THE VELVET REVOLUTIONS OF 1989:
A LASTING 'END OF HISTORY'?

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The Eastern European nations radically changed their political, social, and economic models of development during the "long 1989". Drawing on the first achievements of Perestroika in the USSR and the consequent liberalization of Soviet foreign policy, between 1989 and 1991, Eastern European nations initiated transformation which included establishing democracy, rule of law, the free market and national statehood. Thirty years after the launch of that transformation, we can assess what the nations of our region really achieved during this period.

This issue of the Ideology and Politics Journal studies the legacy of the democratic and authoritarian movements that began in the socialist societies of Yugoslavia, Central and Eastern Europe and the USSR in 1989–91. The articles published in this issue analyze the complex relations between old and new political, social, and economic actors that led to the emergence of new political regimes, national and transnational movements, and economic realities in the region.

The theme of this issue was defined during the debate at the European Historical Forum (EHF). The Forum was held on 21–22 May 2019 in Berlin organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Russian human rights society "Memorial."

This year, the Forum was dedicated to the anniversary of the "Velvet Revolutions". The discussion prompt was " 30 years after 1989: Freedom from What? Freedom to do What?' The forum was centered around the legacy of authoritarianism in Eastern and Southeastern Europe and how "1989" is interpreted today." Two generations were invited to participate: Older researchers who witnessed these events take place, and younger researchers who were born in the year of the "velvet revolutions".

The geography of the Forum participants was no less diverse. The organizers invited scholars not only from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that were at the forefront of revolutionary processes, but also researchers from Southeastern Europe and post-Soviet countries. The discussion showed that "1989" is a rather arbitrary date. For representatives of certain regions, the moments of "real change" that led to the fall of the Communist authoritarian regimes occurred in the range of several years before and

after that year. In Poland's case, this date has probably moved further away and reached the time when the Solidarity trade union movement was organized (1980). Therefore, it is logical to speak of the "long 1989" as the period when the transformation of our societies began.

In Polish national historiography, Solidarity, which created the prerequisites for the destruction of the Berlin Wall, is of great importance. This approach is supported by German historian Leonid Luks and American philosopher Marci Shore. In particular, Leonid Luks believes that Poland has always played the role of a weak link in the external security chain of the USSR. This is where the dismantling of the Soviet system in Central Europe began (Lyuks 2013: 22). In turn, Marci Shore sees Solidarity as a national liberation movement that was able to unite the entire Polish political spectrum from the right to the left. Under other circumstances, the groups within Solidarity would simply not be in the same camp (Shore 2014).

The Forum found commonalities and differences in the cascade of "velvet revolutions". Attempts to provide a historical assessment of the changes that have taken place since the fall of the Berlin Wall—the symbol of Communist authoritarianism—were convincing enough. The main problem was the question of how 1989 liberal transformations are linked to the illiberal turn of 2010s retreat in Eastern and Central Europe. The wave of populism, anti-democratic sentiment and Ostalgie (nostalgia for communism) spread over the region, including Poland and Hungary—the flagships of historical change in 1989 (Bazhan 2020).

Russia's foreign policy has also become an open challenge for the liberal global order. In 2005, Russian president Vladimir Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union "the greatest catastrophe of the twentieth century" (quoted from: Khavkin 2010). Moreover, since 2007, Russia has been a leading revisionist force seeking to revise the results of the Cold War. In this context, the incomplete transformation processes launched in 1989 appear to be connected to the irreversible changes in the global crisis of liberal values.

The category of freedom as the highest human value acquires special significance. As Sigmund Freud stated:

> "Most people don't really want freedom because it implies responsibility, and responsibility frightens people" (quote from: Sereda 2018).

This idea was further developed in the visionary work "Escape from Freedom" by Erich Fromm, in which he demonstrated the correlation between authoritarianism and such "escape" (Fromm 2018).

A symbolic—and even prophetic—manifestation of the current results of "the 1989 Choice" is a mishap that took place on 9 November 2009 during the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The "Festival of Freedom" (an event in Berlin to commemorate 1989) featured a large-scale art installation of thousands of plastic dominoes, which German schoolchildren and artists painted with the slogans about peace and freedom. The dominoes were lined up along a line of the former Wall. Polish ex-president and the Solidarity movement leader Lech Walesa pushed the first

domino triggering a chain reaction that was to symbolize the era of change initiated by the Velvet Revolution. To the great regret of the organizers and participants of the action, the last domino survived the shock and stood (Beasley-Murray 2013).

