 593, 635  
 Geremek Bronisław – 110, 118, 122, 132, 142, 148, 150, 151, 172, 175, 206  
 Gerlach Manfred – 397, 400  
 Gheorghiu-Dej Gheorghe – 598, 632  
 Giedroyc Jerzy – 339  
 Gienke Horst – 363, 379  
 Gierek Edward – 77, 89–90, 100, 198, 238, 284  
 Giertych Roman – 171  
 Gies Gerd – 432  
 Gieseke Jens – 355–356, 359  
 Gill Graeme – 24  
 Glemp Józef – 105  
 Głogowski Karol – 95  
 Göhr Marlies – 342  
 Goma Paul – 592, 643  
 Gomulka Władysław – 77–78, 86, 234  
 Göncz Árpád – 249, 281, 287  
 Gorbachev Mikhail – 12, 59, 61–63, 65–69, 107, 117, 145, 152, 162, 261, 264, 348–349, 370–372, 384, 387, 389, 392, 395, 398, 404, 414, 420, 497, 511, 585, 594–596, 600–601, 604, 655, 658, 663–665, 669–670, 675, 677, 679–680, 687–688, 691  
 Gorky Maxim – 63  
 Gorzkowski Jacek – 23  
 Gospodinov Georgi – 709  
 Gott Karel – 506, 528, 564  
 Götting Gerald – 400, 406  
 Gottwald Klement – 559–560  
 Góralczyk Bogdan – 26, 284  
 Grabski Tadeusz – 348  
 Grass Günter – 414  
 Grebeníček Miroslav – 544  
 Grossman Ernst – 354  
 Grotewohl Otto – 335  
 Grozev Kostadin – 29–707  
 Grósz Károly – 255, 257–269, 275, 598  
 Gubrynowicz Aleksander – 30  
 Gueffroy Chris – 385  
 Guşa Ştefan – 610, 613, 617, 622, 623  
 Gutzeit Martin – 411, 441  
 Gwiazda Andrzej – 110, 113–114, 118, 133, 210  
 Gysi Gregor – 402, 407–408, 416, 418–419, 431, 443  
 Gyurcsány Ferenc – 298–300, 306, 309
- H**
- Hackenberg Helmut – 397  
 Hager Kurt – 351, 405  
 Hájek Jiří – 503  
 Hájek Miloš – 514  
 Halecki Oskar – 11  
 Haraszti Miklós – 250  
 Hardek Władysław – 104

Havel Ivan – 504  
Havel Olga – 504  
Havel Václav – 28, 502–505, 508,  
514–516, 518, 521–527, 529–530,  
532–537, 543, 548–549, 556, 559–560,  
568–570, 572, 680  
Havel Vasek – 504  
Havemann Robert – 336, 373  
Hayek Friedrich von – 103, 296  
Heimann Mary – 27, 499  
Hempel Johannes – 391  
Henrich Rolf – 441  
Herbert Zbigniew – 94  
Herger Wolfgang – 402  
Herman Daniel – 551  
Hermaszewski Mirosław – 138  
Hermlin Stephan – 372  
Heym Stefan – 372, 402  
Hirsch Ralf – 375  
Hitler Adolf – 41, 79, 239, 240, 244,  
294, 354, 373, 510, 563  
Hofmann Karel – 522  
Hohenzollern I Michael – 633  
Holmes Leslie – 24  
Honecker Erich – 66, 238–239, 335,  
338, 340, 342–353, 356–364, 368–377,  
380, 384–387, 389–390, 393–395,  
397–404, 406–408, 411–412, 415,  
428–430, 432–433, 435, 437, 439,  
442–444, 454, 594, 663, 726  
Honecker Margot – 364  
Horakova Milada – 561  
Horn Gyula – 294, 303  
Horthy Miklós – 235, 294, 311  
Horváth István – 264, 280

Hrabal Bohumil – 506, 508  
Hradilek Adam – 552  
Hřebejk Jan – 566–567  
Hristova Pasha – 707  
Hulsemann Wolfram – 367  
Hupałowski Tadeusz – 100  
Hus Jan – 557, 559  
Husák Gustav – 66, 497, 499–501,  
503, 506, 510–512, 515, 518, 522–523,  
527–528, 530–531, 535, 562–563,  
566–567, 663, 727  
Husák Petr – 28

