

Memory, History, and Opposition under State Socialism

An Introduction

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THIS BOOK IS ABOUT REPRESENTING the past in societies where history writing has been the prerogative of a single-party state and its agents. From the very beginning, Communist party leaders grounded their claims to legitimacy in their special understanding of the principles of scientific socialism. According to the Soviet historian Geoffrey Hosking, a mastery of the objective laws of social evolution justified the right of the party faithful to direct society (1989:115; see also Clark 1981). Under state socialism, Marxism-Leninism was not one ideology or political economy among many, but rather was the inevitable and glorious outcome of a discernible historical process.

If one of the primary justifications of communist rule is its inevitability, then the production of history takes on tremendous significance—political, ideological, and moral. Under state socialism the past was read from the present, but because the present changed (leaders, plans, and lines of thinking came and went), the past also had to change. Hosking reports a Soviet anecdote from the imaginary “Armenian radio” that beautifully captures the problem: “Armenian radio is asked ‘Is it possible to foretell the future?’ Answer: ‘Yes, that is no problem: we know exactly what the future will be like. Our problem is with the past: that keeps changing’” (1989:115). As Stephen Jones notes in chapter 8, in Soviet historiography the primary standard by which events or figures were incorporated into official histories was their usefulness in establishing the legitimacy of the current power holders.

In China, too, policies and leaders were justified by their inevitability. During the early stages of Chinese communist organizational development, for example,

Mao Zedong created the terms of political discourse—created correct thought—by transforming his reading of the past into the only possible reading. He thereby justified his own leadership and that of his party by writing himself into history—by making himself, his followers, and his “line” the inevitable result of historical forces (see Saich 1994; see also chapter 4, this volume). In such an environment, incorrect understandings are judged to be not only wrongheaded but also treasonous; they are by definition antiparty and therefore antistate. The production of history in China, Mongolia, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe was deemed too important to be left to those who had no appreciation for the “true march of events.”

Given the logic of Communist party thinking, it is not surprising to find that enforced historical orthodoxies, guided by what Gail Kligman calls “monologic historical explanation” (1990:395), gained considerable adherence in the societies discussed here. If that were the whole story, however, there would be no reason for this book. In the chapters that follow, contributors demonstrate that official histories, while plentiful, never precluded the active construction and transmission of unofficial pasts. Indeed, even as the creators of “correct” history jealously guarded their right to produce historical texts, alternative remembrances and alternative histories survived and on occasion even prospered in Eastern Europe (e.g., Verdery 1991a:215–55), in the Soviet Union (e.g., Heer 1971), and in China (e.g., Barme and Jaiven 1992; Goldman, Cheek, and Hamrin 1987; Wagner 1990). Contestation both within communities of historians and among ordinary people over how the past was to be represented was never fully eradicated.

In this volume we seek to contribute to what Peter Burke has labeled “a social history of remembering” (1989:100) by considering the mechanisms that make unsanctioned remembrance possible under state socialism. The contributors have moved into and beyond the usual domain of written, narrative history to examine how representations of the past are contested in situations where one historical interpretation was meant to be accepted by all. In the following chapters, personal and shared memories, commemorations, theater and drama, and secret and oppositional histories are the venues within which alternative remembrances are located and analyzed.

Although unauthorized representations of the past are the subject matter of this book—they are the windows through which we seek to understand socialist systems—it is important that we do not credit the socialist state and its agents with too much power or its citizens with too much boldness. State socialism was never as omnipotent as the cold war warriors of the 1950s claimed it to be, nor was it the paper tiger that some present-day celebrants of its demise proclaim. It is also important not to lose sight of the fact that state socialist regimes had the capacity to be both brutally coercive and vulnerable at the same time.

As the contributors to this volume can testify, it is difficult to find a vocabulary that captures the elaborate and subtle forms of repression and subversion—of compliance and resistance—that are so characteristic of state socialisms. For

many years totalitarian models dominated our understanding (see, e.g., Arendt 1951; Conquest 1968; Kornhauser 1959; Wittfogel 1957). Those who developed these models stressed the repressive nature of state power and argued that compliance was coerced by means of terror and intimidation. In the last two decades, totalitarian theories have been severely criticized as being too blunt an instrument to produce the kinds of nuanced analyses that are needed. They offer, it is argued, little insight into what scholars like Rudolf Bahro (1978) have called “actually existing socialism.”

