In recent years, the study of the late Cold War has moved beyond its focus on diplomacy and international organizations, in which national histories were essential variables. A variety of social, cultural and economic relationships cut across the seemingly impregnable borders of the Cold War and elided its fundamental divisions. This attention to the Cold War’s undertow owes much to the fact that the conflict came to an end two decades ago, leaving the older points of view orphaned.

That same elapsed time, however, exposes the fact that historians are quite overdue in considering the post-Cold War era. It is too easy to exclude the contemporary period from historical analysis, as if it lacks any possible narrative coherence. Especially to the extent that some developments of the post-Cold War era, such as the enlargement of the European Union or the Yugoslav wars, have reached a conclusion (with others, like the expansion of prosperity in East, Northwest and South Europe, remaining uncertain), we need to consider where the narrative of contemporary history can take us. From today’s perspective, 1989 no longer appears to be a Year Zero, as processes developing well before that year have shaped our time. In this essay, I would like to outline how a transnational approach helps to connect the late Cold War to the period since 1989, shedding light on each period and their transition. Focusing on Eastern Europe, I will consider how the very nature of the region has itself changed over the last four decades, and how that transformation has in turn changed Europe.

A recent well-known debate about Europe provides a transnational entry point into the fall of communism and its aftermath. On 31 May 2003, Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida published an essay in German and French newspapers, calling for attention to a «core Europe», defined by common values rooted in common

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experiences. Quite self-consciously, they sought to define that core in terms of their own backgrounds as multilingual intellectuals of world renown. They assumed, further, that their position represented a kind of European general will. The essay began by contrasting what its authors considered to be two defining events of the preceding winter: the infamous «Letter of Eight», in which leaders of various countries, most in Eastern Europe, expressed support for the imminent war in Iraq, and the demonstrations on February 15, 2003, in which hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in a dozen or so European cities had protested against American aggression.

Each of these actions was transnational, but they represented different axes. Along the first axis, some leaders exchanged notes and signatures «behind the backs» (as Habermas and Derrida put it) of the rest of Europe and at the behest (so it was later revealed) of American officials. This was, in the Habermas-Derrida reading, a false transnationalism, reminiscent of the ritual actions of the Warsaw Pact in opposition to NATO and vice versa. It was, in other words, a transnational moment that excluded participation as much as it included it. Along the other axis, they suggested, politically progressive, globally aware urban citizens joined together across borders to protest yet a third transnational event, the military invasion of Iraq, aimed at transforming the country’s political structure and international role. Habermas and Derrida asked their readers to see in that protest the birth of a European identity; they located that identity, however, safely in a «core Europe», which roughly corresponded to Western Continental Europe. Their Europe was thus as limited as that represented by the Letter of Eight. They bracketed Eastern Europe off from the «core» not only geographically, but also ideologically, ascribing to it pro-American (and thus not truly «European») values.

My purpose here is not to engage in an orientalist critique of contemporary Western European thinkers and their vision of Europe. Instead, I am interested in the East European response. Adam Krzemiński, a Polish journalist, published a bitter retort (in Neue Zürcher Zeitung) in July, observing that Habermas and Derrida, as they acclaimed the new public sphere of the 2003 protests, had too quickly forgotten the public sphere that had brought down communism. «No one in the West rejoiced after the East-Central European «Autumn of the People». In Paris or London there was actually a great deal of embarrassed discontent arising from German unification and the feared influx of the poor to the West. Even fourteen years later, there is obviously no feeling of joy within «core Europe» over the EU’s eastward expansion.»

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3 A. Krzemiński, «First Kant, Now Habermas: A Polish Perspective on «Core Europe»», in Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe, 146–53, 146–47.
The 2003 demonstrations were significant: crowds in London, Rome, Berlin, Madrid and elsewhere numbered in the hundreds of thousands, easily making these the largest protests since the anti-nuclear arms protests of the early 1980s. In Eastern Europe, meanwhile, crowds gathered by the hundreds or low thousands. But Krzemiński juxtaposed this transnational protest with two other supranational moments: the defeat of communism in Autumn 1989, which, Krzemiński argued, was an equally plausible expression of European values, and, at the other end of the post-communist period, the referenda in eight East European countries in spring 2003, in support of joining the EU.4