## I

Iliescu Ion – 595, 621–624, 626–636,  
639, 641–642, 698  
Illyés Gyula – 245–247, 288  
Indra Alois – 497, 522, 536  
Innes Abby – 27  
Ionescu Eugen – 645  
Ioniță Ion – 592, 596

## J

Jackowicz Jerzy – 29  
Jäger Harald – 405  
Jakeš Miloš – 512, 518, 522–524, 536  
Jakobs Karl-Heinz – 373  
Jakubowska Aleksandra – 168  
Janiszewski Michał – 100  
Janowski Jan – 114  
Jarowinsky Werner – 369  
Jaruzelski Wojciech – 57, 66, 77,  
98–103, 105–112, 114–119, 122–123,  
127, 143–148, 150–152, 161, 164,

203–204, 209, 284–285, 287, 348,  
417–418, 429, 663  
Jasný Vojtěch – 507  
Jenerál Jaroslav – 536  
Jičínský Zdeněk – 529, 536, 550  
Jong-Il Kim – 544  
Jóźwiak Jerzy – 150–151  
Juliusz Słowacki – 193  
Jurczyk Marian – 114

## K

Kaczyński Jarosław – 93, 149–150,  
165, 170, 172, 176, 204, 206–208  
Kaczyński Lech – 93, 110, 149, 165,  
169–170, 174, 189, 195, 204, 206–208,  
210  
Kádár János – 66–67, 232–239, 241,  
243, 245–248, 250–251, 253–254,  
256–262, 265, 268, 282–285, 289,  
292, 295–296, 303–306, 309–311, 501,  
598, 663, 688, 726, 728  
Kafka Franz – 499  
Kaiser Kerstin – 443  
Kalinova Evgeniya – 29, 700, 707  
Kamiński Antoni – 20  
Kamiński Bartłomiej – 20  
Kamiński Łukasz – 173, 196  
Kania Stanisław – 77, 98–99, 284, 348  
Karakachanov Aleksandar – 678,  
682–683, 690, 710  
Karakachanov Panaiot – 682  
Karpiński Jakub – 25  
Kaufmann Xavier – 447  
Kavan Jan – 551  
Kenedi János – 252

Kenney Padraic – 18, 24  
Kessler Heinz – 403, 433  
Kevorkian Kevork – 671, 680  
Keynes John Maynard – 52–53  
Khrushchev Nikita – 46, 585, 664, 677  
Khudenko Ivan – 46  
Kincl František – 520, 522  
Kiossev Alexander – 701  
Kirschbaum Stanislav – 510  
Kis János – 242–244, 248–250,  
252–256, 267, 273, 278, 280, 295  
Kisielewski Stefan – 83  
Kiska Andrej – 548  
Kiss Csaba György – 233  
Kiszczak Czesław – 100, 111–113,  
117–118, 123, 126, 132, 142, 144–145,  
147–150, 153, 161, 191, 204, 359, 417  
Kitschelt Herbert – 24  
Kiuranov Chavdar – 683, 695  
Klaus Václav – 523, 528, 532, 538–541,  
544, 560, 569, 741  
Knabe Hubertus – 408, 434  
Kňážko Milan – 525, 529, 572  
Knotek Ivan – 531  
Kocáb Michael – 569  
Kochanowski Jerzy – 239  
Kofman Jan – 24, 30, 154  
Kohl Helmut – 27, 286, 337–339,  
410–416, 419–422, 424, 426, 428,  
430–432, 435, 437, 439–440, 442, 445,  
447, 449–450, 454, 526  
Kohout Pavel – 504–505  
Koldunov Alexandr – 59  
Komandarev Stefan – 709  
Komárek Valtr – 538

Komócsin Zoltán – 233  
Komócsin Mihály – 251  
Komorowski Bronisław – 173, 206,  
208  
Konrád György – 243  
Kontler László – 26  
Kónya Imre – 270  
Kopacz Ewa – 173  
Kornai Janos – 24, 26, 237, 293, 312  
Korwin-Mikke Janusz – 187  
Kostadinov Evtin – 706  
Kostov Ivan – 699  
Kosygin Alexei – 46–47, 52  
Kovács Gergely – 30  
Kowal Paweł – 25  
Kowalczyk Ilko Sascha – 27, 387  
Kozakiewicz Mikołaj – 141  
Krajňák Ondrej – 555  
Krapfl James – 27  
Krasicki Ignacy – 194  
Krasicki Janek – 194  
Kratochvílová Jarmila – 509  
Kraus Michael – 27  
Krenz Egon – 356, 384, 386, 389,  
397–407, 412–415, 419, 433, 594  
Kriegel František – 561  
Křižan Jiří – 516  
Krolikowski Werner – 346, 348  
Kroupa Daniel – 523  
Krugman Paul – 308  
Krusche Georg – 379  
Krusche Werner – 363, 386  
Kryl Karel – 528  
Krynicky Ryszard – 94  
Kryuchkov Vladimir – 153, 260

