

MICHAEL GEHLER

## **1989: AMBIVALENT REVOLUTIONS WITH DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AND CONSEQUENCES**

### **Revolutionary actors and events—revolutionary effects and results**

To begin this volume, *Andrei Grachev* focuses on one of the most influential figures in history of the revolutionary events in 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE): Mikhail Gorbachev. Although he was an ambivalent revolutionary, he tried to bring the “old thinking” to an end and made the emergence of “new thinkers” possible. One year after his taking power, an evolution of “new thinking” started—also as a result of the Chernobyl catastrophe. His revolutionary foreign policy produced not only revolutionary events, but also the successful “Velvet Revolutions” in the CEE countries. In addition, it changed the system of international relations. Grachev raises the question of whether this “unusual politician” was “a dilettante statesman, an idealist, or a visionary.” To a certain extent, all of these descriptions may be accurate. Indeed, Gorbachev’s policy was based on a well-calculated intention of replacing the old balance of power with a new one. This was to be achieved through strengthening international organizations and gradual transferring national sovereignty to the United Nations. While Gorbachev was not able to transform all former enemies into new partners during his seven years in power, Grachev underlines the positive results of the revolutionary policies he introduced. First, Gorbachev left behind a more or less peacefully dismantled totalitarian system and a new Russia in the international arena. Although Gorbachev did not encourage the opening of the Iron Curtain, he tolerated it and agreed with Germany’s unification after the country’s more than forty years of division. Also, his name is connected with a disarmament process that slowed down and ultimately stopped the arms race. Grachev argues that Gorbachev’s “new political thinking” was not so different than George H.W. Bush’s vision of an emerging “new world order.” If Grachev is correct in his belief that Gorbachev also contributed to globalization, this would give him the status of a world revolutionary such as Lenin or Stalin. In any case, it seems clear that he created highly controversial new realities due to the ambivalence of his policies. When conflicts of interest arose, including his own political survival, he changed positions and chose principles. During Gorbachev’s time in power, it was not possible for the concept of “new political thinking” to be successful because the structural realities in Soviet Russia were too strong. Nonetheless, his

ideas were highly relevant. They enabled revolutionary processes to begin that were peaceful and non-violent.

*Klaus Bachmann* analyzes the situation in Poland before and after 1989. He argues that the round table talks and June elections of 1989 constituted milestones in Poland's shift to democratic structures and rule. But bargaining had already started months before the round table was established. The Catholic Church was also involved in these talks from the very beginning. While the "self-limiting revolution" had been put to an end by Jaruzelski's introduction of martial law in December 1981—without legal basis and violating human rights—in the end, de-legalizing and prohibiting the Solidarity trade union was counterproductive: it led to a well-organized clandestine underground movement developing, a movement that, due to its decentralization, was more difficult to control than the public dissent activities that had taken place earlier.

Bachmann also examines the international environment, the various disputes concerning the causes and reasons for Poland's transition, the key actors and their goals, internal constraints and external influences, and short-term as well as long-term consequences.

While Poland served as an icebreaker with regard to the ensuing revolutionary events—especially those in Hungary, but also in East Germany—the road to the first free elections in the still Soviet bloc country was long and stony. Bachmann makes it clear that several influential pre-revolutionary events took place in Poland in the decades before 1981. Revolution and transition were two sides of the same coin; they must be seen as a single entity. Although the Polish revolution was spontaneous, peaceful and successful, the ensuing transition was negotiated and contained contradictions, failures, paradoxes and setbacks. To better understand these events, Bachmann recommends examining archives in Moscow, Washington, Bonn, Paris and London. A comparative approach of this sort will not only provide more details, but also a general overview.

*Andreas Oplatka* describes the process of events in Hungary, a process that had begun with the country's defeat in 1956. In the second half of the 1980s, compromises were found and in 1989, a political transition was achieved through a negotiated revolution. In response, János Kádár stepped down and the Soviet leadership remained silent. Gorbachev assured Prime Minister Németh on 3 March 1989 that there would be "no new 1956" as long as he was in power. The Kremlin also agreed to negotiations concerning the withdrawal of troops from Hungary, and in November 1989 removed nuclear warheads from Hungarian soil. Moscow did not protest the rehabilitation of Hungarian revolutionaries, the round table talks, or Hungary's decision to eradicate the Iron Curtain and open its western border for East German refugees. While he opposed the introduction of a multiparty system in Hungary, Gorbachev did not take any measures to hinder it.

Oplatka raises several critical questions that have long remained unanswered: Who were the main actors in the political changes of 1989? Who fought at the

front line—reform-communists or dissidents and the opposition? Was it a revolution, an evolution or a transformation? Was there public pressure or did the population remain passive? The author reflects upon whether the notion of “revolution from above” would be more appropriate when describing the Hungarian events of 1989. He remains unable to answer the question of when the Hungarian communists recognized that giving up socialism and transforming the economy into a Western-style democratic market system had become unavoidable. There are indications that the coming changes were visible in the second half of the 1980s, at the latest at the beginning of 1989, when opposition groups and critical intellectuals began to be more active. Since the 1970s, the majority of the population as well as the opposition had accepted Kádár’s “goulash communism.” While freedom remained restricted, living conditions, albeit modest, were satisfactory. In the second half of the 1980s the economy declined, which changed the public opinion and delegitimized the communist rulers. A large majority of the population began to desire that the system be replaced. The opposition succeeded in mobilizing the masses, which took part in demonstrations and campaigned political issues such as the role of the Hungarian minority in Romania or the rehabilitation of the 1956 Hungarian revolution.