Transnational stories come heavily burdened with ideological messages beyond the assumption that national histories are in themselves myopic and less progressive. Habermas and Krzemiński share a tendency to see transnational links from below (as in 1989 or in February 2003) as good, and those from above (the Letter of Eight, or the negotiations over the expansion of the European Union) as either bad or at best impersonal. The historian, too, must always be conscious of this temptation. I am interested in transnational history’s limits and possibilities, and want to suggest ways in which it can be used as a tool to approach the recent history of Eastern Europe or of late communism, as well as, perhaps, the history of Europe in general. In what follows, I will suggest that the relationship between communism’s end in 1989 and post-communism’s end (upon entry into the EU) fifteen years later is one forged by transnational links at least as powerful as the ones Habermas celebrated. In so doing, I should make two caveats. First, the countries of Eastern Europe are no more identical (in the present or past) than are those of Western Europe. There are indeed plenty of special cases, and the region-wide perspective elides the exceptions in search of broader trends. Second, Eastern Europe itself (in its Cold War borders) has in any case probably ceased to exist; the differences between Poland and France today, for example, are no more significant than those between France and Spain. Barring catastrophe, Eastern Europe’s last era was the post-communist one.5

5 An analogous point was made by Charles King as early as 2000: «Today, «Eastern Europe», with two capital E’s, is really no longer serviceable, except as anything more than a quick tag for all points east of the Oder River.» C. King, «Postpostcommunism: Transition, Comparison, and the End of «Eastern Europe», in World Politics 53 (2000) 1, 143–72, 169. In this essay, «Eastern Europe» functions as a marker of cold-war divisions precisely in order to highlight transnational movement within and across that divide. Today, «Eastern Europe» more accurately means the countries between the European Union and the Caspian Sea.
1. Transnational Approaches

One should ask whether the concept of «transnational» actually adds something to the way we see events. The word itself suffers from overuse: phenomena that happen to occur in more than one country, or history that merely looks at more than one country, sometimes gets mislabelled as transnational. It is still the case, moreover, that different scholars use the term in varying ways. Here, I will make the case for a particular kind of transnational history as central to the historians’ apprehension of those times.

My own work on modern Eastern Europe has led me to a search beyond national borders for new ways to answer long-existing questions, and for new contexts in which to place them. Investigation of social movements in late communist Poland led me to think about movement across borders. The project that became *A Carnival of Revolution* began as a study of Polish social movements that grew out of Solidarity in the mid-1980s. Here I was following a strong tradition in East European history in which the national struggles – which are in any case vitally important, more so than elsewhere in Europe – make it difficult to look at more than one country or society at a time.

The same is true for most contemporary history of Europe, even at its most encompassing: it relies upon an amalgamation of national stories to make points about continent-wide trends.\(^6\) If one looks broadly at the continent, though, one notices moments in which national experiences become open to interaction with others, across borders. Sometimes these contacts move across the East-West divide (as in 1968\(^7\)); other times, they circulate largely within one region (as in 1989, though Western contacts played an important role\(^8\)). Nor is this phenomenon limited to contemporary history: 1917 and 1848, for example, clearly have a transnational component. But in either case, it is not enough to note that May in Paris followed the Prague Spring, or that a «wave» (or perhaps cascading dominoes) of popular unrest swept the communists from power in Eastern Europe in 1989. Historians need to ask why that is the case, and not be satisfied with reference to the *Zeitgeist*. At the very least, the historian must wonder: What exactly is a domino effect anyway, besides a metaphor? How does it work?

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\(^6\) This is true even of the most ambitious work, like T. Judt’s *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York, 2005). The shoehorning of a chapter on Poland or Prague into a country-by-country collection of articles, as is often the practice, adds up to something rather less than the sum of its parts.


So far, the transnational field has been left largely to the structuralists, who look at common influences or institutions, such as the Cold War, international organisations, economic change, or common generational experiences. Structural factors may be key in creating the space for transnational contacts and exchanges to flourish. This is but one possible approach to the transnational, however. While I acknowledge its central importance to contemporary history, it is not the direction I follow. My turn to transnational history was driven by the study of social movements in Poland, particularly through chance remarks in interviews with activists and brief mentions in local *samizdat* publications that revealed emergent cross-border movement networks. Following the leads of individual actors and social movements led to the discovery of a dozen countries in the East and West in which movements learned from and shared with one another through the 1980s, building networks across which ideas, tactics, and strategies of anti-communism could spread.