Kubišová Marta – 525  
Kuczynski Jurgen – 382  
Kukrál Stanislav – 536  
Kundera Milan – 508, 552  
Kupa Mihály – 287  
Kuroń Jacek – 91, 93, 96, 110, 116, 148,  
175, 208, 242  
Kusý Miroslav – 529  
Kuttler Thomas – 393  
Kutz Kazimierz – 201  
Kvetko Martin – 531  
Kwaśniewski Aleksander – 126, 178,  
181–183, 185, 188, 204–205  
Kwiatkowski Robert – 168  
Kyuranov Chavdar – 678–679  
Kyuranov Deyan – 678

## L

Labuda Barbara – 105  
Lafontaine Oskar – 337, 414, 422,  
426–427, 442–443  
Laki Mihály – 252  
Langoš Jan – 553–554  
Lankosz Borys – 201  
Lázár György – 257–258  
Leich Werner – 368–369, 390  
Lekai Laszlo – 235  
Lendl Ivan – 509  
Lendvai Paul – 26  
Lengsfeld Vera – 359  
Lengyel László – 259  
Lenin Vladimir – 62, 353, 559, 590,  
592, 601  
Lepper Andrzej – 171, 207  
Leuschner Andreas – 395

- Lewandowski Janusz – 103  
 Lilov Aleksandar – 697  
 Lis Bogdan – 104  
 Lis Ladislav – 514, 529  
 Litera Bohuslav – 23  
 Litván György – 244  
 Lityński Jan – 91, 93  
 Lorenc Alojz – 520, 553  
 Ludwig Olaf – 342  
 Ludzhev Dimitar – 29, 683  
 Lukács György – 242–244, 246, 253, 294  
 Lukanov Andrey – 674, 685–688, 691, 697, 711  
 Lukanov Karlo – 686  
 Lukanov Todor – 686  
 Lungu Dan – 641  
 Lustig Arnost – 570  
 Luther Martin – 357, 424  
 Luxemburg Rosa – 194, 353
- M**
- Machulski Juliusz – 199  
 Macierewicz Antoni – 93, 186–187, 208  
 Macri Emil – 597, 609, 631  
 Magyar Balint – 308  
 Mahoney William – 27  
 Maizière Lothar de – 406, 422–424, 427, 431–432, 440  
 Maleszka Lesław – 202  
 Malinowski Roman – 150–151  
 Maluțan Vasile – 620, 636  
 Malý Václav – 514, 569  
 Malycha Andreas – 27, 345, 399  
 Manescu Manea – 620  
 Maniu Iuliu – 633  
 Manolov Petar – 681  
 Marchlewski Julian – 194  
 Marcinkiewicz Kazimierz – 207  
 Marichkov Kiril – 698  
 Markov Georgi – 666  
 Marmației Sighetu – 637  
 Marquardt Regine – 441  
 Marrese Michael – 50  
 Marušiak Jurai – 30  
 Marx Karl – 336, 354, 357, 559, 590  
 Masaryk Tomas Garrigue – 11, 559–560, 562–563  
 Matolcsy György – 259  
 Matyja Rafał – 168  
 Maurer Ion Gheorghe – 598  
 Mazilu Dumitru – 599, 624, 626, 638–639  
 Mazowiecki Tadeusz – 83–84, 110, 136, 142, 144, 150–155, 157, 162–166, 170, 174–176, 180, 203–206, 208–209, 284, 417, 600, 688, 700  
 McDermott Kevin – 27  
 Mečiar Vladimír – 282, 541, 546–547, 562–563, 571–572, 734  
 Meckel Markus – 411, 421, 424, 441  
 Medgyessy Péter – 258, 298, 303  
 Mehlhorn Ludwig – 385  
 Mejstřík Martin – 537  
 Melinte Doina – 591  
 Melone Albert – 29  
 Menzel Jiří – 507  
 Merkel Angela – 432, 450  
 Messner Zbigniew – 108, 110

