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ENTANGLED PROTEST

DISSENT AND THE TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY OF THE 1970S AND 1980S

'A spectre is haunting Eastern Europe: the spectre of what in the West is called "dissent".' Thus begins Václav Havel's famous essay 'The Power of the Powerless' ('Moc bezmocných') – a text which simultaneously described and shaped a new form of politics which had begun to emerge in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the late 1960s.[1] Neither working within the institutions of the communist systems nor trying to overthrow them, 'dissent' instead began with individual acts of defiance. Havel famously illustrated this with the parable of a greengrocer who placed the slogan 'Workers of the world unite!' in the window of his shop, 'among the onions and carrots'. The greengrocer did not need to believe this slogan for it to have an effect; what he communicated with the slogan was not a quotation from the *Communist Manifesto* but his own subordination: 'I, the greengrocer XY, live here and I know what I must do. I behave in the manner expected of me. I can be depended upon and am beyond reproach. I am obedient and therefore I have the right to be left in peace.'[2]

In spite of the greengrocer's indifference to the slogan's meaning, ideology nevertheless played an important role in Havel's analysis of post-totalitarianism: it cloaked the greengrocer's obedience in a statement of lofty principles. In this way, Havel argued, ideology superficially bridged the 'yawning abyss' between the 'aims of life … moving toward the fulfilment of its own freedom' and the 'aims of the system'. The 'post-totalitarian system', therefore, was 'a world of appearances trying to pass for

[1] Václav Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless', trans. Paul Wilson, *International Journal of Politics* 15, 3/4 (1985), 23-96, at 23. The essay was first published in Czech in 1978. An unpaginated version of Paul Wilson's English translation is available on Havel's official website at www.vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=eseje&val=-2_aj_eseje.html&typ=HTML (accessed Aug. 2013).

[2] Havel, 'Power of the Powerless', 27-28.

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reality'; to live within it meant 'to live within a lie'. And by living this lie, the greengrocer became complicit in the system's oppressive rule.[3]

But if ideology was the pillar of this system, Havel believed, it was also its Achilles heel. Resistance to it could begin with the individual choice to abandon 'living within the lie' and to start 'an attempt to live within the truth'. By ceasing to put phony ideological slogans into his shop display, by publicly manifesting his dissent from the system's ideology, the greengrocer was sure to suffer repression, but he achieved a significant triumph nonetheless. He 'shattered the world of appearances, the fundamental pillar of the system. He has shown everyone that it is possible to live within the truth'. With his example, the greengrocer could awaken among his fellow citizens what Havel considered a universal longing of human beings 'for dignity and fundamental rights'.[4] This longing was the 'power of the powerless'; awakening it through a multitude of individual acts of defiance, Havel believed, could have corrosive consequences for the system.

Influential though it was, not all those branded 'dissidents' shared Havel's existentialist philosophy. What they did share was his belief that, in order to change the communist systems of the Soviet bloc, one had to begin by stepping outside of the framework they set out for social life – resistance began with an act of dissent. These political practices of dissent, their prehistory and evolution are the subject of this book. It is thus a contribution to what Barbara Falk has called an 'emerging historiography of dissent' – a movement of researchers from east and west who, drawing on the broad range of source which became available since 1989, invigorate the study of Soviet bloc protest movements.[5]

The individual contributions to this volume demonstrate that movements of dissent and opposition in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were transnational phenomena. On one hand, this means that the similarities between them were not only the result of the similarities of the systems they were rebelling against, but also resulted from the reciprocal perceptions of the dissidents of one another, from the contacts that they established, and from the cross-border conversations that they held. On the other hand, the contributions to this book also highlight that the transnational connections in which dissidents participated were not restricted to the eastern bloc but cut across the 'iron curtain' as well: the dissident experience drew heavily on the imagery of a 'court of world opinion' to which the dissidents could appeal as they sought help against political repression;

[3] Ibid., 29-31.

[4] Ibid., 39-40, 42.

[5] Barbara J. Falk, 'Resistance and Dissent in Central and Eastern Europe: An Emerging Historiography', *East European Politics & Societies* 25, 2 (2011), 318-360.

raising international awareness for their plight was thus a constitutive element in the dissidents' political tactics. This simple observation raises a whole range of new questions about dissent. Since the dissidents lived in oppressive political systems which restricted travel and the ability to communicate across borders: which intermediaries, discourses or structures allowed the dissidents to overcome these obstacles and address western audiences? How did this affect the dissidents' message? Why, simply put, would people in the west listen to what the dissidents had to say? Addressing these questions highlights that many of the activists described in this book participated in transnational processes which transformed world politics during the 1970s and 1980s: the eclipse of Marxism and of other political discourses that were focused on large scale social transformation; the rise of human rights from the obscure texts of international law to being a rallying cry of social activism; the emergence of transnational discourses addressing peace and ecology.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will begin with a discussion of the two essential terms of this book: 'dissent' and 'transnational'. On this basis, I will highlight how the contributions to this book substantiate the two observations mentioned above and discuss a number of themes that help to put the history of dissent into the transnational history of the 1970s and 1980s.

Defining 'Dissent'

In 'The Power of the Powerless' Havel wrote that 'dissent' and 'dissident' were labels foreign observers had applied to him and to his fellow activists; they themselves, he insisted, used these terms only 'with distaste, rather ironically' and always in quotation marks.[6] For Jonathan Bolton, Havel's text is 'nothing if not a sustained polemic with the word [dissent] and the idea'.[7] Why use the term 'dissent' in this book?

Matters are complicated further by the fact that the term dissent was closely associated with another problematic term: 'totalitarianism'. Asked about the possibility of democratic changes in communist societies, Polish intellectual Jacek Kuroń replied that he would prefer to classify the system in Poland as 'totalitarian' rather than 'communist'.[8] Havel used the term

[6] Havel, 'Power of t he Powerless', 58.

[7] Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent: Charter 77, the Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech Culture under Communism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 2.

[8] Jacek Kuroń, *Polityka i odpowiedzialność* (Londyn: "Aneks", 1984), 44.

'post-totalitarian' instead. But he hastened to explain that this did not mean that the system had ceased to be totalitarian, but merely implied that it was a new kind of totalitarian dictatorship.[9] Few other dissident writers bothered to add similar qualifications; describing the political system of the Soviet bloc as 'totalitarian' was one of the few features virtually all dissidents had in common.[10]

Given this characterization of communist societies as (post-)totalitarian, Havel's allegorical greengrocer had but two choices: he could continue to play the system's game, perpetuate its lies and thus sustain it, or he could begin a 'life in truth', step outside the ideological framework of the system and hopefully become part of a movement for changing it. While Havel strongly rejected the elitist associations of the term 'dissident', his analysis nevertheless implied that there were only two relevant groups in the post-totalitarian system: the representatives of the all-powerful system and the courageous few who resisted it. The experience of society at large was thus reduced to compliance and apathy and dismissed as irrelevant. Over the past thirty years, historians have exposed this view of social life under communism as a caricature.[11]

Few authors doubt that the countries of the Warsaw Pact were authoritarian and repressive. More often than not, however, the ruling communist parties failed to mould societies in the ideological images of Marxism-Leninism. Even during the worst periods of Soviet Stalinism, party structures were rarely efficient instruments for enforcing totalitarian rule.[12] But even if power was executed effectively, it could be, as researchers writing in the vein of Michel Foucault have shown, not only restrictive, but productive as well. It could create new social subjects and thus set in motion social dynamics which the party could neither foresee nor control.[13] The

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[9] Havel, 'Power of the Powerless', 27.

[10] Jacques Rupnik, 'Le totalitarisme vu de l'Est', in Guy Hermet, ed., *Totalitarismes* (Paris: Economica, 1984), 43-71.

[11] For a survey and personal account of the revisionist historiography in Soviet history see Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Revisionisms in Soviet History', *History and Theory* 46, 4 (2007), 77-91.

[12] J. Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933–1938* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[13] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, CA et al.: University of California Press, 1995); Katherine A. Lebow, 'Public Works, Private Lives: Youth Brigades in Nowa Huta in the 1950s', *Contemporary European History* 10, 2 (2001), 199-219; Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Malte Rolf, 'Norm, Abweichung und Aneignung: Kulturelle Konventionen und unkonventionelle Kulturen in der Nachkriegssowjetunion', *Totalitarismus und Demokratie / Totalitarianism and Democracy* 2, 4 (2007),

social and cultural history of communism also made notions like 'subordination' and 'resistance' complicated. The greengrocer's placing the slogan into his shop window could have been a subtle act of resistance: placing the slogan precisely 'among the onions and carrots' the greengrocer may have exposed the very pretentiousness of the system's desire for total control. By dutifully enacting the regime's slogans even in the most bizarre of places, the citizens of communist societies ridiculed and thus subverted those slogans.[14] At the very least, the kind of outward compliance displayed by Havel's allegoric figure could help social groups to carve out niches for themselves where they pursued individual life projects based on their own values.[15] In aggregate, these processes created social facts the systems had to reckon with.