*Peter Vámos* compares the perceptions, reactions and consequences of the revolutionary events in Central and Eastern Europe, the Chinese student opposition movement, and the Tiananmen Square “incident” in Beijing. According to this author, 1989 was not only a critical moment with regard to political developments in China, but was also a turning point for Sino–East European relations. In the 1980s, China and the CEE socialist states faced similar problems, and comparable reform processes had been begun in both regions. Their parallel structures can serve as a point of reference. While these reforms contributed to a process of normalizing relations, in the end they led to totally different political results: the CEE countries experienced peaceful and bloodless revolutions, while protest movements in China were violently suppressed. The developments in China strengthened the anti-socialist movements in the CEE countries, while the developments in CEE states alarmed the Chinese communist leaders. In the end the Chinese government took brutal action against organized opposition groups in its country. The bloodless events in the CEE states were also a result of the bloody developments in China. In China, the harsh oppression of the student rally in Tiananmen Square prevented a revolution from below and also influenced a policy of reforms from above. But as a consequence of the political changes in the CEE states, Sino–East European bilateral relations collapsed.

After the bloody events of 4 June 1989, in order to regain acceptance and legitimacy for the still existing totalitarian system, the Chinese communist government proposed a political offensive of reform policies. This began with a three-year policy of opening to the world, after which a reform process could start. In the early 1990s, the Chinese communist regime achieved economic growth, reestablished

its relations abroad, strengthened its influence worldwide, and was able to control inflation tendencies. Since the 1990s, China has experienced unprecedented economic growth and become the world's second largest economy.

*Hans Hermann Hertle* describes the East German developments in the period between the "October Revolution" and the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989. To better understand these revolutionary events, Hertle refers to Pierre Bourdieu and his analysis of the effect of the media on historical events, whereby historical acts and structures are juxtaposed in order to find causalities and moments of interaction. The official opening of the Hungarian-Austrian border for East German refugees on 11 September is seen by Hertle, in the sense of Bourdieu, as a "critical event," as is the decisive Monday demonstration in Leipzig on 9 October, which saw tens of thousands of protesters and was the starting point and symbol of the East Germans' "October Revolution." The reporting on TV of these events enhanced the effect of both. Hungary's "hole in the wall" (Oplatika) demonstrated the weakness and loss of power of the SED regime. As the exodus grew, protests in the GDR against the government exploded.

Since 1961 the Berlin Wall had guaranteed the existence of the GDR. The opening of the border and the fall of the Wall were not planned by the SED leaders. According to Hertle, these revolutionary events were caused largely by the media, which also changed their course. In the three weeks after 9 November, the number of demonstrations did not decrease. The result was the involuntary self-dissolution of the GDR's political system. Hertle also describes the irony of the fact that the SED leaders had realized the state's bankruptcy already weeks before the revolution had begun and that, without West Germany's help, the GDR would not survive. Indeed, the East German communist politicians were ahead of their own people. Hertle considers it a tragedy that the opposition dreamed of a new socialist GDR without knowing the details of its debts and deficits, while the majority of the population claimed the right of self-determination and Germany's unity. Many civil rights activists marginalized themselves because of this contradiction. It was important for ordinary East Germans that the West German chancellor Helmut Kohl advocated German reunification. But the main reason for the success of the revolutionary events was Gorbachev's policy of wait and see. If he had ordered a military intervention, this would have contradicted his "new thinking." This was something Honecker ignored. He had not learned the lesson that Brezhnev had taught him in 1970: that the GDR could not exist without the power and support of the USSR.

*Jiří Suk* investigates Czechoslovakia before and after 1989, whereby he analyzes the background of this crucial year as well as the results and changes it brought. The most critical moment until that time for the Czechoslovak communist system had been the "Prague Spring" in 1968, during which a "palace revolution" changed into a reform movement aimed at creating "socialism with a human face." A number of previously suppressed civil rights groups formed a new civic

society, whereby they gained full freedom of speech, openly criticized the terror of the 1950s, and delegitimized the communist party. The intervention of the Warsaw Pact put an end to this reform movement, and no Prague summer followed.

The resulting dictatorship led to a political, mental and moral depression in Czechoslovakia. In the 1970s, more than 500,000 members were expelled from the Czechoslovakian Communist Party and persecuted. The economy was marked by constant shortages of consumer goods. By the second half of the 1980s, the oppressive system could not compete economically with the Western capitalist system, nor could it convince its own people of its legitimacy.

The violent suppression of a peaceful student demonstration on 17 November 1989 by police forces in Prague provoked resistance and strikes the next day by artists and intellectuals. Opposition movements and parties were organized. The Adamec government launched discussions with the opposition, but the concessions it offered had come too late. On 10 December, a new federal government was appointed and Gustáv Husák resigned as state president. The former dissident Václav Havel became the new elected president. However, his nomination caused problems with the Slovaks, who wanted Alexander Dubček as president, since he was a political symbol of 1968.