I refer to this social plane of transnational interaction, or the contingent sources of transnational change, as diffusion – a term used more by sociologists than historians. The study of social movement diffusion addresses an interesting problem. We know that at certain moments social/political activists become interested in the ideas, the strategies or the tactics employed elsewhere. What we know less about, especially in any systematic way, is how they acquire this information, and in what exactly they are interested. Some mechanisms, such as broadcast media or the interventions of political leaders, are more organized, while others are much more informal encounters. Elsewhere, I have proposed a typology of six modes of transnational diffusion: Command (texts or orders by leaders, such as Mikhail Gorbachev’s decision not to endorse a crackdown on East European opposition in 1989), Text (the circulation of translated essays among opposition figures, for example), Legend (in which activists respond to stories of opposition elsewhere, like that of Solidarity), Courier (the directed transportation of texts or ideas), Pilgrimage (journeys to a site of renown), and Convocation (international gatherings of activists to exchange ideas).

But how is a transnational history of Eastern Europe different from a collection of national histories, and what does it tell us? To answer this, I take as a starting point the emergence of the trade union Solidarity in Poland about 30 years ago. Though itself a movement located almost entirely within a national narrative, Soli-

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darity emerged at the beginning of a transnational reordering of the region’s geography, a process that ran simultaneously with the ending of communism.

An understanding of this moment, in turn, requires that we step back further to the decade leading up to Solidarity’s creation. The simultaneity of 1968 should be traced, in Eastern Europe at least, to structural more than other factors. Among East European nations that experienced 1968, the Poles and Czechs were as generally aware of each others’ protests as had been the Poles and Hungarians in 1956 – in fact even more so thanks to Radio Free Europe and other broadcast sources, the disappearance of censorship in Czechoslovakia, and the presence in both governments of reform communists moving freely in intellectual/quasi-opposition circles. But there was even less of an attempt to interact than there had been in the previous decade.

These two protests against the strictures of one-party rule were broadly similar in their structural causes (the post-1956 crises of both communist ideology and the economic system). They also exposed deep divides between nationalist and socialist oppositions, which ultimately hindered both. Despite its nascent (though unrealised) transnational currents, 1968 as a whole was limited by borders both geographic and ideological. The protagonists of 1968 could not yet see how Eastern Europe was changing – that industrial communism was in decline and that the productive citizens of socialism were becoming consumers. They fought in 1968 the battles of the past and could not yet see common ground.

The 1970s, however, saw the emergence of factors conducive to transnational exchange from below. In Western Europe, the rise of feminist, green and peace movements, as well as terrorist networks, all of which were operating across borders, addressed in different ways the limitations, variously understood, of 1968. On the other side of the Iron Curtain, Solidarity – though it was, again, strictly Polish – was also the product of transnational trends.

First, Solidarity’s self-limiting revolution – a term that suggests realism and distance from both communism and from political power as such – was born of a common awareness of the crushing of Prague Spring. For engaged intellectuals in the region, that year had represented the end of illusions. This awareness is exemplified by the small protests among intellectuals in Moscow, Warsaw and Budapest, such as the tiny protest on Red Square, lasting just a few minutes before the half-dozen protesters were arrested, or by the dramatic Party meetings in the Polish Academy of Sciences, at which distinguished academics turned in their cards. Note

12 This is the case not only in Eastern Europe. Tony Judt portrays 1968 protesters across Western Europe as almost juvenile in their self-centeredness, willfully uninterested in larger cultural and political trends – and this despite the ease of crossing borders, and the presence of transnational actors. On the other hand, Judt is concerned with making particular points about the European Left, and in so doing probably exaggerates its narrow horizons.
that at this moment, transnational consciousness does not lead to the centre (Moscow) as it usually had in the communist period, but instead to the periphery. It was therefore an important step towards making a new kind of un-Soviet Bloc.

The Helsinki Accords of 1975 put human rights onto an international agenda.\textsuperscript{14} This new structure contributed to an opening up of communication among second-generation dissidents (like Adam Michnik, Václav Havel or György Konrád) in the late 1970s. These channels bore creative fruit, as in a clandestine gathering on the Polish-Czechoslovak border in July 1978, or in Gabor Demszky’s pilgrimage from Budapest to the underground printers of Warsaw in early 1980. The lessons went both ways: while Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians (as well as East Germans) who paid attention were impressed by the extent to which Polish opposition was developed, Vaclav Havel’s analysis of late communism, «Power of the Powerless» – itself composed for a transnational collaborative project – had a substantial effect on oppositional thinking in Poland.