Society, in sum, was not a grey mass apathetically enacting the system's ideology; it shaped the history of the communist systems more than the small group of dissidents ever did. Yet precisely by highlighting how social life *within* the structures of the communist party state was radically more complex and dynamic than the theory of totalitarianism suggests, the social and cultural history of communism has confirmed an important aspect of Havel's analysis. The greengrocer may have been able to ridicule the system by placing its slogan among the onions and carrots; once he refused to put it up, however, that is, once he publicly manifested and articulated his *dissent* from the lines set out by the party state, he would have to suffer the consequences. Within or underneath its social and political frameworks, the communist systems of central and eastern Europe were able to accommodate social change and even forms of resistance. Almost every country in the east bloc, moreover, had its social niches such as the churches or the countryside; yet those were niches granted by the state. Whenever people

225-242. In a different way, the 'consumer socialism' of the 1960s and 1970s was a project steered from above which ended up undermining communist rule by creating social expectations the eastern European governments could not meet. Philipp Heldmann, *Herrschaft, Wirtschaft, Anoraks: Konsumpolitik in der DDR der Sechzigerjahre* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003). For a sophisticated view of how 1970s television programs helped to stabilize the Czechoslovak regime see Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and his TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010).

[14] Cf. Falk, 'Resistance and Dissent', 320.

[15] Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Christopher Görlich, *Urlaub vom Staat: Tourismus in der DDR* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2012). Underneath the façade of ideological unity, moreover, communist societies witnessed the emergence of informal social subsystems like exchange markets or systems of patronage. Annette Schuhmann, ed., *Vernetzte Improvisationen: Gesellschaftliche Subsysteme in Ostmitteleuropa und in der DDR* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2008).

began to leave the boundaries set by the party state and did so publicly and deliberately, they challenged a core tenet of the communist systems' mode of operation. Thus, the communist authorities reacted with forms of repression that were disproportionate to the real threat posed by social dissent. The GDR is a case in point: not everyone will agree with Martin Sabrow's characterization of the GDR as a 'consensus dictatorship' (*Konsensdiktatur*).[16] But it is uncontroversial that in East Germany dissent did not become a wider social phenomenon until the mid-1980s and that, even then, these forms remained confined to groups of social outcasts. And yet, the East German leadership cast one of the tightest nets of surveillance over its society. In a country as vast as the Soviet Union, the dissidents were a comparatively small group; nevertheless, the Soviet leadership cracked down on them relentlessly.[17]

Poland may have been more tolerant than other eastern European countries. Yet the Polish leadership, too, could accept the 1960s revisionism of someone like Leszek Kołakowski only up to a certain point; in 1968, resorting to anti-Semitism, it purged the revisionists from its ranks.[18] Recent research suggests that the relative freedom opposition groups enjoyed in the late 1970s and again in the late 1980s was due as much to international pressure as to the Polish leadership's liberalism.[19] Even as the opposition was allowed to exist, it remained an anomaly within the Polish People's Republic: until the end of 1988, the Polish leadership ignored rather than tolerated the opposition by trying to pretend that, at best, its members were ordinary citizens and, at worst, ordinary criminals.[20]

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[16] Martin Sabrow, 'Der Konkurs der Konsensdiktatur: Überlegungen zum inneren Zerfall der DDR aus kulturgeschichtlicher Perspektive', in Konrad H. Jarausch and Martin Sabrow, eds., *Weg in den Untergang: Der innere Zerfall der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 83-116.

[17] Viktor Voronkov and Jan Wielgohs, 'Soviet Russia', in Detlef Pollack and Jan Wielgohs, eds., *Dissent and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 95-118. According to Dmitry Furman, there were 1,000 KGB employees for every dissident. Quoted in Archie Brown, 'Perestroika and the End of the Cold War', *Cold War History* 7, 2 (2007), 1-17, at 2.

[18] Jerzy Eisler, *Polski rok 1968* (Warszawa: IPN, 2006); Andrzej Friszke, *Anatomia buntu: Kuroń, Modzelewski i komandosi* (Kraków: Znak, 2010).

[19] On the late 1970s see Wanda Jarząbek's article below. On the late 1980s see Andrzej Paczkowski, 'Boisko wielkich mocarstw: Polska 1980-1989. Widok od wewnątrz', *Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny* 2, 3 (2002), 165-210.

[20] In November 1982, for instance, the leadership of the Polish communist party tried to impress upon Lech Wałęsa that he had ceased to be an opposition leader and now simply was 'citizen Wałęsa'. Antoni Dudek, *Reglementowana rewolucja: Rozpad dyktatury komunistycznej w Polsce 1988–1990* (Warszawa: Arcana, 2004), 57.

The party states of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, in sum, could accommodate and were characterized by complex social dynamics and different forms of resistance; but there was something they could not tolerate: the public and deliberate manifestation of political disagreement, that is, of *dissent* or *dissidence*.[21] Whatever simplifications came to be associated with the term 'dissent' and however much many dissidents themselves rejected the label, then, it actually is a very appropriate term for the political practises that are the subject of this book. Following Detlef Pollack and Jan Wielgohs, 'dissent' or 'dissidence' are thus defined on the basis of 'the position of [the dissidents'] discourses within the system of social communication' in communist societies. The terms 'dissent' or 'dissidence' describe 'all discourses and activities that were critical of the regime and that constituted, or wished to constitute, an autonomous sphere of public, political and cultural communication outside of the official institutions of the party state and which in so doing openly denied the claim of the regime to full control of public life.'[22]

In this understanding, 'dissent' does not describe a specific ideological orientation. The members of the *Praxis* school, which *Nenad Stefanov* describes below, sought to broaden the sphere of autonomous communication in Yugoslavia while remaining within the communist system's own ideology. A group of social scientists, the *Praxis* scholars had started out within the official structures of the Yugoslav state. Many of them had fought in the communist resistance movement during the second world war and, having begun their careers before the Yugoslav-Soviet split, some had even studied in the Soviet Union. Throughout their lives they remained committed to the project of building a socialist society. Their neo-Marxist critique of Yugoslav realities, however, and their own intellectual 'praxis' of engaging various philosophical orientations in an open and critical dialogue put them at odds with the Yugoslav authorities. Metaphorically speaking, they started out as reformers of their 'church', but in the end found themselves being branded 'apostates' – the original meaning of 'dissident' – and ultimately were pushed outside the official framework of Yugoslav society.

The fate of the *Praxis* group was paradigmatic for many, though by far not all, of the dissidents. Following de-Stalinization, some eastern Euro-

[21] See the definition of 'dissent' and 'dissidence' in the online edition of *Merriam-Webster*: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dissent and www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dissidence (accessed May 2013). See also Falk, 'Resistance and Dissent', 321.

[22] Detlef Pollack and Jan Wielgohs, 'Introduction', in Pollack and Wielgohs, eds., *Dissent and Opposition*, ix-xvii, at xiii.

pean countries – most notably Hungary and Poland – witnessed the rise of 'revisionism' – an intellectual current trying to bring the socialist project back to its roots. When many revisionists were expelled from their parties, they adopted more fundamental forms of dissent. The defining moment of this time was the crushing of the Prague Spring; *Tomáš Vilímek* vividly depicts its impact on the future GDR opposition. He also shows, though, that the process of abandoning socialism as a viable framework for dissent was a much more drawn out process than is often assumed. Among many future GDR dissidents, the experience of 1968 needed quite some time 'to sink in'. 1968 – important though it was – was not the 'big bang' of dissent.

In many ways, the experience of the East German peace activists, which *Holger Nehring* recaptures, was similar to that of the revisionists. The East German peace activists, Nehring shows, should not be retrospectively branded as civil rights activists. Their initial focus was on peace and disarmament and they worked within a niche the regime accepted: the Protestant churches; they even used a slogan the Soviet Union had introduced into the international discourse on peace: 'swords into ploughshares'.[23] Quickly, however, they grew critical of the East German regime's policies of militarizing society. Given how narrow the space of 'what counted as legitimate politics' was drawn in the GDR, Nehring argues, 'demonstrating for peace itself was automatically a claim for fundamental civil rights'. If carefully defined, then, 'dissent' remains a useful term. How can it analytically be combined with the notion 'transnational'?

Transnational Perspectives on Dissent in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Bloc: Mutual Perceptions, Interactions and Cooperation

Historians and social scientists operate with a range of different definitions of the term 'transnational'. Tellingly, the entry 'transnational' in Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier's dictionary of transnational history does not provide a definition of the term, but an overview over its emergence and different uses.[24] Something most authors agree upon is that the interest in

[23] The slogan is engraved on a sculpture the Soviet Union had donated for the garden of the UN building in New York City. Independent peace movement activists in the GDR wore the slogan and a picture of the sculpture – depicting a man forging a sword into a ploughshare – on badges.