In Czechoslovakia a double revolution took place: a Czech one and a Slovakian one. Both revolutions took place within a specific national framework and thus, they must be seen as weakened, half revolutions that led to the nation's division. A small and temporary compromise was reached by Dubček being elected chairman of the Federal Assembly. But a later round table resulted in a division of power that involved political fragmentation and conflicts. A fight against the communist past began, but attempts at creating a "Czech road to capitalism" as a way to solve the chaotic political structures failed.

Slovakia, guided by Vladimír Mečiar's national-populist coalition, separated from the Czech Republic, which was represented by a center-right coalition headed by Václav Klaus. The "Velvet Revolution" changed the communist regimes into democratically elected governments in both Prague and Bratislava. The national separation into the Czech and Slovak Republics was decided by the political leaders of both sides.

With regard to Yugoslavia, *Florian Bieber* and *Armina Galijaš* argue that here a revolution did not occur. When Josip Broz Tito, president for life since 1963, died in 1980, the country's leadership was passed to an eight-member rotating presidency filled by representatives of Yugoslavia's six republics and two autonomous provinces. During the 1980s, demonstrations and protests had started against Belgrade, but they were also directed against the republics and provinces. The main cause of dissatisfaction was the worsening economic situation, growing unemployment, decreasing living standards, and exploding inflation.

The two authors show that the failed revolution in Yugoslavia must be seen in a global context and from the viewpoint of the changed international arena. The

coming to power of Gorbachev, the beginning of perestroika and glasnost, as well as the end of the Cold War in Europe contributed to Yugoslavia losing its strategic position and political significance. The period of distancing itself from both blocs and representing the neutral and non-aligned states, which Yugoslavia had done since 1961, was over in the early 1990s.

In the late 1980s, the focus of Western diplomatic circles and political observers as well as the media was concentrated on the CEE states. When the Yugoslav federal republic began to collapse, the leaders of the various republics tried to establish new coalitions and alliances with other countries: Slovenia and Croatia leaned toward Austria and Western Europe, whereas Serbia tried to get support from the USSR. Although external relations had little impact on the domestic developments, some people thought the dissolution of Yugoslavia was the result of foreign players. In the summer of 1991, the situation escalated. The United States and, to some extent, the European Community initially backed a democratic and unified Yugoslavia. But from the domestic perspective there was no central leader who could establish such a course (with the exception perhaps of Prime Minister Ante Marković). The CEE countries were occupied with their own issues and the Western European countries and the United States remained passive observers, showing no willingness to intervene.

In the 1980s, Yugoslavia lacked a strong bond with the USSR, and its earlier close links with the communist CEE members had also weakened. But the changing international environment did not have as much impact on Yugoslavia's dissolution as its domestic financial problems; the economic crisis led to problems of legitimacy for the communist rule. The system was unable to reform itself or address economic underdevelopment and regional inequalities. Furthermore, once the war-time generation of communists began to pass away in the late 1970s and early 1980s, political loyalties toward Belgrade became less enthusiastic and the federal structures weakened. National grievances and demands for political and economic reforms were directed toward the republics and not the federal state. Political opposition and pluralism emerged within the republics and also between the leaderships of the various republics. However, the transition from single party rule to a multiparty system was different from republic to republic. Each sought the choice of becoming autonomous, which led to separation. Cultural, ethnic and religious conflicts contributed to the resulting civil war, which saw ethnical cleansing, persecutions and mass murder. It was a process that destroyed any productive effects and constructive options that the revolutionary events of the late 1980s had brought.

*Ulf Brunnbauer* analyzes the end of the communist system in Bulgaria, which was also the product of a legitimacy crisis: economic problems and the alienation of Bulgaria's youth and labor forces played an important role. In the late 1980s, the socialist party started to reduce its visibility in order to extract itself from public criticism. Already in the summer of 1987 it gave more maneuvering room to

state authorities and enterprises. It increased the autonomy of companies, allowed more self-management of workers, and supported decentralization. These measures were designed to reduce the alienation of workers and increase their will to push productivity. But the reforms came too late; since the party did not give up its power, in the end its reforms were unsuccessful. Many planned reforms were not implemented and those of decentralization were later revoked. Attempts at the beginning of 1989 at economic liberalization were not realized.

Brunnbauer describes the "Bulgarian pseudo-perestroika," which involved growing administrative chaos and a regime that was unable to organize any successful political changes. Its reform measures had no real chance of implementation because the population reacted hesitantly and skeptically. Resignation and doubt were so strong that only a small minority were interested in taking part in the reform programs. Bulgaria's society had disintegrated to such a degree that labor discipline decreased still further and labor turnover increased more and more. Since doubts were larger than hopes, people withdrew into their private lives. The First Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party Todor Zhivkov even stated that the population had lost confidence in the party and that no one wished to get involved in the proclaimed political changes.

According to Brunnbauer, Bulgaria experienced "a half-baked reform" which exposed the self-created deficits of the system. The new party slogans "individual initiative," "self-management," "rule of law," "democracy," and "human rights" made the weaknesses of the system more obvious than ever and revealed the failings of the old and long-used communist propaganda. Although democracy and a market economy were propagated, increasing the expectations of the citizens, the communist party maintained its power. Thus, public disappointment became still higher, undermining the party's leading role. Brunnbauer argues that at the end of the 1980s, the question was no longer whether communist rule would end, but when and how. Its weak performance and the breakdown of the economy led to the political collapse. The conclusion seems clear: In Bulgaria a revolution did not arise from below, but was due to the failed reforms from above.

