



Physical Violence and State Legitimacy in Late Socialism An International Research Network

Public Lecture

Prof. Dr. Mark Kramer

(Harvard University, Cambridge)

“Violence and Non-Violence in Eastern Europe and the USSR, 1988-1991.”

Date: Thursday **11 October** 2012, 6.30 pm

Venue: **Collegium Novum**, Jagiellonian University of Krakow, ul. Gołębia 24, **room 56**

The collapse of hardline Communist regimes in Eastern Europe was preceded by three crucial events in the first half of 1989—the final withdrawal of all Soviet military units from Afghanistan in February, the violent crackdown in Tbilisi by Soviet army troops and security forces in April, and the much larger assault by Chinese soldiers against unarmed demonstrators in Beijing in early June—that helped to shape Gorbachev’s policies regarding the use of force in both Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The subsequent demise of East European Communism greatly reinforced this pattern and made it even less likely that violent repression could be used, either by Gorbachev or by those around him, to hold the Soviet Union together. The “demonstration effect” of the changes in Eastern Europe was especially far-reaching in the three Baltic states. The separatist leaders of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia regarded the non-violent mass protests in East Germany and Czechoslovakia as a model for their own republics’ path to independence. When the Baltic governments began taking much bolder steps in 1990 to break free of Soviet rule, they were careful to ensure that public protests against the Soviet regime would remain peaceful throughout. The last thing they wanted was a violent outburst “from below” that could be seized on by the Soviet authorities as an excuse for a full-scale crackdown.

Prof. Mark Kramer is a professor and director of Cold War Studies at Harvard University and a senior fellow of Harvard's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. He has written and edited many books and articles and is the editor of the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, published by MIT Press, and the *Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series*, published by Rowman & Littlefield.

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