This interaction coincided with and was inspired by changes in the language of human rights during the same period: a way was found to combine universal and particular (national) rights. They demanded respect for national traditions as a part of civil and human rights, rather than seeing the former as undermining the latter. In terms of advancing a larger anti-communist cause, this was one of the important achievements of this period. Because national and civil rights were linked, the result was not isolation and xenophobia, but the opposite: a new awareness of relationship with other nations. A remarkable example of this can be found in the work of the Polish Independence Alliance (Porozumienie), a circle of influential intellectuals generally associated then and now with conservatism. In concert with Jerzy Giedroyć’s émigré journal Kultura, the Alliance articulated in the late 1970s a new approach to Polish international relations. An essay published by the group in early 1980, entitled «Once Again on Relations with Germany», called for «a commonly accepted vision of the future. That vision […] should be based on the principle of the complete openness of current borders, normal human migration in all directions and the security of minority rights».\textsuperscript{15}

This statement would probably not surprise us coming from the left; that it was a statement signed by three conservative Catholics reminds us that one could trace the growth of religious social activism in the late 1970s (not only in Poland, but also in Slovenia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and perhaps elsewhere in the region) to another transnational communication, the elevation of an Eastern European Pope. The choice of the Archbishop of Kraków, Karol Cardinal Wojtyła, to lead the


Catholic Church in October 1978 helped to diminish Catholicism’s insularity in those countries. Wojtyła, like his colleagues quoted above, articulated a perspective at once Polish and universal, and was attuned also to that which was national in other peoples’ allegiance to the Church.\textsuperscript{16}

A third transnational process that made 1980 possible was the Gastarbeiter phenomenon. We thus far lack a study of the millions of Polish, Hungarian, Yugoslav and other migrants from Eastern Europe who worked in Western Europe (legally, in the Yugoslav case, while the others mostly worked in the black market). This crucial transformation of Eastern and Western labor markets began when Josip Broz Tito signed an agreement with West Germany in 1968. At about the same time, János Kádár’s economic reforms in Hungary, and Poland’s reluctant rapprochement with both Germanys opened small doors in the Iron Curtain.\textsuperscript{17} This encounter with the West and with border crossing itself was as important as the experiences of any number of intellectual travellers, for the movement of labour could shape the cultural and even political environments. Many in Gdańsk, the shipyard city where Solidarity was born, had worked in Munich by 1980. Surely they brought, for example, a sense of their relative deprivation – or of what freedom at the workplace and in the public sphere felt like – home to their workplace. Gdańsk, a city at Poland’s maritime edge, may have been the most open city in Poland. The parallel with Poznañ, where the rebellion of 1956 coincided with that city’s annual international trade fair, is striking.

Solidarity itself was at first suspicious of foreign observers: union leaders’ reluctance to deal with Western movements, even the Western press, can be seen, for example, in British peace journalist John Taylor’s account of his sojourn with Solidarity.\textsuperscript{18} Over the following year, though, Solidarity underwent an evolution that culminated in the famous appeal to workers of Eastern Europe, one which (perhaps consciously) echoed the great transnational statement that ends the Communist Manifesto. While no one in communist Poland would call for the «workers of the world» to unite, they supported parallel national struggles based in labor: «We support all of you who have decided to take the difficult path and fight for free trade unions. [...] We believe that soon your and our representatives will be able to meet to exchange our union experience.»\textsuperscript{19} For Solidarity, this was a radical and

\textsuperscript{16} A still-hidden aspect of the fall of communism is the effort made by Christian groups in Western Europe – particularly the Inter-Church Council of the Netherlands – to support human-rights dissent in Communist Europe.


\textsuperscript{18} J. Taylor, Five Months with Solidarity: a first-hand report from inside Hotel Morski, Gdańsk (London, 1981). The early reticence of trade unionists was also a common theme in interviews I conducted with Solidarity’s representatives or contacts in Western Europe, in 1999.

\textsuperscript{19} «Message from the Delegates to the First Congress of the Independent Self-Governing Trade
surprising step; of course, it didn’t have much meaning or effect. Such «exchange of experiences» (which sounds rather Soviet!) never took place – or did it? This openness to the experience of others would become much clearer over the 1980s as Eastern Europe truly became a new kind of bloc, one whose borders both internal and external changed in meaning.

2. Solidarity’s Children

As briefly as possible, I would like to summarize here the main transnational trends that were developing from my perspective in the crucial transformative decade leading to the fall of communism, focusing on just a few of the diffusion modes I listed earlier. First, Solidarity made Poland broadly (or «Gdańsk» as a shorthand) a mecca of sorts, not only for those in opposition to communism, but also indeed for those in opposition to the Cold War in Europe. Like any pilgrimage destination, it could be perceived in different ways by different travellers. As far away as Robben Island (whose inmates of course had no hope of travelling to Gdańsk), South African prisoners discussed Solidarity’s significance to the worldwide struggle for change.

