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## **East German and Polish Opposition during the Last Decade of the Cold War**

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### **Abstract**

The transition from communism to democracy in Eastern and Central Europe would not have been possible without the activities of several dissident movements. We will compare two presumably opposite anti-communist dissident circles: the Polish and the East-German oppositions.

Indeed, before the collapse of communism in the Eastern block, the oppositional movements in these countries showed many differences. The opposition in East Germany developed slowly and differed profoundly from the Polish one. But after 1989 these two movements made similar mistakes and, ultimately, their fates converged. This paper analyzes their situation and their contacts before 1989, as well their successes and mistakes following the transition. Such problematic as the increasing disappointment of the population in both countries, declining enthusiasm for the economic and social changes taking place, and, in the Polish case, the rising power of the Catholic Church and the complicated situation of women will be discussed, as well as the causes of the missed chance for a real social transformation in Eastern and Central Europe.

Still, we should not forget that thanks to the activity of these movements a nonviolent transformation was possible. The truth is that the dissident movements after 1989 succeeded politically but failed socially. The members of "Solidarnosc" and the civic movements in former East Germany were not prepared to deal with all social and political changes after the fall of communism.

### **Keywords**

Polish and East-German Dissidents, "Solidarność", Communism, Cold War, Transformation of 1989, Catholic Church, Women's Right.