- Mestan Lütfi Ahmet – 711  
 Michnik Adam – 86, 91–93, 96,  
 109–110, 116–117, 136, 139, 144–145,  
 148, 150–151, 167–168, 175–176, 178,  
 209–210, 245  
 Mielke Erich – 351, 358–359, 384, 389,  
 391–392, 394, 398, 401, 408, 415, 432  
 Migaš Jozef – 546  
 Mikhailov Evgeni – 695, 698, 708  
 Mikloško František – 523  
 Milbradt Georg – 432  
 Milea Vasile – 609–610, 616, 618–620  
 Milewski Mirosław – 100, 107  
 Militaru Nicolae – 598, 622, 624,  
 627, 634, 641  
 Miller Leszek – 184–185  
 Miller Petr – 528  
 Milota Stanislav – 504  
 Mináč Vladimír – 506  
 Minev Iliya – 667–669, 671, 678,  
 680–681, 684, 693, 709–711  
 Miodowicz Alfred – 108, 114–116,  
 123–124, 127, 129, 132  
 Mishev Georgi – 673–674, 678  
 Mittag Gunter – 358, 389–390, 415  
 Mitterrand François – 117, 420, 514,  
 680, 701  
 Mladenov Petar – 670, 679, 685–693,  
 695, 697–698, 711  
 Mlynář Zdeněk – 504, 521, 570  
 Moczar Mieczysław – 88, 239  
 Moczulski Leszek – 94–96  
 Modrow Hans – 27, 370–372, 392,  
 394–395, 406–408, 413–416, 418–421,  
 425–426, 428, 433  
 Modzelewski Karol – 91, 144, 242  
 Moga Vasile – 30  
 Molnár János – 261  
 Momper Walter – 338  
 Moravčík Jozef – 541  
 Morawiecki Kornel – 104, 133, 210  
 Morawski Wojciech – 23  
 Morgiewicz Emil – 93  
 Mosor Natalia – 30  
 Mrožek Sławomir – 94  
 Müller Herta – 641  
 Muller Uwe – 436  
 Mungiu Cristian – 640–641  
 Musil Jiří – 27  
 Mutafov Encho – 678
- N**
- Nagy Imre – 232, 244, 249, 268, 272,  
 283, 302  
 Náhlík Petr – 519  
 Náhlík Štefan – 554  
 Naimski Piotr – 93  
 Napieralski Grzegorz – 185  
 Natho Eberhard – 363  
 Navrátilová Martina – 509  
 Neff Vladimír – 508  
 Németh Miklós – 258, 260, 263–266,  
 268, 272, 274–276, 279, 282, 286,  
 288, 387  
 Neubert Erhardt – 27  
 Nicholas II Tsar – 733  
 Nicolaescu Sergiu – 29, 622, 636,  
 639, 642  
 Niedzielak Stefan – 123  
 Novotný Antonín – 497

Nowosad Andrzej – 29  
Nozick Robert – 103  
Nyers Rezső – 233, 236, 243, 251,  
258–260, 262–263, 266–268,  
274–275, 278, 303, 725

## O

Ochab Edward – 77  
Offe Claus – 24  
Ogoranu Ion Gavrilă – 592  
Ogórek Magdalena – 185  
Okey Robin – 18, 25  
Olaru Stejărel – 637  
Olejniczak Wojciech – 185  
Oleksy Józef – 183, 185  
Olszewski Jan – 161, 164, 166, 169,  
186–188, 208  
Olszowski Stefan – 107, 348  
Olteanu Constantin – 604  
Olvári Mihály – 260  
Onyszkiewicz Janusz – 116  
Opletal Jan – 518  
Oprea Marius – 637, 639  
Orbán Viktor – 17, 256, 267–269, 273,  
278, 281–282, 290, 296–298, 300–301,  
305, 307–310, 312–313  
Orszulik Alojzy – 127  
Otáhal Milan – 28

## P

Pacepa Mihai – 597–598  
Paczkowski Andrzej – 25, 26, 30  
Padevět Jiří – 30  
Pajdak Antoni – 93  
Pakowski Grzegorz – 30