In a metaphysical sense, the Berlin Wall remains not only in the minds of ordinary citizens of Eastern Europe, but also in the mental maps of the European and Russian political establishment. This mindset causes a return to the political agenda of old discourses and practices. A new undeclared war is now continuing in the heart of Europe. As Leonid Luks notes, independent Ukraine, especially after the Orange Revolution in 2004, has become a country like Communist Poland of the Solidarity period. Later, Euromaidan tried to create a new outpost of freedom—the place where the mental Berlin Wall would be broken. However, the Russian intervention in 2014 was the imperial act of maintaining the status quo in the post-Soviet space (Lyuks 2013). Therefore, the question of how to interpret 1989 thirty years later is more relevant than ever.

The European Historical Forum inspired the IPJ editorial team to dedicate an issue to the theme of "long 1989," and to invite Forum participants and all interested researchers to send their articles. Of course, it is impossible to maintain an ideal balance of views of the "velvet revolutions" in such a volume. The editors focused more on the so-called "Ukrainian crisis" as a kind of antithesis of 1989. Together, the authors and editors of this issue attempt to show how and why Gorbachev's policy of "new thinking" turned into the Putin's policy of "Russian world."

The issue opens with an article by Tatiana Poiarkova and Inna Plotnitskaya that describes the development of patron-client relations in the USSR. The researchers set themselves an ambitious task—to describe this entire process from the formation of the Soviet Union to Perestroika. The authors define clientelism as a combination of coercion and exploitation with voluntary relations and forced mutual semi-legal obligations. In independent Ukraine, the same type of relations, according to researchers, is inherited from the Soviet political system. However, it was the Soviet *nomenklatura* that became the driving force behind the collapse of the Soviet Union. After all, it was the *nomenklatura* that violated the "social contract" which emerged after the repressive system ended in the Soviet Union.

Soviet-style clientelism still defines political processes in independent Ukraine. Despite certain hopes, the Euromaidan did not break the vicious cycle. As Poiarkova and Plotnytska note, thirty years of post-Soviet Ukraine's existence, despite democratic procedures and institutions, the key political and administrative positions are filled by the cadres personally loyal to the winners of the election race. President Zelenskyy's team has seemingly not broken away from this tendency.

Considering the phenomenon of clientelism in the context of modernization theory, researchers tend to believe that the borrowed and violent nature of Soviet modernization contributed to the transformation of social mechanisms into institutional hybrids. In the post-Stalin period, patron-client relations ensured the formation and reproduction of the Soviet ruling class. Gradually, these relations became fundamental to the existence of the Soviet system, even though they were undermining it from within.

Clientelism led to a systematic violation of the law, cultivated in the *nomenclatura* such qualities as careerism, cynicism, and immorality.

Researchers believe that, during Perestroika, patron-client relations compensated for the lack of horizontal ties in society. In the conditions of fierce competition for resources that arose during the USSR collapse, the *nomenklatura* found itself in a privileged position and became the main beneficiary of newly independent states. It was clientelism that ensured its survival—and even prosperity—in independent Ukraine.

An article by Ivan Gomza and Denys Tereshchenko looks at the behavioral patterns among the GDR party elite during the deployment of the 1989 "velvet revolutions." The authors applied the game theory model to the data from available sources in order to determine the correlation between the age of party administrators and their support for the course of GDR liberalization. The researchers conclude that the idea of liberalization had wide support among the German *nomenklatura*. And this eventually led to the "U-turn" (Wende) in the history of divided Germany.

Urtak Hamiti offers an analysis of the events of "the long 1989" in Yugoslavia from the Kosovars' perspective. In contrast to Central and Eastern Europe, where the transition from authoritarianism to democracy was peaceful, Yugoslavia's disintegration was violent and long-lasting. The conflict around the status of Kosovo began with the suspension of its autonomy by the central government of Yugoslavia and finished with its independence. In that context, Hamiti shows how nationalism replaced communist doctrine in Yugoslavia. In fact, it was the nationalism of the ruling Serbian elite that triggered the chain reaction of armed conflicts in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The author focuses on the events of 1989–1991 in Kosovo, especially on the human rights movement in the region. Hamiti considers that it was this movement that laid the foundation for the Kosovars' movement for freedom and independence.

