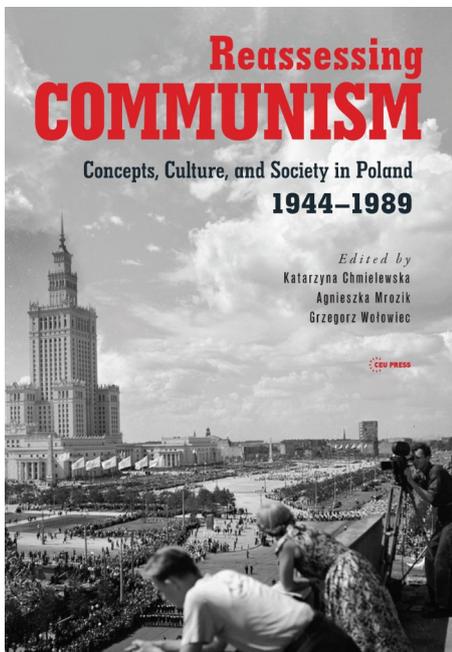


**---PRESS RELEASE---****CEU PRESS Publishes*****Reassessing Communism: Concepts, Culture, and Society in Poland, 1944–1989***

edited by Katarzyna Chmielewska, Agnieszka Mrozik, and Grzegorz Wołowiec



The thirteen authors of this collective work undertook to articulate matter-of-fact critiques of the dominant narrative about communism in Poland while offering new analyses of the concept and examining the manifestations of anticommunism. Approaching communist ideas and practices, programs, and their implementations as an inseparable whole, they examine the issues of emancipation, upward social mobility, and changes in the cultural canon.

The authors refuse to treat communism in Poland in simplistic categories of totalitarianism, absolute evil, and Soviet colonization, and similarly refuse to equate communism and fascism. Nor do they adopt the neoliberal view of communism as a project doomed to failure. While wholly exempt from nostalgia, these essays show that beyond oppression and bad governance, communism was also a regime that common people tried to come to terms with in their everyday lives, accommodating and even endorsing some of its ideals, while rejecting others.

The book is interdisciplinary and applies the tools of social history, intellectual history, political philosophy, anthropology, literature, cultural studies, and gender studies to provide a nuanced view of the communist regimes in East-Central Europe.

**Excerpts from the book:**

In this study, we analyzed the histories and uses of the term “communism” in Poland from 1944 to 1989 in the area of social and cultural phenomena, so important for the Polish past and present. We searched for changes in the senses of this term and in the fundamental categories connected to it, and took a close look at how they evolved with the passage of time: “communism” was something different in the 1940s and mid-1950s, something else again in the 1960s, and its meaning in the 1970s and 1980s was entirely new. We also traced the fluent constellations of concepts in which “communism” emerged, such as upward social mobility, revolution, and modernity. Our task was to unearth the conditions for constructing and applying the category of “communism.” We have attempted to objectivize this concept through reconstruction and analysis of the discursive practices that have grown around it. This called for rethinking and revision of the existing research instruments. It turned out indispensable to critically analyze concepts such as power, postmemory, historical experience, and identity.

—From the Introduction

## Endorsements:

*“Reassessing Communism: Concepts, Culture and Society in Poland 1944–1989* brings new and important reflections and interpretations of communism in Poland. The book is intended as a polemic with the dominant historical and popular narratives in which communism appears in terms of strangeness: as an aberration or a ‘black hole’ in Polish history. The authors consistently and convincingly deconstruct this type of narrative. Instead, they propose a picture of communism that cannot be easily subordinated to established patterns, national-centric stereotypes, or totalitarian theories. The authors’ approach to communism as a multidimensional ‘revolutionary project’ is a new and needed perspective in the current state of research on the history of postwar Poland.” —

**Małgorzata Fidelis**, University of Illinois at Chicago

“I have been waiting for years for someone to write this book. *Reassessing Communism* represents a long-overdue corrective to the one-dimensional approach that has characterized so much historical scholarship on the communist period in Polish history. Breaking away from the image, seen mainly through the lens of political power, as a land only of ‘totalitarian’ oppression and misgovernance, contributions to this volume show that the Polish People’s Republic was also a place in which people pursued diverse goals and sincerely attempted to build a better world for themselves. After all, the communist vision of a better social order necessitated more than mere submission: it also required public compliance, even assent. *Reassessing the communist era* from this perspective also allows us to critically examine the anticommunist opposition and break away from the unproblematic mythologies that have dominated public memory for too long.” — **Brian Porter-Szúcs**, Thurnau Professor of History, University of Michigan

For a **review copy** of *Reassessing Communism: Concepts, Culture, and Society in Poland, 1944–1989* contact

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