*Anneli Ute Gabanyi* focuses on Romania's "incomplete and unfinished revolution." She starts and ends with the collective memories of earlier uprisings. She also describes the attempts of restructuring in the Soviet bloc, the impact on Romania of the world economic crises, its loss of Western support and the emergence of domestic opposition. Gabanyi also offers a chronology of the revolutionary events and the details of the Romanian "revolution." The popular uprising against Ceaușescu cost many lives: over 1,000 civilians, officers and army conscripts were killed and over 4,000 persons injured. Still many more died after 22 December, when Ceaușescu was taken out of Bucharest and arrested. Gabanyi informs the reader that the vast majority of Romanians today believe these later victims died in vain, since the anti-communist people's uprising had been "stolen" or "diverted."

The still unclear background of the violent events following the capture of Ceaușescu continues to influence the state's course of political, social and economic transformation until today. Gabanyi argues that those who seized power after December 1989 did everything they could to prevent the investigation, prosecution and condemnation of those who were responsible for the bloody events. Thousands of people were investigated, but most were released or pardoned.

A group of people around Ion Iliescu seized power in a military coup d'état following a popular uprising in Timișoara. They stayed in power for a long time. According to Gabanyi, although some of them were responsible for the bloodshed, they escaped conviction. Representatives of the victims put pressure on the new government to prosecute those responsible, but the judiciary, acting on political orders, delayed prosecution in the cases of high-level functionaries. Documents were confiscated, such as the files on the Ceaușescu trial, were destroyed or forged, or are still being held by military or civilian prosecutors' offices.

Gabanyi argues that to a greater degree than the other CEE revolutions, the Romanian revolution was supported by electronic media and Western radio stations broadcasting to Romania, above all Radio Free Europe, which was very popular. This contributed to an anti-regime mobilization that delegitimized Ceaușescu's position and popularized regime dissidents from the 1980s. When the broadcasting time of local radios and TV stations was reduced, listeners and viewers turned to the radio and TV stations of the Soviet Union and other neighboring communist countries like Hungary. Soon after the departure of Ceaușescu from Bucharest, the national television station took over the role of Western broadcasting. Gabanyi speaks of a "tele-revolution," which in the end seems to have been a mixture of a popular uprising and a coup d'état. Thus, the events in Bulgaria can also be understood as an incomplete revolution.

*Karsten Brüggemann* describes the revolutions in the Soviet Union's Baltic republics, which when compared to the above "revolutions" in the CEE countries had a different profile and style. The Baltic "singing revolution" can be characterized by an extraordinarily high degree of youth engagement. Decisive was a collective consciousness of the past (such as memories of the secret protocol of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 and the Soviet occupation in 1940) as well as the existence of a kind of independent Baltic culture. This youth engagement grew into a mass movement in the streets that was visible by all. For some time the new Soviet leadership hesitated to intervene militarily, since this would have risked violating its new image. Nonetheless Lithuania's declaration of independence on 11 March 1990 provoked negative feelings in Moscow. Also the Western powers were less than euphoric, fearing the destabilization of Gorbachev's position. But while the Baltic revolutionary changes were initially peaceful, they escalated into bloody confrontations in January 1991 when Soviet leaders decided to suppress the protests. This also contributed to the further weakening of the Soviet Union.



The erosion process of the USSR seems to have started in Poland at the beginning of the 1980s, moving on to Hungary and the GDR, but the collapse of the Soviet Union was not only caused by the economic and political decline of these countries. The mass demonstrations in the Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania constituted a new dimension; they were a decisive threat for the Soviet empire's cohesion. The Baltic states changed from being annexed and controlled districts at the empire's periphery into being a subversive and separatist region. But they should not be seen as unique cases. Their claim for emancipation and independence from the USSR in 1988–89 not only demonstrated the lack of attractiveness of socialism, it was also an expression of Russian "imperial overstretch." According to Estonian social scientists, the "singing revolution" reached "mythological" dimensions in 1988 and reached an "ideological point" in 1989, a first phase that made historical rebirth possible and produced euphoria and optimism about the political future. These societal-ideological changes of 1988–89 preceded the actual political changes, which took place in 1991 parallel to the dissolution of the USSR.

### **International context, external influences, perceptions and reactions**

*Norman M. Naimark* sheds light on the role of the superpowers in the events in the CEE states. While the British prime minister and the French state president wanted the USSR to prevent Germany's unity, the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union wanted the Western powers and the German chancellor to restrain the Americans from "interfering" in the CEE countries, although according to Naimark this was "pretty much the last thing on Washington's mind." The main concern of the US administration and George H.W. Bush was maintaining Gorbachev's reform policies as well as the political status quo in Europe.

The wait-and-see attitude of the superpowers continued even when the CEE countries and the East Germans claimed their self-determination. When Hungary pulled down its barriers to Austria, enabling East Germans to escape to West Germany, Moscow treated this as an affair that only concerned Hungary, the GDR and the FRG. When Polish communists made a power sharing deal with Solidarity, round table discussions that contributed to the erosion of communism, this happened without Soviet interference. Neither Moscow nor Washington stopped Kohl's moves toward German unification. In his summary, Naimark speaks of the "self-induced paralysis of the superpowers." This helped East German protesters and West German political decision makers bring the postwar order in Germany to an end.