With some notable exceptions, centralized dictatorial control under state socialism has not been as effective as totalitarian models would lead us to expect.¹ In recent years attention has focused on the failures and weaknesses of state socialism, including the growth of personalistic networks and clientelism, inefficiencies in production and distribution, and an enveloping cynicism that seems to have characterized party elite and masses alike. These analyses come from American and European scholars as well as from Eastern European sociologists, economists, philosophers, and dissenting intellectuals.² Katherine Verdery makes the important point that “indigenist” theorizing about Eastern European socialism by Eastern Europeans has proved to be both sophisticated and provocative (1991a:74).

Over the years, studies of clientelism, of the second, or underground, economy, and of what have been called “everyday forms of resistance” have increased in number and sophistication.³ Of course, as I pointed out earlier, state socialism was not as fragile as some now think. It did not collapse because peasants resisted collectivization or because industrial workers bargained, dissembled, or engaged in silent protests—yet neither were these activities irrelevant or epiphenomenal. As Michel Foucault has argued (see, e.g., 1978, 1982), there is much to be gained by linking the study of power to the analysis of resistance. The history of state socialism can be written in various ways depending on whether one takes a structuralist or a more processual view of the events; however, the construction and utilization of power and the forms of resistance that countered that power must be central to all these analyses.

Many students of state socialism feel uneasy not only with views that embrace totalitarian models but also with views that privilege resistance.⁴ In chapter 2 of this volume, Caroline Humphrey warns against reading opposition and dissent into the ambiguous situations one finds in societies where mistrust is pervasive and public demonstrations of compliance are expected of everyone. Ideas about resistance, Humphrey argues, have been developed primarily in the context of colonial and class encounters and not in the context of the centralizing party states described in this volume.

Understanding state socialism in its many forms, including both its strengths and its weaknesses, requires, as Sally Falk Moore has argued for the social sciences generally, a scholarship that gives weight not only to people’s struggles to construct order but also to those actions that undo order (1987:735). In many respects the demise of state socialism seriously challenges theorists concerned with practice,

process, and agency.⁵ In Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and even in China (although not so forthrightly), we confront, on the one hand, the dramatic, orchestrated construction of state socialism, and on the other, its equally dramatic, seemingly unorchestrated, “happeninglike” transformation. The dynamic tension between structure and action, society and countersociety, determinacy and indeterminacy is strikingly evident as we put state socialism under the microscope.

Over the years, millions of ordinary Soviet, Eastern European, and Chinese people have found it advantageous, sometimes necessary, to bypass “the system” in order to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves. Even bureaucrats, apparatchiks, and factory managers resorted to backdoor trade-offs to get their jobs done. In this world—where a friend of a friend might offer a better chance of getting what was needed than reliance on the channels of central distribution—scholars are presented with a rare opportunity to study the ways in which many small, incremental acts can alter structures and institutions that once seemed entrenched and inviolate.

For our part, we contributors to this volume examine how small acts of sometimes private, sometimes public, unsanctioned remembrance kept alive memories and histories that produced and were produced by this shadow world. Our examination of memory and secret histories takes on an added significance when we consider that many of these unapproved rememberings are now the stuff of which new histories and new states are being created.

In this book we have restricted our discussion to state socialist societies for a variety of reasons. There are, of course, important differences among the societies discussed here, and no one model or description fits them all. But for our purposes it is important to note that prior to 1989 these societies shared certain features. They were dominated by a single-party state that claimed the exclusive right to exercise political power, to organize the production and distribution of goods and services, and to authorize the production of cultural texts, including historical ones. These rights, as I argued earlier, were based upon claims to a uniquely scientific understanding of the historical process as revealed in the writings of Marx and Lenin. The would-be historian’s loyalty, or at least compliance, was secured—as it also was in the European democracies, for example—through education, enculturation, socialization, and the calculation of personal self-interest. But unlike the situation in those democracies, official censorship prevailed, and compliance also was obtained by direct and officially sanctioned threats to withdraw goods and services controlled by the party and/or its apparatchiks. In state socialist societies, “history” implied official history, and contending representations of the past were forced underground. The price for noncompliance was high.

In my view, there is much to be gained by focusing on socialist states. An enhanced ability to scrutinize the process of cultural production—including the production of oppositional forms—in situations where a single party dominated political power is certainly one such gain. This kind of scrutiny has the potential to enlarge our understanding of both state socialism and opposition. Beyond

this, however, a focus on state socialism makes it possible to contextualize many of the compelling issues of the postsocialist era. It is difficult to imagine how we can begin to appreciate the transitions from socialism that are now taking place if we do not first understand what preceded those transitions.