The author argues that in the case of Kosovo, a non-violent way out of Yugoslavia was impossible, above all, because Slobodan Milosevic was personally not ready to let the "rebellious province" go. The involvement of NATO in the conflict resolution in the case of Kosovo was the only possible scenario. Khamiti is convinced that the case of Yugoslavia should be considered in contrast to the processes in Central and Eastern Europe, since the collapse of Yugoslavia was caused not by external but by internal factors. In this case, international players, such as the United States, which adhered to non-interference policy contributed to the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

In the next article, Igor Piliaiev suggests looking at the "Ukrainian crisis" and the armed conflict in Donbass through the prism of post-non-classical methodology. The author offers a versatile historical and philosophical understanding of the "Ukrainian crisis", considering it from a cultural and neo-realistic perspective. In this context, the researcher analyzes the Ukrainian political regime. However, the author's perspective remains within the framework of the traditional Soviet/nationalist and East /West dichotomies. As an analytical framework, the consideration of Ukraine from the point of view of binary oppositions does not allow us to fully evaluate its cultural and linguistic diversity, and also limits our optics of analysis. Nevertheless, the author puts forward proposals that would allow building a new system of international security in Europe and

Asia around Ukraine. Piliaiev demonstrates Ukraine's potential for success in the transcontinental dialogue between Asia and Europe.

Oleh Bazhan and Viktor Trygub study the "the third revival" of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC). The research is based on materials from the State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU OSA). The researchers show how the UAOC gradually became one vector of the struggle for Ukrainian independence and separation from the religious influence of Moscow. They further demonstrate how the personal factor—the desire of the clergy to preserve their parishes—was closely intertwined with public initiative and wider political processes that took place in Ukraine at that time.

The revival of the UAOC had strong support from society in certain regions, but it received political support from the new Ukrainian elite only in 1990, when MPs realized the mobilization potential of the religious factor in the struggle for independence. This study is particularly relevant in the context of the "hybrid war" between Russia and Ukraine, where the Orthodox Church (or rather the Churches) is one of the arenas for conflict.

The article, authored by Roman Horbyk, Yana Prymachenko and Yuliya Yurchuk, analyzes the mediatization of the sphere of public history, which has become a mainstream trend in Central and Eastern Europe. To some extent, this is facilitated by the position of the Russian government, which actively uses historical arguments to justify aggressive foreign policy. Based on the theory of mediatization and the collective memory studies, the authors consider relevant processes throughout the region and then consider the case of LikBez, a public initiative of Ukrainian historians aimed at refuting historical myths both in and around Ukraine. The authors highlight the general trend of the government losing its exclusive role to interpret and represent the historical past. They also note that the use of media technologies affects the status of professional historians. On the one hand, it leads to a blurring of professional standards and, on the other hand, it promotes direct access of the "meaning-producers" to the target audience, where they enter into competition with other actors, including a government.

The articles selected for this thematic IPJ issue do not represent a holistic narrative of "the long 1989." They do, however, indicate the need to write a transnational history of this period and its consequences. Thus, we see this issue as an invitation to further work.

Fukuyama's thesis about the end of history seems to have long lost its relevance. But if it wasn't the end of history, what was it then: a remake, a sequel or a new section? (Tertychnyi 2003). How should we understand and analyze the processes that began in 1989?

The history of the "short 20th century" is full of wars and revolutions. Colonial empires collapsed one after another, the discourse of emancipation became a global trend, and the "velvet revolutions" in 1989 gave hope for a new free and fair global order. Thirty years after the Berlin Wall's fall, it became clear that the last revolution of the twentieth century was not so peaceful, as the example of Yugoslavia vividly

demonstrates. In addition, we can state that there was no break with imperialism or nationalism.

The global crisis, which began with the economic turmoil of 2008, has become truly global. For our region, this crisis continued with the annexation of the Crimea by Russia in 2014. It provoked the largest international security crisis since WWII in Europe, and was comparable to the Yugoslavian wars. In fact, there is an attempt by Russia and a number of other states to revise the results of the Cold War, symbolized by the overthrow of the Berlin Wall.

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