Concerning the outcome of the revolutionary events, Naimark considers Gorbachev's role a decisive one. In the second half of the 1980s, his assurances that

the CEE countries could make their own decisions supported the resulting political changes. Perestroika encouraged the opposition movements to articulate their claims. While it seems that Gorbachev did not have a policy concerning Germany, he nonetheless opposed the old “conservative” foreign policies such as the Brezhnev Doctrine. Due to various special interests, the superpowers kept an observer position and did not interfere. Naimark reflects that the congratulations they gave themselves about “1989” were “mostly about what they did not do rather than what they did.”

*Ella Zadorozhnyuk* examines the causes and effects of the Soviet Union’s policy with regard to the revolutions of 1989–90. According to this author, at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s the events in the USSR and in the so-called satellite countries were reciprocal. She argues that the interaction between these events was causal; one event was often the consequence of another. When Gorbachev’s reform policies were announced, people in the CEE countries started to consider comparable options, including alternatives to single-party structures. In turn, these political reactions affected Soviet Union policy. The revolutionary tendencies in the CEE countries stimulated by perestroika led to questions also being raised about the one-party structure in the USSR. Many of the CEE countries’ political options were adopted in the USSR. In the end, the process of transformation in the socialist states also occurred in the USSR, resulting in its dissolution in 1991.

*Philip Zelikow*, the US foreign policy and security advisor during the George W.H. Bush administration, discusses the strategic planning of the United States during this period. Discussing “the generation of 1988,” including Ronald Reagan, George Shultz, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Margaret Thatcher, despite having some differences, together with other experts they believed the Cold War had ended in 1988. This makes sense if one takes the INF Treaty and the START talks into account. Zelikow relates a chronology that began with European arms control agenda in 1987–88, a period of transition from June to November 1989, and a phase of rapid changes from November 1989 to November 1990. When in December 1989 President George W. H. Bush assured the Europeans that US troops would remain in Europe as long as their presence was desired, he also frankly asserted that the United States would remain “a European power.” Europe’s leaders had nothing against such reassurances.

The outcome was improved relations with the USSR and China, as well as the United Nations Security Council organizing international solidarity against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The positive developments in Europe during 1989/90 influenced Bush’s dealing with Saddam Hussein in 1991. In the end, US diplomacy reached goals that were more than President Truman’s containment doctrine had been able to achieve after 1947 and better than the Bush administration had expected: Russian influence in Europe was contained, US influence in Europe increased, and NATO stood at the border of the Russian Federation.

*Alexander von Plato* begins by discussing international politics until December 1989, continues by examining the policy of non-military interference, turns to Gorbachev's vacillating reactions, and concludes by describing the various European reactions to German reunification. Thatcher rejected reunification with the argument that it could threaten Gorbachev's position. Mitterrand reacted differently: he feared that reunification would weaken the process of European integration and thus encouraged a monetary union that absorbed the Deutschmark.

At the February 1990 Open Skies conference in Ottawa, the international conditions for reunification were presented. The fact that they were excluded from these negotiations angered the Italian and Dutch foreign ministers: the conference only involved the four victorious powers of World War II and the two German states. The Two Plus Four Agreement was signed on 12 September 1990. Von Plato argues that the role of Baltic republics has been underestimated by scholars. In Politburo protocols, the Lithuanian Question was on the agenda more often than the German Question. After German unification, all of the CEE countries desired safeguards against the Soviet Union and Germany. Only NATO, with its new capacities, seemed to protect them from these perceived dangers. The transatlantic alliance remained the main factor of the United States in Europe. Mitterrand expressed hopes that European integration would reduce the influence of the United States and Russia in Europe, especially with regard to military questions. But the CEE governments thought NATO offered them a guarantee of security.

Gorbachev's road toward German unity can be divided into three steps: 1) the retrospective approval of opening the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989; 2) his consent, expressed in January–February 1990, with the two Germanys' right for self-determination regarding possible unification; 3) his acquiescence in May–July 1990 with Germany's right for self-determination regarding a free choice of alliances. *Wolfgang Mueller* argues that the Soviet leader made each of these decisions separately, a procedure that made each step easier to accept and, thus, influenced a final outcome that at the beginning had hardly been thinkable. He demonstrates that the Soviet leadership communicated acceptance of the German right of self-determination with regard to German unification ten days earlier than hitherto thought, namely on 20 January 1990, in a conversation between the Soviet and the East German foreign ministers.

*Klaus Larres* presents Margaret Thatcher's attitude toward Germany. He first describes her experiences as a child during World War II and then turns to the growing lack of support for her policies in 1989–90. Here, the author focuses on British public opinion and the houses of parliament, the four powers, and the beginning of the end for the GDR. Larres raises the question of whether Downing Street and the Foreign Office pursued two different foreign policies. The prime minister had become unpopular in her own country because of the imposition of community taxes. In addition, the Ridley affair and the leakage of the Chequers seminar in March 1990 damaged her image. As consequence of an internal party

coup in November 1990, Thatcher had to give up her leadership of the conservatives and leave her prime minister office. Her strict opposition to Germany's unification and European integration further contributed to her downfall. Thatcher's conservative, immobile and narrow-minded policies concerning Germany and Europe also weakened the international position of Britain. The end of her career can be seen as a political tragedy: the anti-German Thatcher became a victim of Germany and its unification. Two months later she lost her power entirely. After retiring she attacked her successors from time to time and never forgave her party for its unceremonious farewell.