[24] Pierre-Yves Saunier, 'Transnational', in Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier, eds., *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History: From the mid-19th Century to the Present* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1045-1055.

transnational history emerged in response to the contemporary concern with 'globalisation' and the awareness it created for how nation-states are embedded in, shot-through with, and at times even constituted by larger structures, contacts, exchanges, discourses, etc., that is, by phenomena which cut across or permeate at least two nation-states and are thus transnational.[25] In its broadest sense, transnational history is concerned with the emergence, evolution and impact of these phenomena. It therefore makes sense to distinguish it from diplomatic or international history. Where the latter are concerned with the interaction of nation-states within a wider system of international relations, the former is concerned with goods, people, ideas – say, capital flows, migrants, Marxism – that moved 'above, below, through, and around, as well as within, the nation-state'.[26] The borders between the two approaches, however, are permeable and – as Kiran-Klaus Patel has noted – one and the same phenomenon can be object of both inter- and transnational approaches: the United Nations or the European Union are creations of diplomatic processes and they remain major forums for the international interaction of nation-states; with their provisions to regulate or foster economic exchange or their provisions to counter climate change, fight corruption, or safeguard human rights, however, they may trigger transnational forces.[27]

How can the history of 'dissent' benefit from a transnational approach? If transnational history is concerned with cross-border connections and flows of information, ideas, people, or goods, how did such processes concern someone like Havel's allegorical greengrocer? Is not a 'transnational history of dissent' really an oxymoron? Here, an additional aspect of 'dissent' comes into play: many of the forms of dissent described in this book shared a specific, somewhat paradoxical form in which they tried to extend the sphere of free public communication. Almost all dissidents merely demanded rights or liberties which their governments claimed to grant them anyway; stepping outside the system's boundaries, the dissidents pretended to remain within its framework. The early Soviet dissidents analysed by *Julia Metger* pioneered this approach. The Soviet constitution did feature civil rights and Moscow had signed the 1966 UN human rights pacts (and later signed the Helsinki agreement of 1975). Protesting against the political trials of the late 1960s, the dissidents did not need to question Soviet communism, but could instead invoke the Soviet constitution and

[25] David Thelen, 'The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History', *The Journal of American History* 86, 3 (1999), 965-975, at 966.

[26] Ibid., 967.

[27] Kiran Klaus Patel, 'Überlegungen zu einer transnationalen Geschichte', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 52 (2004), 626-645, at 634.

later the country's international obligations under the Helsinki agreement.[28] Charta 77, discussed in this book by *Tomáš Vilímek*, applied a similar form of activism to Czechoslovak realities. The Polish opposition – whose activities *Wanda Jarząbek* describe – constituted itself around the defence of workers' rights and thus around an integral part of communist ideology. By centring their activism on 'peace' the opposition groups of the late 1980s in Poland, Hungary and the GDR – discussed by *Padraic Kenney*, *Kacper Szulecki*, or *Holger Nehring* – tried to give a new, transformative meaning to a central word of the official lexicon.

These similarities could be explained by reference to the similarities of the communist systems. This was how Havel saw it: invoking the *Communist Manifesto* with 'subversive irony'[29], he characterized dissent as 'a natural and inevitable consequence of the present historical phase of the system it is haunting.'[30] But do the similarities of the 'system of social communication' in communist societies suffice to explain a phenomenon like dissent? Showing how in specific political systems all attempts to broaden the sphere of free discourse are turned into 'apostasy' is one thing; to ask *how* people tried to broaden spaces of free communication is something very different. 'Societies,' *Padraic Kenney* writes below, 'are not chemical compositions, giving rise to similar phenomena under similar conditions; nor are they elements in a demonstration of a domino effect. Historians need to ask themselves, yet rarely do so: how and why are phenomena similar to one another?'[31]

In his contribution, Kenney answers this question by recapturing how he encountered similarities in the style and tactics of Polish and Hungarian opposition groups of the late 1980s. The Hungarian groups, he found, had been created according to a Polish model: in the early 1980s, two Hungarian political scientists began travelling to Poland. Later taking their students along, they wanted to get in touch with and learn from the Polish opposition. Bringing the political ideas and tactics they encountered in Poland back to Hungary, they helped shape an opposition movement surprisingly similar to the Polish one. 'This is transnational history at its purest,'

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[28] Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Christian Peterson, *Globalizing Human Rights: Private Citizens, the Soviet Union, and the West* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[29] Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, 1.

[30] Havel, 'Power of the Powerless', 23.

[31] For an elaboration of this position see Padraic Kenney and Gerd-Rainer Horn, 'Introduction: Approaches to the Transnational', in Padraic Kenney and Gerd-Rainer Horn, eds., *Transnational Moments of Change: Europe 1945 - 1968 - 1989* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), ix-xix.

Kenney concludes. '… young men from one country entering an apartment in another country, finding people who are like them in age and background but who act very differently. We see them learning how to act in this new way and then taking that mode of action home with them.'

A closer reading of Havel's text suggests that Kenney did not describe a singular case: throughout his text, Havel described 'dissent' as a movement whose members (in different parts of the Soviet bloc) were imbued with a spirit of mutual solidarity; indeed, 'The Power of the Powerless' was a product of that spirit. It was written as an introduction to a Polish-Czechoslovak collection of essays on civil rights activism in which writers from both countries were supposed to respond to and elaborate upon the ideas developed by Havel.[32] While this book never materialized, other forms of cooperation did take place: contact was established via telegrams, letters, or phone calls; intellectuals published essays or interviews in each other's samizdat journals or featured in the editorial boards of each other's periodicals; appeals of solidarity were adopted in support of each other. In the summer and autumn of 1978, meetings among Polish, Czech and Slovak intellectuals took place in the Karkonosze/Krkonoše Mountains, at the Polish-Czechoslovak border. An appeal adopted after the meetings was broadcast to east central Europe via Radio Free Europe and contained the demand to free all political prisoners in the Soviet bloc. Moreover, interaction was not restricted to Polish-Czechoslovak encounters. The Poles, and certainly also the Czech and Slovak dissidents, had drawn inspiration for their activity from the Soviet human rights groups. In 1979, one Polish activist, Zbigniew Romaszewski, managed to travel to Moscow to meet Andrei Sakharov – an encounter that inspired Romaszewski to follow the Soviet example and add a Polish commission to the emergent transnational network monitoring compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki agreement.[33]

Until recently, Kenney's *A Carnival of Revolution* or Barbara Falk's *Dilemmas of Dissidence* were the only studies that made these cross-border interactions between different opposition groups a central part of the story of dissent.[34] The publication of Friederike Kind-Kovács and Jessie Labov's

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[32] John Keane, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 268.

[33] Jan Józef Lipski, *KOR: A History of the Workers' Defense Committee in Poland, 1976–1981* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 279-285; Andrzej Friszke, *Opozycja polityczna w PRL 1945–1980* (London: 'Aneks', 1994), 298-299; on the Helsinki network see Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*.

[34] Padraic Kenney, *A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe 1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Barbara J. Falk, *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe: Citizen Intellectuals and Philosopher Kings* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2003). In

edited volume on samizdat and tamizdat as transnational media, however, is evidence of a growing recognition among historians that transnational interactions are crucial to understand movements of dissent in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.[35] Contributing to this trend is one of the main aims of this book.

Tomáš Vilímek's article – based on extensive archival research and oral history – provides ample evidence for how the rise of dissent was shaped by mutual perceptions, interactions and exchanges of ideas. As noted above, the Prague Spring was a watershed for the emergence of dissent, but its impact seems to have been less immediate than is often assumed. Among future East German dissidents, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia initiated reflections that lasted for years and, crucially, these reflections were influenced by encounters with people and texts from the ČSSR. For example, Wolfgang Templin had initially considered the Soviet invasion legitimate, and it was only after conversations with two Slovak girls and his later readings of Polish and Czechoslovak samizdat and émigré publications that he began to rethink his position. Ludwig Mehlhorn, too, began to reflect upon the Prague Spring only in response to the emergence of opposition groups in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

The East German activists whom Vilímek interviewed readily admitted that the specific form the GDR dissent assumed in the 1980s – its non-ideological character, its defensiveness, its non-clandestine, public charac-

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contrast, the otherwise highly useful essays in Pollack and Wielgohs, eds., *Dissent and Opposition* write the history of dissent as one of parallel national histories with little or no interaction between them.

