

**Michael D. Kennedy**

### **Abstract**

Beginning in 1989, Round Table negotiations ended communism peacefully in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. First in Poland, followed shortly in Hungary, and then later in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Bulgaria, and much later Mongolia, the Round Table became the principal peaceful mode of extrication from communist rule. Poland's Round Table was critical not only because it was first, but also because it embodied a transformation of political culture from one based on mobilization against enemies into one based on the value of compromise and dialogue. This paper draws on a 1999 conference at the University of Michigan, which brought together many of the Polish Round Table's participants, to consider both the controversies that surround and the lessons that can be learned from Poland's experience of negotiated political change.