No other city or country in the region functioned as a central node of diffusion, though Budapest in particular attracted some attention and visitors (from, for example, Dutch and British pacifists in 1981–83, Slovak environmentalists in 1986–88 and gay activists in 1986). The political web of 1989 really centres around Poland. Many of those who travelled to Poland, from the West (like Timothy Garton Ash) or the East (like Slovene sociologist Tomaž Mastnak) subsequently travelled elsewhere in the region, thus spreading the infection, as it were. In the early part of the decade, this movement was generally unorganized; later, coordination was provided by the United States Embassy in Warsaw or English-speaking Solidarity leaders.

At the same time, Poland was also the principal source within Eastern Europe of Couriers who exported the materials of revolution. Chief among these were the trekkers in Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity. They carried backpacks full of Czech-language oppositional publications across the mountains to foil the Czechoslovak border guards and energize their contacts in Prague and elsewhere.

The «exchange of experiences» envisioned in 1981 came closest to fruition in several key Convocations in Poland, like that organized by Freedom and Peace outside Warsaw in 1987 and in Kraków in 1988, or the Festival of Czech Culture arranged by Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity in Wroclaw in November 1989. At

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20 «Evaluative meeting of Mrabulo [syllabus], 1989»
21 «Evaluative meeting of Mrabulo [syllabus], 1989»
22 The conference of Soviet Bloc gay activists in 1986 has not, to my knowledge, received any scholarly attention.
each, participants could experience the atmosphere of relative freedom in Poland, and engage in speech practices unthinkable (or more difficult) back home.

One other important mode of ground-level transnational diffusion worth mentioning is assistance. Here, the literature is quite sparse; this essay can only signal the phenomenon. The key target location in late communist Eastern Europe was again Poland, specifically during the Western response to martial law in 1981 and after. This assistance ranged from individual trucks loaded with food and medicine, trucks from West Germany or Sweden23, to the postcards of solidarity from Dutch citizens that piled up in the houses of jailed Solidarity activists.24

Diffusion then occur through individual contacts, often well below the level of institutions and social movements. Such transnational activity is rather hard to find,25 and hard to interpret as well. Why is an individual or a small-group encounter important to larger events like revolutions, and what occurs during such an encounter? On the one hand, the encounter itself has significance for breaking stereotypes and conveying some kind of information (though the nature of that information may not be documentable). At another level, it opens up a path for others: in a parallel to the migration chains that bring friends and family to the same workplaces occupied by early travellers, first encounters in the political or social movement sphere lead to others. The British peace activist in Budapest, the Polish intellectual in Amsterdam, the Czech student in Kraków – they are followed by others, and the channels of communication are opened up. Thus, in the 1980s, these types of individuals created a kind of Central European community that was marked by awareness of neighbours, and acting with neighbours in mind. This community, again, revolved around Poland.

To return to the question of diffusion’s content: though it may sound terribly vague, what is really exported or imported from places like late-communist Poland that have a relative degree of freedom is a style or a way of being. Travellers or hosts in the Central European opposition learned how to act freely and how to put aside their fears in their encounters with their neighbours. What it feels like to act in uni-

24 My mother-in-law was one of those who proudly displayed such a collection, whose origins nevertheless remained mystifying to the recipient.
25 In July 1998, I was conducting interviews in Budapest with activists from the younger Hungarian opposition. As Viktor Orbán had recently been elected Prime Minister, it was quite difficult to find members of his party, Fidesz, who had time to talk. On my last afternoon in the city, on my way to catch a train to Zagreb, I had coffee with Peter Molnar, a lawyer who had been active in Fidesz before 1989. I had the idea that Fidesz in those days was quite similar to Poland’s younger social movements, but knew of no link. We chatted about my research in general, and he asked me why I was interested in the region. When I mentioned the many years I had lived in Wrocław, Molnar perked up: «Oh, I visited Wrocław... I think it was in 1985.» This clue (which was in part a faulty memory) led me to a crucial transnational story – one which, to my knowledge, had never been written about in any language – about the influence of Polish opposition on the Hungarians. See Kenney, Carnival of Revolution, 136 – 140.
son, or to express oneself openly, can only be gained in personal contact. This sense was clearly expressed by Charter 77 activist (and one-time spokesperson) Petruška Šustrová in November 1989. She had just returned from Wroclaw’s Festival of Czech Culture. Though the Velvet Revolution in Prague was only a week away, neither she nor anyone else could anticipate it. Yet the days she had spent in Poland, with crowds of Czech students who had somehow slipped across the border, energized her: «Those thousands of people, mostly young, will bring home more than just impressions from a concert and from a beautiful gathering. I think that the optimism of our Polish friends has infected them. And then, when you see with your own eyes that something can be accomplished, it stimulates you […]. The hope we have brought home is a great foundation for the future.»