*Georges Saunier* focuses on the post-Yalta era and its different phases: the re-emergence of the German Question (from summer 1988 to autumn 1989); the attempts to keep the consequences of the fall of the Berlin Wall under control (from November 1989 to January 1990); the period of unification negotiations (from January to October 1990); and the debates concerning a new European balance after autumn 1990.

From the summer of 1989, French politicians realized that the GDR system was eroding, but they still believed in an evolutionary development with a mid-term perspective. In talks in Latche on 4 January 1990, Mitterrand heard from Kohl that German unification would be a process taking years.

Paris decided that Bonn should not pursue a unification policy alone; the EC should play an important role and the process should be "Europeanized." Elisabeth Guigou, advisor to Mitterrand, emphasized the need of linking unification with the deepening of European integration. It would allow immediate issues to be settled, but would also launch a new integration phase. According to Saunier, the 1990 Charter of Paris was a "détente treaty" that paved the way for disarmament in a unified Europe. In view of future transatlantic relations, Paris considered NATO stability necessary in this period of European transition and thus, that Germany should remain part of NATO. The evolution of NATO was a key element in the 1990 negotiations, with US policy aiming at its expansion. This was something France had opposed in former times and thus Paris was confronted with a dilemma. But due to the circumstances, France had to favor the revitalization of NATO. French policy therefore tried to introduce a reference to a future European defense structure within the formal framework of the alliance, although the German unification treaties did not contain any clauses providing such structures. In 1990 it was too early for such concepts. The Quai d'Orsay had to accept that the other European partners were against any plans of this kind. Therefore NATO's development remained undecided. Mitterrand's policy followed a clear line that combined his own projects. Unified Germany was to be part of a unified Europe that was based on international agreements and organizations.

*Antonio Varsori* shows that Italy's political elite and diplomats understood the importance of the events in the CEE countries. They backed the reunification of Germany, but wanted to prevent a German superpower that was no longer interest-

ed in its traditional relations with his European partners. Rome's primary foreign policy goal was to implement the integration process from both a political and an economic perspective. The creation of the European Monetary Union (EMU) was an additional goal, but involved dangers because of Italy's weak economy.

After 1990 Rome felt itself compelled to pay more attention to the Yugoslavian crisis than to the events in the CEE states. In order to avoid a large flow of immigrants, between 1989 and 1991 Italy tried to prevent Yugoslavia's breakup, although this policy was not popular in the general public opinion. Independent of Giulio Andreotti's reservations against German reunification, Varsori makes it clear that in the Two Plus Four negotiations, Italy was, against its will, only a "minor actor." Through Europe's integration, Italian politicians tried to influence the decisions being made, but due to the country's weak economy these attempts were limited.

Italy signed the Treaty of Maastricht on February 1992. Soon after this the Andreotti government resigned and the entire Italian political system collapsed. Its power of almost forty-five years had also come as a result of the Cold War. When the East-West conflict came to an end in Europe, the "clean hands" policy caused an implosion of Italy's political system. Despite the CEE socialist regimes' loss of power, the Italian Communist Party became the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (PDS) and survived.

*Arnold Suppan* presents a survey of the relations between Austria and its neighbors in the CEE states and the Balkans from the signing of the Austrian State Treaty in 1955 until the end of the Cold War. He points out that Austrian public opinion—especially in Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland—was divided: living next to Iron Curtain produced an "island-of-the-blessed" mentality, but at the same time Austria had joined the Western European trajectory towards prosperity, consumerism and a "leisure-class society." Nevertheless, due to Austria's geopolitical situation between the blocs, the foreign ministers Karl Gruber, Leopold Figl and Bruno Kreisky insisted on an active "good neighbor policy" towards the adjacent communist states Yugoslavia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and from the 1970s also toward Poland, the GDR and Bulgaria. But the bloody suppression of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and the "Prague Spring" in 1968 forced concrete reactions; the Austrian government as well the public helped hundred thousands of refugees from these two countries. From 1952, relations with Tito's Yugoslavia improved and from the 1960s became relatively close due to Yugoslav "guest-workers" coming to Austria and increased tourism on the Adriatic coast. Even the minority question in Carinthia did not disturb the excellent contacts between Vienna and Belgrade. Astonishingly, Poland's Solidarity movement received little support from the Association of Austrian Trade Unions or Chancellor Kreisky, despite the fact that a new wave of political refugees arrived in Austria. But the election of the Cracow archbishop, Karol Wojtyła, as pope in the fall of 1978 was supported by Vienna's archbishop Franz König.