DISAPPEARING WORLDS

Since the conferences that led to this book began, the societies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have been radically transformed, and the twists and turns of their transformation have produced some formidable challenges to all of us who have worked on this volume. In some cases contributors have had to revise several times to cope with dramatic changes, renamed countries, and redefined borders. Since the autumn of 1989, it has been necessary to discuss state socialism in Eastern Europe in the past tense: the Soviet Union has become the former Soviet Union, while Yugoslavia seems to have disappeared altogether in a frenzy of "ethnic cleansing."

Besides these national appearances and disappearances, there has also been an amazing transformation of one-time commissars, seemingly overnight, into politicians in the best tradition of American ward politics. And perhaps most important for many of the societies discussed here, the rhetoric of fraternal socialism has given way to the strident language of nationalism. There is no doubt that our burden of analysis has been expanded by these changes. Because of recent events we have added a second set of research questions. In addition to our concern with contending representations of the past under state socialism, contributors also consider the ways in which unsanctioned memories and histories have become the raw material from which new societies and nations are being created. These questions of transition are taken up most explicitly in the chapters dealing with Czechoslovakia, Georgia, and Yugoslavia.

We are also confronted with China—an apparent socialist survivor. At the end of 1989, Eastern Europe and China seemed to be moving in opposite directions. As Chinese leaders boasted that they were saving socialism, the Eastern Europeans proclaimed they were destroying it (in its statist form, that is). For China we can, at this writing, still speak of state socialism in the present tense, but it is a pale version of Mao's robustly centralizing, "politics-in-command" socialism of the 1950s and 1960s.

In the aftermath of the Beijing Massacre (June 4, 1989), contacts with Western countries continue, as do many of the economic reforms instituted in the 1980s. China, however, has not embraced the concept of *glasnost*. Contrary to developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Deng Xiaoping continues to argue that political and economic reforms can be separated. There are many who doubt the ability of Deng and his followers to maintain this separation—to produce reform with Chinese characteristics. In this volume, no one suggests that China is the country that stood still; changes are occurring and further changes are inevitable,

but, in my view, China does represent a failure to create and sustain a national framework for political reform. As I argue in chapter 4, China appears to have neither a message nor a messenger that can mediate among the warring elites who seek to "speak for," but do not seem able to "speak with," the masses. State socialism in Asia is not dead, although it is being transformed, and for this reason alone China makes an interesting contrast to the postsocialist countries described here.

The dramatic events in Beijing, Berlin, Prague, Bucharest, and eventually Moscow and Leningrad (now renamed St. Petersburg) remind one in the most dramatic terms that constructing the new is deeply embedded in reconstructing the old. There is, of course, nothing particularly novel in the idea that new environments produce "new pasts." As Bernard Lewis points out: "The invention of history is no new invention" (1975:13). Until recently, however, discussions of reinventing the past have focused primarily on history making outside the Soviet and Chinese orbits.⁶ In this book we consider how new pasts are created in societies where, as Vera Schwarcz argues in chapter 3, "the technology of amnesia" has produced an enforced forgetfulness. In one way or another each of the contributors to this volume seeks to assess the effectiveness of that technology.⁷

Given the changes taking place in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and China, many important issues now turn on how the past is represented. New national charters are being constructed out of long-suppressed histories and shared memories. Judging from the mounting evidence for the survival of alternative versions of the past, it is clear that the party's gatekeepers were not as successful in mandating what could be remembered as we had assumed. How, we ask, do people encounter and counter historical orthodoxies? How do they remember events that "did not occur" or were described in terms unfamiliar to those who had experienced them?

As the effects of glasnost and later the "velvet revolutions" of 1989 widened and deepened, people in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union could be seen engaging in a feast of remembrance. Their counterparts in China also remembered, but with different consequences. In all these societies, however, alternative representations of the past were publicly recalled, recharged, and even relived in ways that would have been impossible a decade earlier. There was a sense that ordinary people were recovering pasts that, because they contradicted official history, had remained hidden and protected. Some of these "recoveries" took place before our eyes as newly minted official histories lent their support to emerging nation states (for examples, see the chapters by Hayden, Jones, and Lass).

For the countries discussed in this book, the 1980s were a time when "forgotten" people and "forgotten" deeds could be commemorated. Sidney Monas has written of the great potency of the "return of the repressed" in societies that have been dominated by strict censorship (1989). In a recent paper, Susan Gal (1991) provides a fascinating account of the composer Bartók's reburial on Hungarian soil in 1988. Similar memorial rites have taken place with increasing urgency, includ-

ing (again in Hungary) the reburial of the executed leader Imre Nagy, memorial services for well-known victims of China's Cultural Revolution, and public commemorations for Polish officers slaughtered during the Second World War. These memorials testify to the recognition of the forgotten dead and to the "nonevents" that occasioned those deaths. In chapter 9, Robert Hayden describes how, in 1990–91, the victims of communist and fascist massacres in Yugoslavia received elaborate funerals after having lain for decades in unmarked graves.