The revolutionary moment of 1989, therefore, was an organic whole, not a serial revolution. Actions or experiences in one society bled into those in another along personal pathways at the same time as they flashed westward and eastward by the familiar routes of technology, journalism and diplomacy. In this way, 1989 was unlike previous revolutionary eras in that change across borders of the Soviet bloc was the product of interaction, even exchange. Perhaps we could say it was the realization of the tactical potential of the semi-transnational moment of 1968, stripped of much of its ideological language.

The fruits of this late-communist East European interaction can be seen in the post-communist period, in the interactions within the region, and in the relationship Eastern Europe has fashioned with Western Europe and beyond. Attention to this contemporary period provides a further perspective onto important trends in the communist period, and further demonstrates how a transnationalized Eastern Europe can contribute (and perhaps it has already done so) to a reinvention of Europe.

3. Narratives of Post-communism

There are many ways to discuss the now-past post-communist era, which ended in the spring of 2004, as eight countries of the region entered the European Union. Of course other countries have entered since, and more are in the waiting room. For many, prospects of membership have receded since the onset of the global recession. This does not change the fact that the referents of political, social and economic relations have realigned sufficiently since the accession of May 2004, to the extent that it no longer makes sense to think of the current period as being primarily post-communist. Many aspects of culture and society bear the imprint of the communist era, of course; yet they also show traces of World War II, or of the Habsburg Empire. In that sense, the post-communist era will never be over.
First, the post-communist period witnesses the end (or at least the marginalization) of fear, an emotion that characterized East European communism from beginning to end. This is one way of thinking about borders breaking down or being breached. The clearest example of this is in the changing attitudes of Poles toward Germans.\footnote{I develop the argument here at greater length in «Martyrs and Neighbors», in which I compare Polish and Czech attitudes toward Germans. I suspect that one could fruitfully explore other changing attitudes: between Latvians and Russians, Croats and Serbs, Hungarians and Romanians. There will surely be significant differences in these cases, just as Czechs are not as comfortable in their relations with Germans as Poles appear to be. One hindrance to such comparison may be scholars’ continued insistence on «post-communist» frameworks.} Anyone familiar with Polish society and culture might have expected that Poles, who suffered greatly at the hands of Germans during World War II, whose leaders through the 1980s continued to play the anti-German card and who had relatively little experience with democracy either at home or abroad, would build their post-communist worldview upon a visceral hatred of all things German. Still less, one might have thought, would Poles be willing to re-examine the history of their relations with Germans.

Consider, however, a survey taken in May 1996 that asked Poles to characterize their attitude toward the expulsion of Germans from Polish territory in 1945–47. Nearly half, or 47 per cent, chose the following statement: «It was an injustice which affected a civilian German population that had lived in those areas for centuries.» Just over one-quarter, meanwhile, felt that apologizing to Germans was appropriate. One should not want to hang too much upon a survey, however; it is also important to note that this survey was taken before the growth of tension over the proposed Centre for Expellees in Berlin.\footnote{See S. Troebst, «Europeization of the Memories of Expellees» in Przegląd Zachodni (Western Affairs Review) 2 (2008), 207–33.} Nevertheless, the prospect of a society unexpectedly open to reconciliation (and even apology) is striking and merits explanation.

If we think of Poland and Poles as continually engaged in transnational contacts over much of the communist period, the story is much less surprising. In addition to the work of the Polish Independence Alliance, and the assistance from West Germany during martial law, both discussed above, one could mention the 1965 Pastoral Letter of the Polish Bishops to their German Brothers, and the interactions between Polish, East German and West German peace activists in the 1980s.\footnote{Kenney, «Martyrs and Neighbors»; and Kenney, Carnival of Revolution, ch. 3.} In this light, transformed memory is really the product of a transformed national culture, engineered by transnational contacts; not only do those in the East put aside their fears or prejudices, but so, too, do their neighbours to the West.

A second example of transnational movement in the post-communist era is the wave of revolutions that closed the twentieth century and opened the twenty-first,
beginning in Slovakia, Croatia and Romania in the later 1990s, and then in Serbia in 2000, Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004. It may be too soon to determine whether these revolutions can be called successful, or whether all of these countries could today be considered democratic. Even so, one can speak of the process of export of revolutionary road maps.