Palach Jan – 498, 515  
Panenka Antonín – 509  
Panev Ivan – 679  
Papp László – 261, 605  
Paraschiv Vasile – 593, 644  
Paroubek Jiří – 550  
Pasikowski Władysław – 200  
Passer Ivan – 507  
Patočka Jan – 503  
Pavel Ota – 508  
Pavliček Michal – 569  
Pawlak Waldemar – 182–183  
Pažout Jaroslav – 24  
Petkov Nikola – 693–694  
Petranský Ivan – 554–555  
Petrescu Dan – 603  
Petrescu Dragoș – 19, 22, 24, 29, 731  
Pęczak Andrzej – 184  
Piasecki Bolesław – 88–89  
Pieck Wilhelm – 336  
Pietrzak Jan – 48  
Piketetty Thomas – 308  
Pilecki Witold – 202  
Piłsudski Józef – 11, 194  
Piwowski Marek – 199  
Plevneliev Rosen – 702  
Plocek Evžen – 498  
Plojhar Josef – 500  
Poche Klaus – 373  
Pöhl Karl Otto – 426  
Pollack Detlef – 355  
Popiełuszko Jerzy – 100, 106, 683  
Popov Dimitar – 699  
Poppe Gerd – 375, 441  
Poppe Ulrike – 374–375, 441

Portocală Radu – 29, 635  
Portugalov Nikolai – 413  
Postelnicu Tudor – 618–619  
Pozsgay Imre – 246, 251, 255–256,  
259–260, 263–268, 272–279, 287  
Priboi Ristea – 597  
Prutianu Ștefan – 604  
Putin Vladimir – 14  
Pyjas Stanisław – 96, 202

## R

Rábár Ferenc – 287  
Radev Valentin – 666  
Radevski Christo – 678  
Rajk Jr. László – 232, 250  
Rakósi Mátyás – 231–232, 280  
Rakowski Mieczysław – 77, 114–119,  
127, 135, 138, 147, 149, 151–152, 163, 181  
Ralin Radoy – 678–680  
Ramelow Bodo – 443  
Rašín Alois – 559, 561  
Rațiu Ion – 628  
Rau Johannes – 422  
Rauchfuss Wolfgang – 402  
Reagan Ronald – 12, 49, 57–58, 61,  
101, 103–104, 594  
Religa Zbigniew – 138  
Reykowski Janusz – 105  
Richter Frank – 395  
Ritter Gerhard – 437, 447  
Rödder Andreas – 27  
Rodowicz Jan – 202  
Rodowicz Maryla – 200  
Rogulski Rafał – 30  
Roman Petre – 621–622, 625, 639, 642

Roman Valter – 621  
Romaszewska Zofia – 93  
Romaszewski Zbigniew – 93  
Romsics Ignác – 26, 234, 236, 264,  
283, 285  
Rosiewicz Andrzej – 68  
Roszkowski Wojciech – 24–26, 30,  
68, 154, 752  
Rüb Friedbert W. – 731, 734  
Ruczaj Maciej – 30  
Rühe Volker – 422  
Rulewski Jan – 114  
Ruml Jan – 516–517, 549  
Rusan Romulus – 636, 639  
Rust Mathias – 59  
Růžička Milan – 520, 573  
Rybakov Anatoly – 63  
Rychlik Jan – 28  
Rydzik Tadeusz – 178  
Rywin Lew – 167–168  
Ryzhkov Nikolai – 601

## S

Šabatová Anna – 520  
Sacher Richard – 531, 552  
Sakharov Andrey – 63  
Sakskoburggotski Simeon Borisov  
– 705, 709  
Santor Irena – 200  
Saul Richard – 19  
Saxonberg Steven – 49  
Schabowski Günter – 401–402,  
404–405, 412, 433  
Schalck-Golodkowski Alexander –  
346, 408, 412, 415

