

Finally, Paczkowski deserves praise for relating elite decisions to the situation on the street. Readers hear the voices of miners whose strikes were broken using deadly force. Price increases are translated into corresponding effects on time spent queuing for sparse food. The author also assiduously invokes polling data to illustrate shifting public attitudes toward both the government and opposition. The growth of independent cultural, intellectual, and artistic endeavours also receives meaningful and insightful attention keeping the narrative grounded in people's lived experiences.

Twenty months of military rule ended in stalemate. Poland did not return to the pre-August 1980 status quo, nor did the opposition retake power. In July 1983 'neither side could definitely defeat the other' (p. 278). Martial law was important, then, not for its immediate outcomes but for how it shaped the future. The Catholic Church's calls not to spill Polish blood and its decision to cooperate with the government maintained the peace. Jaruzelski stabilized the country and promoted moderate reformers in the Party and military by 'clipping the wings' in personnel decisions, simultaneously removing hardliners and radicals within the leadership. The pragmatist Wałęsa retained his position as the movement's symbolic head, and despite ardent criticism from within the anti-government forces the Solidarity underground's primary leadership body implemented a gradualist, 'long march' strategy to remake society. Poles chose a middle path towards transformation in part because of the experiences of martial law. As Paczkowski concludes: 'it is very likely that without Solidarity's revolution, the communist system [in East Central Europe and the Soviet Union] would not have imploded, or its collapse would have taken a different course – perhaps a much bloodier one' (p. 313).

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Wolfgang Mueller, Michael Gehler and Arnold Suppan (eds), *The Revolutions of 1989: A Handbook*. Internationale Geschichte/International History, vol. 2, Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015; 705 pp.; £98.25 hbk; ISBN 9783700176381

To this day, the revolutions of 1989 rank among the most puzzling events of the twentieth century. Within months, the seemingly unchangeable system of the 'Soviet bloc' unraveled as ruling elites who still controlled massive apparatuses of repression surrendered their power in the face of massive peaceful protest. In the years since, historians and IR specialists – both from Central and Eastern Europe and from other parts of the world – have pored over thousands of newly available documents in order to make sense of the *annus mirabilis*. The contributions in Wolfgang Mueller, Michael Gehler and Arnold Suppan's edited volume *The Revolutions of 1989* are not audacious attempts to rewrite this emergent history of 1989. The editors' ambition, rather, is to provide a handbook, a comprehensive

survey of the state of research and insights into the history of the collapse of European Communism.

Following Mueller's fine introductory survey of the literature on 1989, the book is divided into three sections dealing, respectively, with the revolutions themselves, the Soviet and western reactions, and with the aftermath of these revolutions. The quality of the contributions, as with any collected volume, vary, and it is easy to take issue with some editorial choices. The reviewed volume, consisting of 26 chapters and running to over 680 pages, is no exception. Klaus Bachmann's contribution on Poland in the section 'Revolutions', for instance, dismisses Polish historiography a bit too cavalierly as driven by a patriotic narrative, especially since Bachman strangely fails to engage with some of Poland's finest historians such as Andrzej Friszke, Paweł Machcewicz, or Jan Skórzyński. German unification seems to play too central a role in the chapters on 'Reactions', given that the book is meant to be on 1989 more broadly. The section 'Aftermaths', the least convincing one, does not sufficiently discuss the extensive literature on post-Communist transitions. One could also take issue with the fact that there are few comparative or transnational analyses focusing, for instance, on how the seismic economic shifts in the world economy of the 1970s and the rise of human rights impacted the fall of Communism. Equally, there is barely an attempt to offer a comparative history of the culture and mentalities of Communist elites. Structuring the book into a section on national 'Revolutions' and a section on 'Reactions' does not give enough room to assess the controversial question of how western policies – whether 'peace through strength' or *Ostpolitik* – helped shove Communism over the edge.

Criticism aside, the editors do achieve their goal of compiling a comprehensive handbook on the revolutions of 1989. The first section features chapters on all Soviet bloc states as well as on Yugoslavia and the Soviet Baltic republics, with particularly strong articles, like Ulf Brunnbauer's piece on Bulgaria, on countries that usually get short shrift. The same holds true for the second section where, in addition to chapters by "giants" of the field such as Norman Naimark or Philip Zelikow on Soviet and US policies respectively, articles on Italian or Austrian responses to the fall of Communism and German unification are featured. And while the final section could have been stronger, Dieter Segert's chapter on the continuities in the post-Communist transformations is one of the strongest analyses in the entire volume.

The reviewed volume, in sum, is a fine and reliable survey of the field, allowing anyone to get acquainted with many of the major questions and interpretations on the events of 1989. It is particularly strong on country case studies and on the international context of German unification. Containing an extensive chronology and bibliography, the book seems particularly well suited for teaching courses on the Cold War and contemporary international history at both the undergraduate and graduate level. It is highly recommended for any university or departmental library.

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