Thus, in the mid-1980s, the Austrian capital of Vienna was a “Western” city surrounded by Soviet “Eastern” Europe. For Polish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Serb, Croat and Slovene intellectuals, Vienna stood for “Central Europe” (*Mittleuropa*), an imagined community of cosmopolitan civility that Europeans had somehow mislaid in the course of the century. Nevertheless, a great majority of the Austrian people, including the intellectuals, did not really recognize what was going on in the late 1980s in its neighborhood. They did not see the significance of the new nationalism movements in Serbia (from 1986), in Slovenia (from 1988) and in Croatia (from 1989), the increasing conflicts in Kosovo, and the fractures within the Union of the Yugoslav communists (in January 1990). They were also not aware of how important the reform processes within the Hungarian communist leadership (from 1987) had become, including the resignation of Kádár in 1988 and the opening of the Iron Curtain, first in December 1988 for Hungarians, in August 1989 for some six-hundred East Germans at the Austro-Hungarian “border picnic,” and then at midnight on 10–11 September for tens of thousands East German vacationers fleeing to West Germany. There is no doubt today that this mass exodus was the starting point of the disintegration of the communist regimes in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Immediately after the “Velvet Revolution” in Prague, Austria also opened its border to Czechoslovakia. With the fall of the Iron Curtain, Austria’s role at the periphery of the West was suddenly transformed into a position in the center of Europe.

*Michael Gehler* shows that Austria responded early and positively to the reform efforts in the CEE countries. Its strongest sympathies were for the changes in Hungary. In contrast, the rapid end of East Germany was not expected and had an entirely different impact, with the positive climate shifting quickly. Diplomats at the Ballhausplatz did not follow the changes in East Germany merely by waiting and sitting still, but with a sense of urgency and concern; the end of the SED regime was perceived with surprise and mixed feelings. While the reaction of Austrian chancellor Franz Vranitzky toward a reform-oriented GDR was positive, his foreign minister Alois Mock backed Bonn’s policy of a quick solution to the German Question in the sense of unification. The differing positions were also due to different approaches toward Brussels. Mock’s course focused on accession to the EC, whereby he relied on the support of West Germany. Vranitzky moved more cautiously with regard to Austria’s EC membership. While Vranitzky’s attitude toward the CEE states was based on state decisions and the status quo, Mock was oriented toward humanitarian and cultural aspects, despite his being an anti-communist hardliner. Vienna was accurate in its assessment of the interdependence and mutual interaction between glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union and the changes in the CEE countries, recognizing early Gorbachev’s key role in the reform processes and the further opening of the CEE countries. That is why the stability of Gorbachev’s government was seen as a top priority. In this regard, Austria’s foreign policy was parallel to that of the Western powers. The

reform movements in the CEE countries were seen realistically, with the differences between the pioneering role of Poland and Hungary and the slower political changes in Bulgaria, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Romania being evaluated reliably. The perception of the latter developments ranged from skepticism to disapproval. The CSCE-succession process in Vienna (1986–89) offered an important stabilizing and conciliatory framework into which the dramatic upheavals could be placed. The key way that Austria intervened politically in the course of the events just before the fall of the Berlin Wall was through the symbolic cutting of the Iron Curtain and the assistance and support it gave to fleeing East German citizens. The Austro-Hungarian prologue in the summer of 1989 was decisive for the extreme speed the developments in Germany took that autumn.

### **The aftermath and consequences**

*Dieter Segert* analyzes the societal transformations in CEE states after 1989 and their preconditions. Despite changing political and economic conditions, “a great deal of continuity” still exists. The CEE societies were seen as backward societies on the periphery of the West that were trying to gain the richer and more successful social order of their Western neighbors. State socialism is characterized by Segert as having been an attempt to modernize these backward societies. But he has no doubt that the starting point of political breakdown was the deep ongoing crisis of state socialism from the mid-1970s. The systemic changes of 1989 took place because elements of capitalism had silently been placed into the fold of state socialism. Following 1989, economic output declined significantly, especially in industrial manufacturing. Segert calls this development a “transformation recession.” Ensuing reforms also contributed to production decreases. The social consequences of these political changes were a rise in consumer prices and inflation, as was experienced for example in the successor states of former Yugoslavia and of the Soviet Union. The size of the working population dropped dramatically as well, which has resulted in rising social inequality. In most CEE countries, political participation in the first few elections after 1989 was high, but later this engagement declined and election turnouts decreased remarkably. Also social time changed fundamentally in the CEE countries. After 1989 the pace of life began to move faster and faster, with living conditions for the individual becoming more intense and less predictable. A radical restructuring of the welfare state occurred, with health care and pension systems massively changed. It has become clear that the process of economic adaptation and integration of the new member states into the EU will take much longer than was originally expected. With regard to political stability, the new member states differ from the older ones. Since 1989 voter unpredictability has grown, becoming even more widespread than in the “old” Western democracies.

*Liliana Deyanova* explores the different ways and different waves of how 1989 and communism have since been remembered in Bulgaria, a country where reformed communists managed to stay in power after 1989. Whereas the two main political groups in the country have tried to make their specific interpretations of 1989 universal by marginalizing the memories of the other, their readings have not remained unchanged, as a review of party media coverage in 1990, 1999, 2004 and 2009 reveals. What was celebrated by communists in 1990 as starting point for great reforms was later criticized by them as beginning of capitalism. Anti-communists were and remained skeptical about the success of 1989 in Bulgaria but used the occasions to denounce the crimes of communism. The division of memory regards not only 1989, but also September 1944, an anti-fascist revolution for some, a coup d'état mounted with Soviet help for anti-communists. Deyanova makes it clear that the "common places of memory" are not necessarily "places of common memory." She believes, however, that many of the incidents being interpreted as "nostalgia for communism" do not, in fact, reveal a real desire for communism to return but rather indicate what Jean-François Lyotard has called "nostalgia for nostalgia."