- Schäuble Wolfgang – 411–412, 432  
Schlesinger Klaus – 373  
Schmeitzner Mike – 422  
Schmidt Helmut – 337–338, 453  
Schmögnerová Brigita – 546  
Schnitzler Karl-Eduard – 400  
Schnur Wolfgang – 359, 422, 432  
Schönherr Albrecht – 356, 360–361, 363  
Schorlemmer Friedrich – 441  
Schröder Gerhard – 338, 422  
Schürer Paul Gerhard – 344, 358, 370–371, 383, 402, 404, 412  
Schuster Rudolf – 563, 571  
Schwan Gesine – 338  
Schwarz Karl Peter – 511  
Sebastyen Victor – 24  
Segeš Dušan – 31  
Seghers Anna – 336  
Seifert Jaroslav – 508  
Seiters Rudolf – 411–412  
Seyppel Joahim – 373  
Shalamanov Naum (Suleimanov Naim, Suleymanoglu Naim) – 662  
Sharapov Viktor – 687–688, 691  
Shevardnadze Eduard – 65  
Shopov Grigor – 688  
Siani-Davies Peter – 29  
Sibev Khristofor – 683  
Siderov Volen – 669, 710  
Siedzikówna Danuta – 202  
Sikorski Radosław – 173  
Siła-Nowicki Władysław – 123–124  
Šimečka Martin – 563, 572  
Šimečka Milan – 508, 572  
Simeonov Petko – 673, 678, 683, 694–695, 710  
Simons Jr. Thomas – 25, 55, 62  
Simov Grigor – 667  
Sinha Shashank – 30  
Siwicki Florian – 100, 118, 153, 161  
Siwec Ryszard – 559  
Škoda Jan – 529  
Skórzyński Jan – 25  
Skubiszewski Krzysztof – 153, 421  
Slabakov Petar – 673, 682–683, 710  
Slota Ján – 547, 554  
Smarzowski Wojciech – 201  
Šmíd Martin – 519–520, 573  
Smrkovský Josef – 498  
Sobotka Bohuslav – 551  
Sokol Ján – 554  
Sokolov Sergey – 59  
Soltan Karol – 21  
Šoupal Josef – 561  
Spiridon Maria – 604  
Springsteen Bruce – 199  
Srp Karel – 514  
Stacho Lubo – 6  
Stalin Joseph – 41–42, 45, 66, 77–78, 306, 336, 350, 726, 728  
Stănculescu Elena – 631  
Stănculescu Victor Atanasie – 610, 616, 619–623, 627, 631, 639  
Stanger Allison – 27  
Staniszki Jadwiga – 8, 23–24  
Stank Jozef – 536  
Štefaník Milan Ratislav – 534, 558, 562  
Stelmachowski Andrzej – 110

Štěpán Miroslav – 518, 520, 522, 524,  
531, 573  
Stiglitz Joseph – 308  
Stoescu Alex Mihai – 29  
Stokłosa Henryk – 142  
Štoll Ladislav – 508  
Stolpe Manfred – 363, 368, 380  
Stomma Stanisław – 83  
Stoph Willy – 346, 370, 398, 402,  
406, 415, 432  
Stork Coen – 637  
Strauss Franz Josef – 338, 346  
Štrougal Lubomir – 512  
Štúr Ludovít – 559, 562  
Suchocka Hanna – 159, 206, 208  
Suchowolec Stanisław – 123  
Suk Jiří – 28  
Švéd Jan – 519  
Šverma Jan – 559  
Svoboda Jiří – 544  
Svoboda Ludvík – 498, 503, 559  
Szabo Ecaterina – 591  
Szálasi Ferenc – 231  
Szczepeński Maciej – 100  
Szczepkowska Joanna – 141  
Szczęsna Joanna – 93  
Szenyán Erzsebet – 30  
Szewczuwaniec Andrzej – 193  
Szmajdziński Jerzy – 185  
Szumiejko Eugeniusz – 104

## Ś

Śpiewak Paweł – 168  
Świerczewski Karol – 194

## T

Tănase Stelian – 24, 29  
Tanev Georgi – 661  
Tatarka Dominik – 508  
Tejchman Miroslav – 23  
Teltschik Horst – 411, 413  
Templin Wolfgang – 375  
Thatcher Margaret – 57, 420  
Tigrid Pavel – 339, 536  
Tischler János – 30  
Tismăneanu Vladimir – 19, 24, 639  
Tiso Josef – 555, 563  
Tkaczyk Grzegorz – 30  
Todorov Stanko – 673–674  
Tökés László – 69, 246, 261, 605–609,  
623, 643  
Tökés Rudolf L. – 26, 258–259, 281  
Tomášek František – 514  
Tomczyk Wojciech – 202  
Tomko Jozef – 514  
Topolánek Mirek – 560–561  
Torgyán József – 256  
Totu Ioan – 631  
Trembicka Krystyna – 25  
Trenchev Konstantin – 680–681,  
695, 710  
Trifonov Ivaylo – 673  
Trojanov Iliya – 702, 709  
Trump Donald – 174  
Trzeciakowski Witold – 136  
Tsekov Tseko – 667–668  
Tudor Corneliu Vadim – 642  
Turowicz Jerzy – 83, 124  
Turski Marcin – 30