[35] Friederike Kind-Kovács and Jessie Labov, eds., *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond: Transnational Media during and after Socialism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013). See also the contributions to Hans-Joachim Veen, Ulrich Mählert and Peter März, eds., *Wechselwirkungen Ost-West: Dissidenz, Opposition und Zivilgesellschaft 1975-1989* (Köln: Böhlau, 2007). Much of this research is published in individual articles. See, for instance, Natalie Bégin, 'Kontakte zwischen Gewerkschaften in Ost und West: Die Auswirkungen von Solidarność in Deutschland und Frankreich: Ein Vergleich', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 45 (2005), 293-324; Jan C. Behrends and Friederike Kind, 'Vom Untergrund in den Westen: Samizdat, Tamizdat und die Neuerfindung Mitteleuropas in den Achtzigerjahren', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 45 (2005), 427-448; Robert Horvath, '"The Solzhenitsyn Effect": East European Dissidents and the Demise of the Revolutionary Privilege', *Human Rights Quarterly* 29 (2007), 879-907; Robert Brier, 'Adam Michnik's Understanding of Totalitarianism and the West European Left: A Historical and Transnational Approach to Dissident Political Thought', *East European Politics & Societies* 25, 2 (2011), 197-218; Christie Miedema, 'The Transnationality of Dutch Solidarity with the Polish Opposition 1980-1989', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire / Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis* 89 (2011), 1307-1330; Kacper Szulecki, 'Hijacked Ideas: Human Rights, Peace, and Environmentalism in Czechoslovak and Polish Dissident Discourses', *East European Politics & Societies* 25, 2 (2011), 272-295.

ter – was heavily influenced by the models from the Soviet Union and east central Europe. The case of the East German opposition confirms observations Kenney makes on how similar national contexts and geographical proximity foster transnational exchanges. Searching for political models, the most obvious thing for the East Germans to do was to look to their neighbours within the Soviet bloc. The ability to travel in eastern Europe or even spend a longer period in one of them – such as when Templin studied in Poland – greatly fostered this circulation of ideas and tactics. However, direct encounters, which the secret police of the relevant countries tried to restrict, were not the only routes along which ideas travelled between different countries: Vilímek mentions how émigré journals or couriers, like the theology student from Leipzig who provided Mehlhorn with texts from Charter 77, also helped to sustain a certain flow of information. The East Germans had as well another very important source of information: West German media.[36]

What Vilímek's text also documents is how a sense of transnational solidarity and of being involved in a common struggle emerged among the dissident groups. For many Charter 77 members, the writings of Robert Havemann or Rudolf Bahro remained too concerned with reforming socialism. Nevertheless, it seems to have been natural for the Polish, Czech and Slovak activists meeting in 1978 to include Bahro into their appeal to free all political prisoners in the east bloc. And even as Jaroslav Šabata conceded that Havemann's writings were irrelevant for him, he still insisted that they belonged in a transnational 'library of dissent'. Even Miloš Rejchrt, someone who denied that events in other countries influenced him, acknowledged his 'dissident's obligation' to read the texts of other opposition intellectuals.

In terms of the history of dissent, therefore, transnational history shows that the striking similarities between the respective dissident movements were not merely the 'natural and inevitable consequence of the present historical phase of the system'. Mutual perceptions, the circulation of ideas and the movement of people across borders brought about similar forms of political opposition in different countries. To be sure, one should not exaggerate the degree to which the joint experience of dissent created a transnational community. The projected Polish-Czechoslovak volume failed because the regime in Prague began to crack-down on its dissident movement.[37] Dissent, moreover, remained focused on domestic concerns and

[36] On how ideas and information circulated among Soviet bloc opposition groups see also Padraic Kenney, 'Opposition Networks and Transnational Diffusion in the Revolutions of 1989', in Kenney and Horn, eds., *Transnational Moments of Change*, 207-225.

[37] Keane, *Václav Havel*, 268.

was heavily rooted in national cultures.[38] For many, 'living within truth' meant to wrest national languages from the distortions of official propaganda and give words their 'authentic' meaning back; it meant exposing suppressed or falsified aspects of national history – at times replacing them with idealized views of the interwar period. Striving for human rights and democracy, moreover, was indistinguishable from the quest for national sovereignty.[39] The international imagery of the dissidents, therefore, had much in common with Giuseppe Mazzini's nineteenth century liberal nationalist vision. Again, however, this nationalist vision was something the dissidents shared and, with the debate about 'Central Europe', they even developed a transnational cultural context for their national discourses.[40] These discursive entanglements are a striking example of how national and transnational factors interact.[41]

But can transnational perspectives accomplish more than just explaining the similarities between movements of resistance in different countries of the Soviet bloc? For some authors, the end of the cold war was part of a broader political transformation of the world which turned representative democracy and respect for individual freedoms into 'the organizing principles of a new international order'.[42] Political scientist Samuel P. Huntington believed that the transitions from communism were part of a worldwide wave of democratization that had begun with the south European transitions of the 1970s and continued well after 1989.[43] If transnational history can explain the emergence of dissent without having to resort to ahistorical concepts like a *Zeitgeist* or a social domino effect, maybe it can explain these events as well?[44]

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[38] Jerzy Szacki, *Liberalism after Communism* (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 1995), 85; see also Michal Kopeček, 'Human Rights Facing a National Past: Dissident 'Civic Patriotism' and the Return of History in East Central Europe, 1968 –1989', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38, 4 (2012), 573-602; Elżbieta Ciżewska, *Filozofia publiczna Solidarności: Solidarność 1980–1981 z perspektywy republikańskiej tradycji politycznej* (Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2010); Sergiusz Kowalski, *Krytyka solidarnościowego rozumu: Studium z socjologii myślenia potocznego* (Warszawa: PEN, 1990).

[39] See, for instance, Jacek Kuroń, *Polityka i odpowiedzialność*, 53-57.

[40] Behrends and Kind, 'Vom Untergrund in den Westen'.

[41] Patel, 'Überlegungen', 632-633.

[42] Nicolas Guilhot, *The Democracy Makers: Human Rights & International Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 1.

[43] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

[44] Robert Brier, 'Historicizing 1989: Transnational Culture and the Political Transformation of East-Central Europe', *European Journal of Social Theory* 12, 3 (2009), 337-357.

There are at least two good reasons to be cautious. Firstly, the question as to what role the dissidents did play in ending the cold war (and thus in Huntington's 'wave of democracy') still awaits a conclusive answer. Multiple explanations have been put forth for why communism fell and the dissidents feature in only some of them.[45] Until very late in the 1980s, moreover, dissent looked like a noble, but ultimately futile attempt to defy the ironclad realities of the cold war. Even Havel conceded in 'The Power of the Powerless' how the 'stalemated world of nuclear parity' endowed 'the system with an unprecedented degree of external stability'.[46] In 1983, five years after Havel had written his famous essay, the story of dissent seemed to have ended in tragedy: the world had descended into a 'second cold war'. Solidarity in Poland had been crushed and the most prominent Czech and Slovak activists were incarcerated; the Moscow Helsinki group had self-dissolved and most of its members had been put into prison, deported to labour camps or forced into exile.

Understanding the sense of defiance in the face of an international situation which was expected to change at no more than glacial speed (if at all), means to understand a core element of what Jonathan Bolton calls the 'worlds of dissent'. If we ignore this experience in favour of an 'end-of-the-cold-war-trajectory' we are in danger of adopting a teleological perspective. The experience of 'dissent' can be illuminating in its own right and on its own terms.

The second reason can be found in Kenney's contribution to this volume: there seems to have been little interaction among the revolutions of 1989 and other late-twentieth and early twenty-first century revolts. For all the interest the protesting Chinese students in 1989 had in the writings of the dissidents and in Gorbachev's reforms, Kenney writes, the 'Tiananmen occupation was not an eastern European event that ended tragically, but rather an entirely different animal with its own logic.' South African activ-

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[45] The controversy between Timothy Garton Ash and Stephen Kotkin may not have been overly useful in clarifying this matter, but it does bring out the gulf separating the opinion of serious historians on this problem. Stephen Kotkin, *Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York: Modern Library, 2009); Timothy Garton Ash, '1989!', *The New York Review of Books*, 5 Nov 2009, available www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/nov/05/1989/?pagination=false (accessed August 2013). Especially experts in Soviet history voice doubts whether the dissidents played any significant role in the 'Gorbachev revolution'. See Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 157-190; Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). For a sketch of what a multi-causal explanation might look like see Christoph Boyer, '"1989" und die Wege dorthin', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 59, 1 (2011), 101-118.

[46] Havel, 'Power of the Powerless', 24.

ists, too, may have been aware of events in eastern Europe and adopted the Polish Round Table model, but 'at the heart of the transformation the African context mattered most to the exclusion of any other'. Reflecting on what some observers called the 'Twitter revolution' in Moldavia, Kenney also warns that our contemporary fascination with the internet or social networks like Facebook should not lead us to believe that such media are the actual cause of revolt and protest.

In order to avoid the recent fascination with transnational connections and networks, Kenney distinguishes between two kinds of phenomena that may cause similarity and simultaneity in political revolts. For the first he uses the metaphor of 'electromagnetic forces': the members of the opposition in the Soviet bloc, he argues, can be compared to 'atoms in a molecule, bound together and exchanging information over short distances' – 'transnational interactions are like the electromagnetic forces binding them closer together'. Understanding transnational political activism in this way Kenney sees it restricted to 'periods of heightened political activity', occurring 'over short distances among people who share common interests and skills'. Most of the time when we encounter simultaneity and similarity in political revolutions, however, we are looking not at 'electromagnetic forces', but 'radio waves': forces that 'exist in the background, as a constant presence' rather than as a result of direct interaction. To explain the striking simultaneity of late twentieth-century democratic transitions in different parts of the world, he mentions four such background factors: a generational turnover, the availability of new means of communication, a global human rights discourse and the waning of the cold war.