*Mikhail Prozumenshchikov* shows that the revolutions of 1989 also caused an "archival revolution" in the USSR, with documents becoming accessible that enable new revelations about contemporary history. Studying history with these open archives makes it possible to discover secrets that were hidden for a long time behind a "double Iron Curtain," first of the country and second behind the party secrecy. These secrets were not only hidden from the outside world, but also from the USSR's own citizens.

*Stanley R. Sloan* focuses on NATO's expansion from the American perspective. First he examines the setting for NATO enlargement, then discusses the emerging candidates for NATO membership, the process from partnership to membership and cooperation that has prepared the ground for enlargement, and in conclusion, the consequences of this expansion. Sloan considers NATO enlargement a success story. A small enlargement around 1999 was followed by a second bigger one in 2004, which represented a geopolitical and geostrategic revolution in the CEE states. Germany was the key European architect of the first round, followed by Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The decision in favor of a major "big bang" enlargement was made when the leaders of the NATO member states met in Prague in November 2002. During the administration of George W. Bush, in 2004 seven additional countries became members of NATO: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. In 2009 Albania and Croatia joined the alliance. Macedonia remains invited but still stands outside because of its differences with Greece over the country's official name. Ukraine and Georgia are still waiting, Serbia remains defiant and other states have the status of "partners" of various kinds. The question of NATO membership of Europe's non-aligned and neutral countries, like Austria, Finland and Sweden (which became members of the EU in 1995), is still open.



According to Sloan, NATO enlargement was “successful” because it brought new democracies into the Euro-Atlantic partnership. But he concedes that the process has left a number of unanswered questions concerning the future of European security with regard to relations with Russia. Sloan draws our attention to the point that Russian officials have used NATO’s expansion toward the east as justification for its own foreign and domestic policies. The NATO and EU enlargement processes have caused a double revolution: they have stimulated first a new consciousness of European security and secondly the democratization of former Soviet bloc states and republics. Joining NATO has been followed by active EU integration: as former Warsaw Pact members have joined the alliance, they have become strong supporters of the transatlantic community within the EU. NATO-enlargement has troubled but not destroyed relations with Russia. In this context, Sloan refutes that NATO enlargement has led to a “new Cold War.” Sloan argues that political developments in Russia that are unconnected to NATO’s enlargement process have turned out to be far more important to its relations with Europe than the acceptance of former Warsaw Pact allies and the Baltic republics by the transatlantic alliance. Moreover NATO functions as a framework for coordinating responses to the defense and security needs of its new members.

*John O’Brennan* analyzes the EU’s enlargement. In general, enlargement “has been a central and quasi-permanent element in the EU’s history,” an accurate statement of Desmond Dinan. Enlargement to the east was accompanied with rather hesitant and grudging responses by the old members. O’Brennan continues by focusing on the external and internal enlargement “canon” within EU studies, the economic and geopolitical dimensions, as well as theoretical approaches to EU enlargement. The first round of new members—UK, Denmark and Ireland (in 1973)—had hardly been assimilated when the second round followed and Greece (in 1981) and Spain and Portugal (in 1986) joined the community. Following the absorption of the old GDR (in 1990), the third round was negotiated quickly, with Austria, Finland and Sweden joining (in 1995), this causing nearly no problems. EU enlargement continued in 2004, with EFTA states and the “return to Europe” (“big bang” enlargement) of ten CEE countries, which was combined with their peaceful transitions.

O’Brennan makes it clear that there was and is an ongoing process of unfinished enlargement, with accessions of new member states taking place although the assimilation of older members remains non-consolidated. But the enlargement to the east has differed significantly from previous rounds in terms of size, scale and diversity.

1989 was also a starting point for changes in the West, especially for the transformation of the EC into the EU, with the events of this year contributing to a revolution within the old European Community. The Maastricht Union Treaty was an outcome of 1989 as well as a response to the unification of Germany.

The EU's eastern enlargement has been connected with democratization, Europeanization and modernization. But following the initial political changes, euphoria and idealism disappeared and disappointment and a new realism took their place. This was a consequence of expectations that were too high, as well as the challenges of inner-state and inter-state supra-national negotiations. With regard to new candidates from the Western Balkans, the controversies and struggles concerning widening the EU are back on the political agenda.

The establishment of new institutional structures shows that there has been successful adaptation of existing EU modes of decision making, but the process has remained partial and incomplete in both a geographic and normative sense. The democratic shortcomings of the CEE countries and of the EU itself have made it difficult to progress more quickly. The EU was and is confronted with a double challenge: on one hand being a welfare boosting entity and on the other, a global geopolitical power. It has not been possible to reach both goals at the same time, which has led to the failure of consolidating the gains of the "1989 moment." O'Brennan concludes with the critical yet reflective remarks:

The EU may be bureaucratically cumbersome and politically enigmatic, but in supervising a framework for the renewal of meaningful pan-European interstate cooperation, not to mention the reconstitution of the democratic impulse across the continent, it may have contributed in some small way to making 1989 at least as important a historical juncture as 1789 and 1848 in the rich tapestry of the European collective experience.