Tusk Donald – 103, 172–173, 207  
Tymiński Stanisław – 164, 205

## U

Uhde Milan – 508  
Uhl Petr – 514, 520  
Újvárossy Ernő – 606  
Ukielski Paweł – 27, 30  
Ulbricht Walter – 239, 335, 340–341, 343, 345, 350, 353, 435  
Ullmann Wolfgang – 408, 441  
Urban Jerzy – 106, 118, 138, 177  
Urbánek Karel – 523–524, 530–531, 535  
Urbánek Zdeněk – 504  
Ursu Gheorghie – 593  
Uzunova Rumiana – 689

## V

Vesicle Miroslav – 552  
Vaculík Ludvík – 508  
Vajda Mihály – 243  
Vanous Jan – 50  
Varga Krzysztof – 301  
Vásárhelyi Miklós – 244  
Vasilev Jordan – 695  
Verdeț Ilie – 593, 621  
Videnov Zhan – 699–700, 704–705  
Vlad Iulian – 596, 599, 609–610, 618, 621, 625, 631  
Vlad Nelu – 587  
Vodenicharov Pirin – 683  
Vodenicharov Rumen – 668–670, 678, 693–695, 710  
Vogel Hans Jochen – 411, 422

Voiculescu Dan – 639  
Vondra Alexandr – 516, 570  
Vondráčková Helena – 506, 564  
Vykoukal Jiří – 23

## W

Wagner Richard – 641  
Wajda Andrzej – 93, 117, 140, 145, 201  
Walentynowicz Anna – 97, 133, 210  
Wałęsa Lech – 93, 97–98, 104–105, 109–110, 112–113, 116–118, 121–123, 132–133, 135–140, 142, 144, 147–151, 159, 164–165, 171, 176, 182–183, 190–191, 203–206, 208, 210, 291, 417, 431  
Warnig Matthias – 434  
Wasilewska Wanda – 194  
Wasilewski Tadeusz – 29  
Wawrzyk Maja – 30  
Ważyk Adam – 245  
Webb Adrian – 25  
Weiss Konrad – 441  
Weiss Peter – 543, 545–546  
Wielowieyski Andrzej – 110, 146  
Wilczek Mirosław – 162  
Wildstein Bronisław – 189, 202  
Wilhelmi Roman – 653  
Willaume Małgorzata – 28  
Witt Katharine – 342  
Wodecki Zbigniew – 200  
Wojnicki Jacek – 24  
Wojtyła Karol (John Paul II) – 57, 84, 86, 96, 105, 109, 177, 193, 205, 513, 517  
Wölbern Jan Philipp – 27  
Wolchik Sharon – 24

Wolf Christa – 402  
Wolf Markus Mischa – 351–352, 370,  
372, 401, 407–408  
Wollenberger Knud – 359  
Wonder Stevie – 140  
Wujec Henryk – 118  
Würzen Dieter – 428  
Wyszkowski Krzysztof – 210  
Wyszyński Stefan – 57, 82–85, 89,  
92, 105

## **Y**

Yeltsin Boris – 14, 65  
Yugov Anton – 654

## **Z**

Žáček Pavel – 550  
Zagladin Vadim – 145  
Zanussi Krzysztof – 94  
Zápotocký Antonín – 559  
Zappa Frank – 569

Zarkin Georgi – 666  
Zavadil Miroslav – 522  
Zawadzki Aleksander – 194  
Zawadzki Tadeusz – 194  
Zawadzki Waclaw – 93  
Zawieyski Jerzy – 83  
Zeman Miloš – 551  
Zhelev Zhelyu – 29, 671, 673, 675–678,  
680, 683, 694–695, 698, 700, 710  
Zhiron Yuri – 672  
Zhivkov Todor – 29, 66–68, 238, 600,  
654–655, 657–660, 663–666, 670,  
672–674, 676–680, 682–692, 694–697,  
700, 702–705, 707–709, 711, 727  
Zhivkova Ludmila – 682  
Zieliński Adam – 141  
Ziemiński Wojciech – 93  
Zifčák Ludvík – 520, 573  
Ziobro Zbigniew – 171, 172  
Zlatarov Tsvetan – 681  
Znepolski Ivaylo – 701, 707



ISBN 978-83-955090-7-0  
ISBN ENRS 978-83-941048-3-2