If the history of dissent cannot easily be integrated into a global 'wave of democracy', is it thus only a concern for specialists in Russian and East European studies? Discussing the remaining contributions to this book I will argue that it is not and I will use Kenney's metaphor of 'radio waves' to make this point. Firstly, these 'radio waves' certainly can be characterised as transnational phenomena: they occurred above or below the level of nation-states but had an important impact on processes within nation-states. Secondly, unless we invoke *Zeitgeists* or 'dominoes', these radio waves are puzzling phenomena in their own right. Take the example of human rights: activists in Chile, South Africa or Poland adopted a human rights discourse for reasons that were domestic and had little in common with one another. 'Human rights', moreover, probably meant something different in all these three countries. Yet precisely because of these differences it is striking that in all three countries people would frame their protest as a defence of individual rights and not, say, as the struggle for world revolution. The fact, moreover, that the term 'human rights' took on particular meanings in particular contexts is a central insight of the transnational history of human

rights: the power of the human rights discourse, after all, derived from how it provided a meaningful framework for vastly different forms of protest occurring in vastly different places.[47] Studying how people around the world adopted 'rights talk' is key to understanding how human rights became a global language of moral protest – a 'radio wave' – in the first place. Even if dissent was not part of a 'global dance of democracy', as Kenney observes below, by focussing on the 'radio waves' of transnational history, we may come to understand it as part of broader, even worldwide processes nonetheless.

Dissent and the Transnational History of the 1970s and 1980s

The 'Power of the Powerless' had more than one transnational dimension. As noted above, Havel did not like the terms 'dissent' and 'dissident'. He considered them labels western journalists had applied to him and his peers; the 'spectre' he invoked was 'what *in the West* is called "dissent"'.[48] Apparently, however, the Czech intellectual believed that he could not do without this western label, for, rather than discarding it, he tried to explain what the people called 'dissidents' actually did. So, in addition to Havel's Czech, Slovak and Polish peers, 'The Power of the Powerless' had a second audience: people in the west.

There are two reasons why western audiences were important for the dissidents. Firstly, there was the need to create publicity.[49] Without publicity, the kind of activity by Havel's greengrocer would have remained an individual act of defiance. It was only once a wider public was made aware of the possibility to perforate the regime's façade of public rituals that such acts acquired political relevance. Therefore, the 'most important trait of dissidence', Pollack and Wielgohs note, was to create an independent *public* sphere; they hence see samizdat as 'the systematic "site" of dissidence'.[50]

Crucial though it was, samizdat was but one form of breaking the regime's monopoly over the public sphere. Another form was crucially dependent on western attention to events in eastern Europe. Almost anything of political relevance that was published in western media or by western news agencies about eastern Europe returned to eastern Europe.

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[47] Kenneth Cmiel, 'The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States', *The Journal of American History* 86, 3 (1999), 1231-1250.

[48] Havel, 'Power of the Powerless', 23.

[49] Falk, 'Resistance and Dissent', 321.

[50] Pollack and Wielgohs, 'Introduction', xiii.

Reports were translated and published in émigré publications or reached the Soviet bloc on the radio waves of western broadcasters like Radio Free Europe or the foreign language programmes of the BBC.[51] Publications in western media – news reports by foreign correspondents, political essays published in periodicals or interviews in newspapers, radio or TV news programmes – were thus a very effective way in which the dissidents could communicate with their own societies.

Radio Free Europe, for instance, played a crucial role in disseminating information about the strikes at the Polish Baltic coast of 1980. The Polish authorities tried to suppress any information about the strikes in order to prevent them from spreading to other cities. The intellectual Jacek Kuroń, however, informed western correspondents about the labour unrest and their reporting reached Poland via western radio stations.[52] Like someone throwing a boomerang, then, many dissidents cast their statements out into the west in order to hit targets in eastern Europe.

Secondly, western audiences themselves were a crucial target of appeals by eastern dissidents. Although it does not contain the term, 'The Power of the Powerless' is often seen as a key text of 'anti-politics'.[53] The dissidents' programme, Havel wrote, was essentially 'defensive' – it sought to protect individuals against the 'total assault on humans' which the post-totalitarian system mounted. Thus, this programme offered 'no new conception, model, or ideology, and therefore it [was] not politics in the proper sense of the word …'. Usually, this programme took 'the form of a defence of human rights'. Against the regimes' empty rituals, the dissidents did not counterpose an elaborate political programme or a vision of a future society, but the simple idea that everyone, everywhere is entitled to protection from repression.[54]

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[51] The Polish émigré journal *Kultura*, for instance, regularly featured sections on western reporting about Poland. A systematic account of the impact western broadcasters such as Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty, the international sections of the BBC, Radio France Internationale, or Deutsche Welle had on the Soviet bloc remains to be written. For an annotated collection of documents on Radio Free Europe see A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe – A Collection of Studies and Documents* (Budapest; New York: CEU Press, 2010).

[52] Jacek Kuroń, *Autobiografia* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2011), 512.

[53] The term was introduced in György Konrád, *Antipolitics: An Essay* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1984).

[54] For a provocative, recent account of the history of human rights ascribing Havel's essay a central role see Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

The idea of human rights draws heavily on the imagery of a 'court of world opinion' – a place where victims of repression could accuse their perpetrators and spur the international community to punish this violation of their common humanity. In order to appeal to these 'international courts', however, the dissidents had to make their suffering known to international audiences. International audiences were thus not only 'feedback loops' to reach eastern European societies, they were important addressees themselves. In explaining to a western audience who the dissidents were and what they were doing, Havel did not merely seek to satisfy a western curiosity; he engaged in political activism.[55]

Unless we operate with a very simple sender-receiver-model of how information is passed on or how ideas circulate, the relationship between the dissidents and their western audiences comes into focus as a central dimension of dissent. One important questions is which intermediaries helped the dissidents to reach their international audiences. Eastern European émigré and diaspora communities in the west doubtlessly played an important role in this respect. Émigré journals – the so-called tamizdat – were crucial outlets for independent political thought, the staff at Radio Free Europe consisted largely of political exiles from eastern Europe and émigrés established contacts between opposition groups behind the iron curtain and supporters in the west. The cultural and social milieux of the émigré groups, their lines of communication with their home countries and the politics they were entangled in all shaped their role as a 'feedback loop' for the circulation of ideas within the Soviet bloc and between east and west.

In her contribution to this volume, *Julia Metger* analyses another important group of intermediaries. She recaptures how a relationship between dissidents and western correspondents evolved in late 1960s Moscow. Her focus is on how three newspapers – the *New York Times*, the *Times* of London, and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* – reported from three political trials held in Moscow between 1966 and 1972.[56] A number of developments intersected in the Soviet capital, she shows, turning it into a transnational 'space of experience' where Soviet dissidents could become western household names.

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[55] In retrospect, Adam Michnik, even argued that it was only international attention that turned individual defiance into political activism. Adam Michnik, 'Polska na pierwszej stronie', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 Sep. 2002; cf. Brier, 'Adam'.

[56] Barbara Walker, 'Moscow Human Rights Defenders Look West: Attitudes toward U.S. Journalists in the 1960s and 1970s', in György Péteri, ed., *Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 237-257.

As the capital of the Soviet superpower, Moscow was always interesting for western readers. In the 1960s, however, this attention changed as détente created an awareness in the west of differences within Soviet society. Western journalism was also undergoing changes. Especially the *New York Times* encouraged its correspondents to learn Russian and socialize with the educated circles of Moscow in order to switch from 'traditional facts-and-politics journalism' to a more vivid reporting based on in-depth research. Reconstructing these processes, Metger charts an evolution of the western reporting from a dry facts-based approach to a lively style that barely concealed the journalists' sympathies with the dissidents. The correspondents' language of civil rights and legality, moreover, made the Soviet process accessible to western audiences. By 1972, at the latest, the dissidents had come to understand western correspondents as crucial allies. Thus, they flooded them, as a Briton quoted by Metger complains, with protest materials.

Metger's article is so important because she makes 'the contingency of information on dissent and opposition … part of the story' of dissent. Rather than understanding the 'dissidents' as an objective social category and taking their relevance for granted, she highlights how they emerged as an internationally relevant group from interactions between events in Moscow, the reporting on them, and wider, transnational processes – radio waves – such as détente or changes in the style of western newspaper reports. Yet Metger's article also raises a simple, yet crucial question: Why did people in the west pay attention to the dissidents? Why would the fate of a few writers put on trial in Moscow be of concern for newspaper readers in Frankfurt, London or New York? Why would some of them identify with the fate of these Soviet writers and become politically active on their behalf?

Through the prism of the events of 1989 and the role generally ascribed to dissidents in this process, the attention paid to the dissidents may seem only natural. Here, too, however, it is important to avoid an 'end of the cold war'-teleology. In the late 1960s, even more so than in the early 1980s, the dissident's rebellion against the Soviet system – and the cold war stabilizing it – looked to many observers like an act of misguided heroism. The emergence of the dissidents, moreover, undercut many underlying assumptions about the cold war. On one hand, the figure of the 'dissident' confirmed traditional views of life in a communist society which, as Metger shows, had become problematic in the age of détente. As lonely intellectual figures defying the totalitarian leviathan, the dissidents resembled the characters from Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* or, more importantly, from *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, George Orwell's powerful

vision of a totalitarian society.[57] On the other hand, however, the dissidents were not content with their role as witnesses of communist repression: they called upon the international community to help them. Invoking human rights, moreover, they did not take sides in the cold war but appealed to a universal anti-political morality instead. Thus, they contradicted the scenarios of a conflict in which, imagined as a gargantuan struggle between two opposed systems, individuals or moral impartiality had no role to play. A core idea of the 'Power of the Powerless' or Adam Michnik's 'New Evolutionism', moreover, was that even totalitarian systems could slowly be changed by social activism. Thus they contradicted the views of western political analysts who believed that totalitarian societies were incapable of changing or, if at all, could only be changed from above. In 'tilting at the windmills' of the cold war, therefore, the dissidents challenged many of the taken-for-granted notions of western policies.

