

Poland's Solidarity Movement and the Global Politics of Human Rights. By Robert Brier. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2021. xvi, 269 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$99.00, hard bound.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.36

Two principal audiences will discuss this volume, as it contributes critically to historiographies of both *Solidarność* and human rights and the Cold War. Cultural analysts interested in the articulation of national and global/transnational transformations can be a third.

I no longer immerse myself in studies of 1980s *Solidarność*, but I appreciate Robert Brier's deep grounding within Polish debates and its echoes in the US and western Europe. He may not introduce too much new to those expert in the movement and its politics, but that is not his goal. Although he is dedicated to understanding what the movement meant to a certain "group of Polish intellectuals" as the book's main protagonists (16), he is more interested in how it figured in international relations, especially for its implication in the human rights movement, and the way in which both helped end communism in 1989 Europe.

Brier buries tropes beautifully in this book. The 1975 Helsinki Accords may be one way to mark the introduction of Human Rights discourse within communist-ruled Europe, but its international agreement was not the most consequential. Rather, its translation beyond its originally designed scope mattered. Many celebrate human rights as a mode of anti-politics, where human dignity, prior to political contest, guides campaigns for amnesty and freedom. Although dissidents in communist-ruled worlds were easily cast within that frame, that made little sense to those moving transformational solidarity. In an eloquent expression of its sense, Brier explains that his main protagonists "vernacularized" that global discourse, politicizing it with a "thick understanding of human rights rooted in notions of community and of an objective transcendent moral order" (40) enjoying "a clear religious dimension" (50).

Brier leads us to appreciate such strategic action not only between "global" and "local" but also across spaces in the transnational. I remember myself participating in those efforts to resist Cold War appropriations of human rights. I admired how Chilean and Polish political entrepreneurs in the 1980s established their own solidarity to resist demeaning some workers' labor rights while elevating others. Brier elaborates that practice concisely. In these two examples, along with many others across the book, Brier emphasizes properly the "contestedness of human rights language," "its adaptability to new circumstances and aims" (227) and even to erasures. What *did* happen to *autogestion*?

Brier not only uses theory to recognize contests and translations, but also to reconstruct the coherence of human rights transformations. For example, he uses "iconization" to refer to the process by which *Solidarność* gained "symbolic power and moral authority" while "dissolving its struggle for social self-organization and economic justice into a universalizing narrative" (149). Amnesty International helped realize that for Polish prisoners of conscience and the Nobel Peace Prize for Lech Wałęsa. While iconization increased celebrity, it also forced changes in politics. Cultural sociology has worked extensively on icons, well beyond the Bourdieusian reference to a "political economy of symbolic power." But instead of recommending those works to him, I see Brier's work as a great complement to those practicing cultural global and transnational sociology. Exponents of World Society theories, for example, focus on human rights as an exemplary global cultural expression with universities writ large as its principal agents. Other than intellectuals and other less eminent university graduates, Brier does not reference that arena. What is their implication in this particular tale of human rights? Do universities translate what activists and diplomats do? Provide the language? Serve as intermediaries? That dialogue could prove productive

for figuring the ways in which human rights discourse enjoys knowledge cultural infrastructure, reproduction and transformation beyond its immediate applications.

Brier is agile in cultural theory. He distinguishes cultural meanings from self-understandings and thick and thin cultures. He recognizes how apparently similar ideas can be embedded in different conceptual worlds. He notes the challenge of marking continuity with names when underlying meanings change. Not everyone should be a Pierre Bourdieu, but theoretically minded historians could find value in Sewellian approaches to theory and history. William Sewell's approach to eventfulness is useful here, most obviously in reference to 1989's consequence. As it is, we have too crude a debate.

It is not just what *really* caused *Annus Mirabilis* but how various actors reconstruct 1989's eventfulness to find meaning in the present and guidance for shaping alternative futures. Despite human rights mutations over time, activists want to celebrate their mobilizing culture's emancipatory powers. Cold Warriors wish to elevate their virtuous military powers. Those focused on imperial powers inflate Mikhail Gorbachev's consequence. I prefer Brier's blend. He has explained how a regionally networked set of actors refashioned a global discourse of human rights within their own vernacular and through a series of remarkable contests and collaborations across polities and sensibilities to move an event of world historic consequence. I cannot help but see in Ukraine's current resistance to invasion a reenactment of those very dynamics, with those seeking justice once again struggling to define what is possible, despite imperial authorities defining realism's place. I wish miracles were in the offing now too.

MICHAEL D. KENNEDY
Brown University

The Rise and Demise of World Communism. By George W. Breslauer. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. x, 368 pp. Notes. Index. \$29.95, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.37

Thousands of books and monographs have been published on the communist states since the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and few scholars have attempted to integrate this vast amount of material. Professor George Breslauer's survey provides an extraordinarily effective synthesis that is extremely useful for both the general reader and the regional specialists responsible for providing the vast bulk of scholarly and journalistic analyses of communist states. Breslauer provides a concise and coherent summary of Marxist, Leninist, Maoist and other theories and the varied practices of communist states. His detailed explanation of both the initial basic unity of communist state practice during the period of Iosif Stalin's rule and the extraordinary diversity that emerged in both theory and practice after his death is particularly effective. The text is dramatic and coherent and its focus on the "interaction of their ideology and organization, the world communist movement and the broad global context" (4) is successful at every point. Regional specialists will benefit immensely by the surveys of theory and practice in regions beyond their area of expertise. (Trained as a specialist in the USSR and the Russian federation, my knowledge of communist state practice in Asia had become obsolete and this survey allowed me to "catch up" on recent developments in Asian communist states.) The text draws a clear distinction between the "bureaucratic Leninism" practiced in the USSR, the east European peoples' democracies, Cuba, and the "Market Leninism" developed in China, Vietnam, Laos, Yugoslavia, and Hungary (in the 1960s–80s.) Breslauer seems to conclude that