How did the events of 1989 shape the subsequent democratizing wave in the region? On the one hand, they did so as legend. Serbs, for example, saw themselves as part of the 1989 tradition, especially during the street protests in the winter of 1996–97.\footnote{L. Weschler, «Letter From Serbia: Aristotle in Belgrade,» The New Yorker, February 10, 1997.} The renewed attention to 1989 on the tenth anniversary may also have had some influence.\footnote{It would be worth analyzing the presence of this anniversary in the press around the region. One such study is being undertaken by Deanna Woolley for the Czech Republic. D. Woolley, «Communicating Revolution: Representations of the 1989 Events by the Press and Civic Movements in Czechoslovakia,» paper presented at the AAASS National Convention, New Orleans, November 2007.} Terms familiar from 1989 also echoed in Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine, even as these political upheavals generated new models and traditions. Even if the details were fuzzy and the interpretation simplistic – slogans like «Velvet Revolution» and «Round Table» surely misled as much as they taught – the fall of communism in Eastern Europe was still as enticing, and perhaps as influential, as 1917 was in the interwar years. Western scholars, by the way, play a role in this story: it is worth noting that Timothy Garton Ash’s book on 1989, The Magic Lantern, was published in Croatian in 1993.

Contacts and the transmission of specific information also spread revolutionary practices. The Polish journalist Konstanty Gebert, a participant in the Solidarity underground throughout the 1980s, recalls meeting in the early 1990s Kosovar intellectuals incensed that the Serb leadership would not allow the printing of history textbooks in Albanian. He showed them how Poles had made simple printing presses from ordinary materials. The next time he visited Kosovo, his hosts presented him with an underground text they had produced by this method. Gebert has not been the only Central European to come to the Balkans or to the post-Soviet nations in the East. In December of 1997, five Poles accompanying humanitarian aid were kidnapped in Chechnya. Four of them had been active in the Freedom and Peace movement in the late 1980s, as well as in the anarchist movement. Their work in Chechnya (some of them were on their fifth trip there) could be seen as a logical outgrowth of their activism during the communist era.\footnote{See http://flag.blackened.net/agony/chechen.html}

At the other end of the spectrum of political border crossing are figures like Tadeusz Mazowiecki of Poland and Jiří Dienstbier of the Czech Republic. Both played key roles in negotiating the fall of communism and later served as Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Bosnia. As I will suggest below, the
monitoring of human rights and democracy became a specialty of East Europeans who had experienced the fall of communism.

The later phase of this wave of democratic change, from Serbia’s Bulldozer Revolution (2000) through last year’s Twitter Revolution in Moldova, has been marked by an overt transnationalism in which outside participants, outside funding (American in particular) and ever new forms of technology are prominent, if not central.34 This has led some observers to question the integrity or authenticity of these revolutions. If we consider that any revolution costs money, and that such factors were present in earlier cases, we should realize that, in all probability, such concerns are a red herring hindering us from study of the micro-influences of social movements and individuals across the region.

A third approach to the post-communist era and the legacy of East European dissent returns us to the spring of 2003, where this essay began. That moment also leads us in a new direction in which ideas or styles in the East have an impact on the West. In a remarkable paradox that caused considerable consternation among intellectuals in Western Europe, a large proportion of the educated middle class in Eastern Europe expressed support for the United States-led invasion of Iraq. The polls in 2003 showed that society was divided, however, making it difficult to discern clear trends.35 Yet, if one may fall back upon anecdotal memories and press reports, it seems that the general tenor of educated society in the spring of 2003 in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, from Václav Havel down to my dentist in Wroclaw, from the moderate left to the moderate right, favored the American response.

And why? It cannot be attributed to an innate sense of realpolitik, though some surely hoped to acquire NATO bases as a reward. Indeed, this perspective was visible in the aforementioned Letter of Eight.36 Individually, too, leaders in Eastern Europe justified their support partly in terms of NATO obligations. More representative, though, of the perspective I have in mind were the arguments of Adam Michnik, responding to a bitter attack from a formerly sympathetic left-wing