By asking why western audiences paid attention to the dissidents' appeals, we are also touching upon a more general problem of transnational political activism. The 1970s are increasingly seen as a decade in which a human rights discourse experienced its international breakthrough.[58] In spite of a soaring activism in the name of human rights, however, some of the worst atrocities of this decade – the Cambodian genocide, for instance, or the massacres which Indonesian troops committed in East-Timor – went, as Jan Eckel or Bradley Simpson demonstrate, largely unnoticed.[59] Why, then, did some human rights campaigns capture the international imagination while others were ignored? Apparently, the answer lies not only with these campaigns themselves but also with how their message resonated with the expectations, values and ideas of their western audiences. A transnational approach to the history of dissent is therefore important not merely because it shows how dissidents were interacting with each other. Transnational perspectives also integrate studies of dissent into the broader history of the human rights revolution and of the intellectual and cultural changes propelling it. The 'radio waves', in other words, are highly relevant fields of study in and of themselves and showing how the dissent 'rode' these waves we learn something important about them.

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[57] Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, 20.

[58] Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *Moral für die Welt? Menschenrechtspolitik in den 1970er Jahren* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012).

[59] Jan Eckel, '"Under the Magnifying Glass": The International Human Rights Campaign Against Chile in the Seventies', in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 321-342, at 326-327; Bradley R. Simpson, 'Denying the "First Right": The United States, Indonesia, and the Ranking of Human Rights by the Carter Administration, 1976-1980', *The International History Review* 31, 4 (2009), 798-826.

If we focus on the intellectual changes of the 1970s, rather than fixing our gaze on 1989, we encounter a discourse which remains under the radar of cold war history, but which focused significant chunks of western attention on eastern Europe: Marxism. The western left's relation to 'really existing socialism' is an extremely complex one. Suffice it to say that, by the late 1960s, few western leftists outside of the communist parties considered the Marxist-Leninist model to be anything else but authoritarian and repressive. Characterizing the intellectual world of the European left in the 1960s, however, Tony Judt wrote that 'when it came to changing the world there was still only one grand theory purporting to relate an interpretation of the world to an all-embracing project of change; only one Master Narrative offering to make sense of everything while leaving open a place for human initiative: the political project of Marxism itself.'[60] The continuing dominance of this system of thought rendered the existence of real-socialism problematic: as much as it contradicted core values of the western left, it nevertheless embodied an anti-capitalist modernity.[61] At least some of the attention which dissent created among western audiences was thus among people who were looking for processes that might signal an evolution of really existing socialism into a more democratic and humane direction.

Nenad Stefanov discusses a group which seemed to embody the most promising of these developments: the thinking of the *Praxis* school in Yugoslavia. Stefanov's is truly a story of the circulation of ideas across borders and the way they changed as they were adapted to new contexts. The *Praxis* group was named after an academic journal. Some of the philosophers and social scientists who edited the journal and published in it had studied in the west on scholarships by the Ford Foundation or the Alexander-von-Humboldt-Foundation. The ideas they encountered in the west – Marx' *Frühschriften*, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, Herbert Marcuse's writings, but also analytical philosophy or American pragmatism – they took back to Yugoslavia where they integrated those ideas into a Marxist critique of the Yugoslav system. As these ideas evolved, western leftists projected their hopes for an alternative to capitalism that was both socialist and democratic on *Praxis*.

This east-west exchange of ideas was institutionalized in an international edition of the *Praxis* journal whose editorial board featured such intellectual giants of the western left as Jürgen Habermas, Herbert Marcuse, Lucien Goldmann or Zygmunt Bauman. An annual summer school held on the island of Korčula of the Croatian coast became a place where some of these

[60] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 403, 564-565.

[61] Eric Hobsbawm, 'Goodbye to All That', *Marxism Today*, 10 (1990), 18-23.

western intellectuals, including Habermas and Marcuse, met the *Praxis* philosophers as well as intellectuals from the Soviet bloc to discuss their ideas. While Marxism may rather be classified as a transnational 'radio wave', it seems that on Korčula it generated the 'electromagnetic forces' that bind people from different countries together, although, as Stefanov notes, linguistic barriers could hamper the exchange of ideas. In this transnational dimension, the members of the *Praxis* group and their international interlocutors dissented not only from the reigning orthodoxy in Yugoslavia, but also from the logic of the cold war.

Ultimately, the members of the *Praxis* group suffered the fate of all revisionist forces: they were pushed outside of the party state. However, this should not prevent us from analysing how Marxism or at least the ideal of 'democratic socialism' provided a western receptiveness for the emergence of dissent. In retrospect, the Eurocommunist attempt to align the Soviet model with a concern for human rights and democracy is easily dismissed as a sideshow to the political and social transformations taking place in the 1970s. As Soviet bloc dissent gained momentum, however, Eurocommunism was an important transnational 'sounding board' amplifying the appeals of the dissidents. In his memoirs, Jacek Kuroń noted that it was only once that he actually managed to get people out of prison: in 1976, when he published an open letter urging the Italian Communist Party boss Enrico Berlinguer to speak out against repression in Poland.[62] In that same year, a congress of all communist parties was held in East Berlin. Intended by its Soviet conveners to symbolize communist unity, the Italians were widely expected to use this forum to criticize their international comrades for failing to respect human rights. At the time, as Bolton notes, the Czechs Zdeněk Mlynář or Jiří Hájek – two of the main authors of Charter 77 – invested more hope in that conference than in the Helsinki process.[63] Initially, the group of Czechoslovak exiles organized around the journal *Listy* had also sought support from the Italian communists. Rejected, they turned to the socialists instead.[64]

Where Stefanov deals with intellectuals seeking an alternative to the western system, *Bent Boel* analyses the response of west European social democratic parties to the rise of dissent. He thus demonstrates how dissidence not only undercut traditional cold war thinking but the policies of détente as well. Boel provides a richly documented and nuanced view of the relationship between west European social democrats and east European dissidents. The latter's appeals exposed a central dilemma of détente – a

[62] Jacek Kuroń, *Gwiezdny czas* (London: Aneks, 1991), 9.

[63] Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent*, 26-27.

[64] See Bent Boel's contribution below.

foreign policy to which many western social democrats – most notably the West Germans – had made a major contribution: détente sought better relations between east and west to elevate the situation of people suffering under cold war realities. The very aim of sustaining less confrontational relations with the Soviet bloc, however, prevented many social democrats from speaking out on behalf of the dissidents.

Socialist responses to dissent, Boel shows, varied from party to party, from politician to politician and even with regards to the different opposition movements in Soviet bloc countries. On one hand, the Czechoslovak émigré group around the journal *Listy* and later Charter 77 enjoyed significant socialist backing; the overwhelming attitude toward Solidarity, on the other hand, was cautious and western socialists' contributions to sustaining the Solidarity underground were modest. The latter attitude can partly be explained by the volatile international situation of the Polish crisis and the collapse of superpower détente. After all, almost all western observers – including Jimmy Carter – responded cautiously to the developments in Poland. Undeniably, however, these different positions seem to be related to ideas underpinning détente. With almost half its members consisting of former reform communists, Charta 77 could still be interpreted as an outgrowth of the Prague Spring. Thus, it spoke to a central premise of *Ostpolitik*: the idea that change in the Soviet bloc could only be initiated from within the ruling parties. Charta 77, in other words, seemed like an internal opposition, even though this meant ignoring a text like Havel's 'Power of the Powerless'.[65] Poland's Solidarity, on the other hand, implemented more clearly the anti-political strategy of building parallel structures beyond the party state. Its rapid growth to nine million members, a quarter of Poland's total population and 80 % of the Polish work force, threatened to undermine communist rule and thus international stability. Boel's article also highlights an important lacuna: the attitude of other western parties which, it seems, were not significantly more active than the social democrats. For all their admiration of the dissidents, US neoconservatives believed that there was little they could do for them other than relentlessly putting pressure on the Soviet Union in the arms race.[66]

Wanda Jarząbek's article further makes an end-of-the-cold-war-trajectory in the history of dissent problematic. She analyses the Polish government's responses to the rise of an organized opposition in the context of the

[65] Willy Brandt, 'Wider die alten Kreuzritter: Über Bedingungen und Chancen einer künftigen Entspannungspolitik zwischen Ost und West', *Die Zeit*, 26 Aug. 1977.

[66] See, for instance, Charles Krauthammer, 'A Panglossian Warsaw', *The New Republic*, 10 Feb. 1982; Tom Kahn and Norman Podhoretz, 'How to Support Solidarnosc: A Debate', *Democratiya* 13 (2008), 230-261.

Helsinki process. Her article provides evidence for an often heard but as yet only thinly documented thesis: the human rights provisions of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) strengthened Soviet bloc opposition movements and empowered them to challenge communist rule.[67] The Polish government's tolerating the precursors to the Solidarity movement, she demonstrates, was to some extent due to external factors. Against the background of the CSCE follow-up meeting in Belgrade and with US President Carter turning human rights into a central notion of his policy, Warsaw believed that repression and political trials would jeopardize the financial credits the Poles hoped to receive from the west. Jarząbek also shows, however, that once the internal situation threatened to get out of control the authorities cracked down on the opposition. Neither the emergence nor the suppression of Solidarity was greatly influenced by détente and the CSCE process. Just as interestingly, the Polish opposition does not seem to have perceived the potential of the CSCE process until after the Belgrade conference. Jarząbek also raises important comparative questions: Why did the Czechoslovak and Soviet dissident movement not profit from the CSCE process? When the second CSCE follow-up meeting, held in Madrid 1980-1983, ended, the Soviet Helsinki movement had been all but crushed.

Reading Boel's and Jarząbek's articles back-to-back highlights important lacunae in the literature. The CSCE Final Act was the apogee of détente – a policy which had largely been propelled by western social democrats. Leading figures of west European social democracy, however, were adamantly opposed to using these human rights provisions to pressure communist governments. In Belgrade, it was the US and the Dutch who began to single out the Helsinki agreement's human rights aspects and to demand Soviet concessions. The West Germans, for instance, did not see the Final Act as primarily a human rights agreement. Bonn adopted a 'holistic' approach to the Final Act, seeing different aspects of the Final Act as mutually supportive elements of détente and peaceful change.[68] In 1977,

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[67] Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Snyder, *Human Rights Activism*; Peterson, *Globalizing Human Rights*.

[68] Petri Hakkarainen, *A State of Peace in Europe: West Germany and the CSCE, 1966-1975* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); Matthias Peter, 'Sicherheit und Entspannung: Die KSZE-Politik der Bundesregierung in den Krisenjahren 1978–1981', in Helmut Altrichter and Hermann Wentker, eds., *Der KSZE-Prozess: Vom Kalten Krieg zum neuen Europa 1975 bis 1990* (München: Oldenbourg, 2012), 59-82; Kristina Spohr Readman, 'National Interests and the Power of "Language": West German Diplomacy and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1972–1975', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, 6 (2006), 1077-1120.

Willy Brandt wrote that he had great respect for Charter 77 which he dubbed a 'socialist opposition'. But he refused to speak out on their behalf and even argued that it was 'questionable' to give the impression as though the Final Act had created a 'district court in Helsinki' to which all human rights cases could be brought. Why, he asked, should we believe that the Final Act could achieve more in terms of improving the human rights situation than the UN human rights declarations and conventions?[69]

Trying to understand Brandt's attitude, it is again important to look at it within the political situation and intellectual processes of the 1970s. *Ostpolitik* was a project aimed at revising the cold war division of Europe. However, it was based on the dominant understanding of the international system of the time which saw the world as divided into sovereign, self-contained nation-states. In this realist imagination – and with many of the world's nation-states organized into two blocs engaged in a nuclear stand-off – individual claims to human rights simply had no role to play. If one wanted to improve the situation of the people of eastern Europe – and Brandt wanted to do that – one had to begin with the existing system of international relations. *Ostpolitik*, moreover, was a deeply social democratic project. Improvements for societies were expected to emerge from social and economic changes. As modern industrial societies, it was believed, the economic developments of communist countries would exert the same kind of modernization and liberalization pressures capitalist countries were subject to. By ameliorating east-west tensions and providing communist governments with a sense of security, room was to be created to allow these processes to play out.[70]

Dissent articulated a different understanding of international politics – one that was just about to gain momentum in the 1970s. Rather than judging the behaviour of Brandt and others by contemporary standards or drawing a direct causal line from *Ostpolitik* to '1989', we should historicize détente against the background of profound changes in the culture of international relations. In our time, human rights belong, as Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann observes, 'among those convictions of our society that are tacitly presumed to be self-evident truths and that define the space of the conceivable and utterable', but it was 'not until the last two decades of the twentieth century that human rights developed into the "lingua franca of global

[69] Brandt, 'Wider die alten Kreuzritter'; broader on his ideas see idem, *Menschenrechte mißhandelt und mißbraucht* (Reibeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1987).

[70] Robert Brier, 'The Helsinki Final Act, the Second Stage of Ostpolitik, and Human Rights in Eastern Europe: The Case of Poland', in Rasmus Mariager, Karl Molin and Poul Villaume, eds., *Human Rights in Europe During the Cold War* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

moral thought".'[71] The dissidents were protagonists of this revolution; they were part of a global process in which victims of repression in different parts of the world and non-governmental actors gave new meaning to existing human rights documents. The 'radio waves' of human rights emanated from the activism of Soviet and eastern European activists.[72]

Human rights' rise to prominence broadened the group of the western supporters of the dissidents'. Yet, as noted above, it does not seem to have made international attention significantly less selective. These realities are reflected in the article by *Idesbald Goddeeris* and *Kim Christaens*. They provide a comparative perspective on transnational solidarity movements in the 1980s: following the suppression of Solidarity in 1981, Belgian trade unionists – along with labour activists from other countries – began to mount a campaign on behalf of their Polish colleagues.[73] But there were also critics of this campaign. The overwhelming attention paid to Lech Wałęsa and Solidarity, some people complained, drew attention away from human rights violations in Latin America. Thus, Goddeeris and Christaens compare the trade union campaign for Poland with the Belgian activism on behalf of Nicaragua. What the two authors show is how transnational solidarity is driven by the concerns of the supporters themselves. As a movement with a strongly Catholic dimension struggling for workers' rights in the 'Second World', Solidarity's appeals for help resonated strongly with the Christian trade unions in Belgium – the driving force of Belgian 'solidarity with Solidarity'. Solidarity's appeal had other sources as well: as a trade union which had become an icon of non-violent resistance and human rights, it provided a moral boost for the declining western labour movement. Solidarity with Nicaragua was supported by people who were critical not only of western foreign policy but of the western social system as well. In a way, then, both support groups that Goddeeris and Christaens write about projected their own political ideas onto the move-

[71] Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, 'Introduction: Genealogies of Human Rights', in idem, ed., *Human Rights*, 1-28, at 2.

[72] For reviews of the increasingly vast history on human rights see Jan Eckel, 'Humanitarisierung der internationalen Beziehungen? Menschenrechtspolitik in den 1970er Jahren', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38, 4 (2012), 603-635; Samuel Moyn, 'Die neue Historiographie der Menschenrechte', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38, 4 (2012), 545-572; Devin O. Pendas, 'Toward a New Politics? On the Recent Historiography of Human Rights', *Contemporary European History* 21, 1 (2012), 95-111; see also the contributions to Hoffmann, ed., *Human Rights*; Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde and William I. Hitchcock, eds., *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[73] On the wider campaign see Idesbald Goddeeris, ed., *Solidarity with Solidarity: Western European Trade Unions and the Polish Crisis, 1980-1982* (Lanham: Lexington, 2010).

ments they supported. Christaens and Goddeeris, in sum, describe a conflict where approval of the western system coincided with support of Solidarity and criticism of it with support of other causes.

The book's final contributions narrate different forms of interaction. Havel's 'Power of the Powerless'– focused as it was on the 'pre-political sphere' of human conscience – did not entail any reference to 'democratic socialism'. Famously, however, Havel saw the 'automatism of the post-totalitarian system [as] merely an extreme version of the global automatism of technological civilization' and of a 'general inability of modern humanity to be the master of its own situation'. The societies of the west could 'only with great difficulty be imagined as the source of humanity's rediscovery of itself' given their 'mass political parties run by professional apparatuses and releasing the citizen from all forms of concrete and personal responsibility', their 'complex focuses of capital accumulation engaged in secret manipulations and expansion' and 'the omnipresent dictatorship of consumption, production, advertising, commerce, consumer culture'.[74]

Given this rejection of western society, a number of the dissidents' western interlocutors began to wonder whether 'anti-politics' was merely a strategic necessity born out of the character of post-totalitarian societies or rather a new form of politics altogether. Petra Kelly, the charismatic figurehead of the early West German Green party, praised 'anti-politics' as an approach to politics that 'possesses power, but in a completely different moral and ethical sense'; this was the model she wanted her own Green party as an 'antiparty party' to follow. For her, anti-politics was embodied in 'creative ''disobedient'' forces' ranging 'from Philip Berrigan and Liz McAlister and the US Pledge of Resistance to Václav Havel (Charta 77) to Adam Michnik (Solidarność) to Katja Havemann (Women for Peace)'.[75]

Out of this perception of 'anti-politics' evolved the most important western intellectual debate that focused on the dissidents. At the centre of this debate was the idea of a 'civil society'. In contemporary political science, the term 'civil society' has come to denote a sphere of social life where citizens are habituated into the norms of representative democracy. Applying this term to Poland's Solidarity or Václav Benda's idea of a

[74] Havel, 'Power of the Powerless', 91.