35 One problem is that neither Polish nor US surveys isolate by social class in a useful way. A poll by OBOP in March 2003 may be indicative, however: it showed that while just 36 per cent of those who evaluated their economic situation as «bad» felt that Poland should support the United States politically in the imminent campaign, 58 per cent of those who felt they were doing well economically expressed such support. A similar percentage of those who said they followed politics closely expressed support. In the United States, support for the war did not differ as much according to income level (which is not the same measure, of course); in fact, higher-income respondents were slightly less supportive than most categories of middle- and lower-income respondents. Compare TNS OBOP, «Polacy wobec uderzenia na Irak,» March 2003, available at http://www.tns-global.pl/archive-report/id/1388; and Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, «Post-Blix: Public Favors Force In Iraq, But…; U.S. Needs More International Backing,» February 20, 2003; available at http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/173.pdf.
German journalist, in March 2003: «I am one of those people», he wrote under the headline «We, the Traitors», «who well remember our nations’ experiences with totalitarian dictatorships [...] and that is why we were able to draw the right conclusions from the lessons of September 11, 2001.» Aligning himself with fellow dissidents-turned-traitors Václav Havel and György Konrád, Michnik affirmed his deep suspicions of American militarism, and celebrated the rights of those who would protest, but concluded: «War has been declared upon the democratic world. And we want to defend that world, whose mistakes and sins we know all too well.»

Michnik’s is perhaps an idiosyncratic voice, and he might not put forward the case the same way today. Indeed, such supporters in the region now feel betrayed, not only by the evident American deception in the lead-up to the war, but by the lack of interest on the part of American occupation forces in the East European experience in building democracy and civil society. Michnik’s reasoning, however, was specifically East European in that it reflected particular experiences of subjugation, resistance and cross-border interaction. His position was echoed by many former dissidents who had fought primarily for the recognition of human rights and civil liberties. They spoke in terms of repaying a debt; not to anyone in particular, but with respect to a need to share the freedom they had won over a decade earlier.

One could mention further examples of this new role for Eastern Europe as a voice for a moral approach to international politics, such as the debate over the preamble to the EU constitution, or the debate over the EU budget in June 2006, when new members, led by Poland, offered to give up parts of their subsidies if older members would break deadlocked negotiations. The direction of these communications, during which a transformed Eastern Europe endeavours to alter what Habermas and Derrida called «core» Europe, signals how Eastern Europe’s place on the continent has changed. A familiar trope labelled Eastern Europe as the «Lands Between», but now this preposition does not connote domination, but interchange.

Each of these cases directs our attention to the effects of the communist era, and again to the ways that opposition movements ended that era. At the same time, they point to the intellectual content of the relationship among East European countries, and put them in new European and global contexts. The key story in Eastern Europe since the 1970s, then, is the growth of a transnational intellectual-political community. Transnational processes are in turn essential to the region’s development since 1989, a period during which Europe itself is reconstituted (not only in a political sense). That same transnational community that contributed to the fall of communism has also brought an end, therefore, to post-communism.

38 See Kenney, Burdens of Freedom, 157 – 58.
Borders Breached: The Transnational in Eastern Europe since Solidarity

This article reconsiders the history of the late Cold War and the early post-Cold War eras as shaped by transnational forces. It proposes an understanding of the transnational as created by individual and group actors crossing borders and engaging in diffusion of ideas, styles and methods of political action. The era centred around 1989 differed, in its transnationality, from the preceding era of protest in 1968, when interactions across borders were less important than were common structural factors in accounting for coincident activism. From the mid-1970s, international agreements, economic migration and the conscious decisions of local actors and social movements facilitated the emergence of a network of activism in Eastern Europe; this network is one of the most important features of Communism’s demise. Since 1989, the imprint of that network can be seen in subsequent democratic transformations, in the changing attitudes of Europeans toward their neighbours, and even in the discourse surrounding the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Durchbrochene Grenzen: Das Transnationale in Osteuropa seit der Solidarnosc


Des frontières franchies: Le transnational dans l’Europe de l’Est depuis Solidarnosc

Cet article reconsidère l’histoire des dernières années de la Guerre Froide et des premiers temps de l’après-Guerre Froide comme une période façonnée par les forces transnationales. Il propose une compréhension du transnational comme résultat créé par des individus et des groupes d’acteurs traversant les frontières et engagés dans la diffusion d’idées, de styles, et de méthodes d’action politique. La période centrée autour de 1989 diffère, dans sa transnationalité, de la période de protestation précédente de 1968, lorsque les interactions par-delà les frontières étaient moins importantes que ne l’étaient les facteurs de structures communs dans les comptes pour un activisme coïncidant. A partir du milieu des années 70, les accords internationaux, la migration économique, et les décisions conscientes
des acteurs locaux et des mouvements sociaux ont facilité l'émergence d'un réseau d'activisme en Europe de l'Est; ce réseau est l'une des plus importantes caractéristiques de la désagrégation du Communisme. Depuis 1989, l'empreinte de ce réseau peut être vue dans les transformations démocratiques subséquentes, dans le changement d'attitudes des Européens envers leurs voisins, et même dans le discours autour de l'invasion de l'Irak en 2003.

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