[75] Petra Kelly, 'Defending Values', manuscript for a speech given at the END convention, Amsterdam, 5 Jul. 1985, Mappe 1050, Petra-Kelly-Archiv, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis, on her view of anti-politics as a model for political action more generally see Ruth A. Bevan, 'Petra Kelly: The Other Green', *New Political Science* 23, 2 (2001), 181-202; see also Saskia Richter, *Die Aktivistin: Das Leben der Petra Kelly* (München: DVA, 2010); for a similar interpretation of Poland's Solidarity by a US peace activists see Jonathan Schell's 'Introduction' to Adam Michnik, *Letters From Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), xvii-xlii.

'parallel polis', writers like John Keane, Jeffrey Isaac or Andrew Arato have given it a different meaning. Echoing a view widely held among the dissidents' western admirers, Isaac wrote that 'anti-politics' implicated 'a more radically democratic kind of political praxis' than the one dominating western societies.[76] Given their strong ethos of political participation and solidarity, east central European dissident movements were seen as models of how citizens could take responsibility for their collective life and effect political change. The anti-political civil society was thus seen as a means of helping western societies to bring out the full potential of democracy.[77]

These kinds of discourses prepared the ground for transnational dialogues discussed in the remaining two contributions to this volume. As human rights activist were appealing for western support, *Kacper Szulecki* shows that they were facing a powerful contender for international attention: the massive peace movements that had emerged in western Europe in response to the NATO dual-track decision of 1979. Many of the members of these movements were actually quite sympathetic to the cause of the Soviet bloc opposition. They feared, however, that the deployment of the new middle range missiles might lead to war; therefore, they wanted to avoid everything that could destabilize the international situation or divide the ranks of the peace movement. Human rights and peace appeared as goals contradicting each other. Perceiving this problem, as Szulecki documents, members of Charter 77 and the post-Solidarność generation of Polish opposition activists initiated a dialogue with some groups in the western peace movements. Human rights activism, the dissidents argued, does not contradict the quest for peace; human rights activism goes to the root of the threat of war: the totalitarian nature of the communist systems. This idea – while controversial with many western peace activists – nevertheless created a common east-west context in which a dialogue on peace and human rights could evolve. In the late 1980s, this even led to an initiative for supplementing the Helsinki process with a social dimension and to the organization of joint peace seminars in Poland. Again, 'radio waves' – peace and human rights – could produce the 'electromagnetic forces' that draw people from different countries together.

Szulecki also shows how eastern dissidents actively shaped a transnational discourse on peace and human rights. Christaens and Goddeeris, too,

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[76] Jeffrey C. Isaac, 'The Meanings of 1989', *Social Research* 63, 2 (1996), 291-344, at 305.

[77] Andrew Arato, *From Neo-Marxism to Democratic Theory: Essays on the Critical Theory of Soviet-type Societies* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1993); cf. Agnes Arndt, *Intellektuelle in der Opposition: Diskurse zur Zivilgesellschaft in der Volksrepublik Polen* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Campus, 2007).

highlight that victims of repression or the targets of international solidarity campaigns could play an active role in their relations with their western supporters. Activists of Poland's Solidarity even tried to overcome the competition between different solidarity campaigns: Solidarity actively sought to strike symbolic alliances with Chilean activists or with the cause of the anti-apartheid struggle, as Christaens and Goddeeris show.

Holger Nehring deals with a topic similar to Szulecki's but does so in the specific context of German-German relations. In both West and East Germany, Nehring shows, peace movements emerged in response to their relative governments' policies of modernizing the country's nuclear arsenals. Relations between the two movements were often marred by conflicts triggered by the cordial contacts which the West Germans established with the GDR's rulers or its official youth organization. Nevertheless, peace activists in east and west perceived each other's activities and East German exiles in the FRG such as Rudolf Bahro and Wolf Biermann, journalists, or activists of the West German Green party established direct contacts. Moreover, the two movements shared not only a specific policy issue they protested against, but also a specific approach to their political protest. What they criticized was not only the decision to deploy a new type of missile, but also the understanding of democracy underlying this decision – an understanding in which vital decisions were relegated to government agencies. In a sense, then, the social protest emerging in the two Germanys can be characterised as a form of anti-politics: what the activists sought was not political influence or institutional power. Their protest was a means of dealing with their fear of nuclear annihilation; thus, the protesters wanted to transform society by way of an individual self-transformation focused on themes such as reconciliation, tolerance and solidarity. With their joint concerns, the two movements created a new sense of 'Germanness'. However, spreading their view of the relationship between government and society as well as their perspective on violence and peace, they also initiated a transformation of the two countries' political cultures. In this way, they helped bring about the peaceful character of the revolution of 1989. *Nehring*'s article, then, is a particularly good example of the insight that leaving traditional narratives about the cold war behind does not render us silent about explaining the course of the cold war and the way in which it ended.

Nehring's article touches upon a theme which runs through most articles in this book, but is nowhere dealt with systematically: the role of religion in dissent. Nehring shows how the Protestant churches in Germany provided shelter for independent activists in the GDR and a transnational space of communication between the two German states. Catholicism played a similar role: in Poland, in particular, Catholic parishes provided a space

where oppositionists could meet; Catholics also played a visible role in Charter 77.[78] As a quintessentially transnational discourse, moreover, Christianity also acted as a 'radio wave': The Catholic church's rather sudden endorsement of religious liberty at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was an important impetus for the Polish opposition's turn to human rights, especially when the sermons of John Paul II during his 1979 trip to Poland invoked human rights.[79] Similar processes took place in Latin America; here, the Catholic church's behaviour varied from apathy and at times even tacit support for military dictatorships (such as in Argentina) to a strong endorsement of human rights activism (such as in Chile or Brazil).[80] These varieties suggest that future research into the role of the churches in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union will bring a very complex picture to light; no direct causal lines connect Vatican II or Karol Wojtyła's ascending 'the throne of St. Peter' to '1989'.[81]

Religion leads to a final theme: though John Paul II was undoubtedly highly influential in the 1980s, '[f]ew Europeans today', Jan-Werner Müller writes, 'would know what to make of the term "Christian personalism"' that formed the basis of the Polish pope's understanding of human rights.[82] Other discourses associated with dissent fared no better: whether the supporters of the dissident groups were traditional trade unionists or new-left social activists, none of the ideas they projected onto dissent were implemented after 1989. They saw human rights as connected to questions of solidarity and political participation; individual rights were supposed to empower people to take control of their collective lives. Post-communist eastern Europe, however, was shaped by the ideas of what Daniel T. Rodgers calls the 'great age of fracture' – a time when the unfettered market became the dominant paradigm of social thought as 'conceptions of

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[78] Kenney, *Carnival of Revolution*, 34-42.

[79] See Jarząbek's contribution below. An important document for how 'post-conciliar' Polish Catholics adopted human rights is Bohdan Cywiński, *Rodowody niepokornych* (Warszawa: Biblioteka 'Więzi', 1971); on the difficult relationship between Catholicism and human rights see Daniel Philpott, 'The Catholic Wave', *Journal of Democracy* 15, 2 (2004), 32-46; Bernhard Sutor, 'Katholische Kirche und Menschenrechte: Kontinuität oder Diskontinuität in der kirchlichen Soziallehre?', *Forum für osteuropäische Ideen- und Zeitgeschichte* 12, 1 (2008), 141-158.

[80] Jan Eckel, 'Neugeburt der Politik aus dem Geist der Moral: Erklärungen einer heterogenen Konjunktur', in Eckel and Moyn, eds., *Moral für die Welt?*, 21-67, at 37-38.

[81] For a particularly egregious interpretation see George Weigel, *The Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[82] Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 241.

human nature that [...] had been thick with context, social circumstance, institutions, and history gave way to conceptions of human nature that stressed choice, agency, performance and desire'.[83]

For some of the dissidents themselves the transitions after 1989 seem to have had a bittersweet dimension. Speaking to an audience at Stanford University in 1994, Havel noted how, after the end of the cold war, 'democracy is seen less and less as an open system best able to respond to people's basic needs, that is, as a set of possibilities that continually must be sought, redefined, and brought into being. Instead, democracy is seen as something given, finished, and complete as is, something that the more enlightened purchase and the less enlightened do not.'[84] As important as it is, in sum, to see the dissidents as agents of transnational history, we should not lose sight of how they were embedded in processes they helped to shape, but the outcomes of which they neither foresaw nor controlled.

Conclusions

The rise of 'transnational history' does not signal a paradigm shift in historiographical research. Used with restraint and care, though, it does highlight something fundamentally important: it shows how seemingly local events are entangled in wider networks of interconnections and in broader, even global processes. Havel's 'The Power of the Powerless' was widely perceived as a manifesto of individual defiance based on an Orwellian vision of society; read from a transnational perspective, however, it turns out that it was located at the intersection of a series of processes and discourses through which people established contact, circulated ideas, shared information and created bonds of solidarity cutting across national borders and even across the 'iron curtain'. Following the different threads that run through this document helps us to understand dissent better and it helps us to appreciate dissent as a factor of major global processes of the late cold war: the eclipse of Marxism, the rise of human rights and the emergence of new forms of transnational activism. This manifesto of 'dissent' – precisely by discussing a foreign label Havel would not have used himself – documents the reality of transnational history.

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[83] Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 3, 247-253.

[84] Václav Havel, 'Forgetting We Are Not God', *First Things* 6 (1995), 47-49, at 48.