Although these rememberings were often encouraged and orchestrated by emergent power holders, remembrance was by no means confined to the choreographed event. There were also fragmented and sometimes highly ritualized, personal acts of memory and homage: the flowers placed on an empty pedestal that was to have supported a monument commemorating the American liberation of Pilsen; the photos and personal documents of Stalin's "disappeared" posted on a Moscow street; the creation of an unauthorized cemetery in a Soviet gulag; candles lit at the mass graves of "secret" Yugoslav massacres; and silent vigils commemorating violent confrontations with police in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania.⁸ Before 1989—during the early days of glasnost—people sometimes used their own bodies to proclaim the unofficial past. The unsanctioned mourning of Zhou Enlai in January 1976 is an example of such a proclamation (chapter 4, this volume). Often these acts of remembrance were both simple and silent; they were, as Humphrey argues in chapter 2, "inherently ambiguous," managing to appear individual and collective, silent and noisy at the same time. As Andrew Lass points out in chapter 5, many of these symbolic acts took place in public places like Wenceslas Square in Prague, where for decades secret histories of opposition had been quietly but effectively nurtured.

TRANSMITTING THE PAST

In asking how people remember what is meant to be forgotten, matters of transmission—the mechanics of shared memory and hidden histories—take center stage. We are only beginning to understand these processes, and it is here that the authors of this book make, I believe, a special contribution. In societies where unofficial histories are seditious and the photographer's air brush is an effective tool of historical annihilation, the production and survival of unsanctioned memories must be problematical.

Much has been written about shared, collective, or social memory and about the relationship between memory and history.⁹ In chapter 5, Lass provides an excellent discussion of various scholarly treatments of the latter. In this volume, the term *history* is most often used to describe representations of the past that appear in written, narrative form—although it is important to note that for definitional purposes no one would wish to imply that the term should be so rigidly confined. In chapter 7, Paul Pickowicz analyzes a remarkable oppositional history written

by a Chinese villager. Of course, a history may become oppositional whether the author intends such a reading or not; the ongoing battle over how to remember China's May Fourth Movement (1919), for example, has transformed official accounts into oppositional ones and back again as political regimes have come and gone (see Schwarcz 1991c; Wasserstrom 1990).

Memory may be a reservoir of history, but it is not the same as history. As Stephen Owen argues: "It is easy to forget that we do not read memory itself but its transformation through writing" (1986:114). People maintain personal memories—memories of events and situations that they themselves experienced. These personal memories may remain private, they may be passed on in conversation or storytelling, they may be lost, or they may be written down in the form of diaries, memoirs, and autobiographies. There are also collective or shared memories that are not dependent on a single individual's direct experience of the past. That is, we may "remember" an event—have a shared understanding that is represented as a "memory"—that we ourselves did not experience. Many Americans "remember" the American Civil War and many Jews "remember" the Nazi Holocaust, but not because they personally experienced those events or because they have read master narratives written by professional historians detailing the great battles or the sufferings in the camps. Rather, they "remember" because they share with others sets of images that have been passed down to them through the media of memory—through paintings, architecture, monuments, ritual, storytelling, poetry, music, photos, and film.

These rememberings are not constructed in an overtly logical, intellectualized manner—they rarely provide a clearly organized story or narrative. Rather, they are fragmented, much like a Dalí painting or a collage. Often these rememberings are visual, producing powerful and compelling images that speak to the passions as well as to the intellect. Such memories re-present the past and give people the sense that they are reexperiencing an event that may have occurred long before their birth. Museums and monuments often give a physicality to memory, as do the rituals that commemorate the dead and their deeds. The visual arts, poetry, memoirs, and novels contribute to memory construction in part because they make us *feel* as well as *think* the past.

Although definitional exercises may not be very satisfying, in my view shared memory and history should not be collapsed, nor should those who are concerned with the past eschew the realm of memory altogether, leaving it, as so often has been the case, to the cognitive psychologists and philosophers. I do not wish to invoke the dichotomies between Lévi-Strauss's hot and cold societies, nor do I wish to deny that there are many kinds of history (for discussion, see Rappaport 1990). However, for those of us who are concerned with unorthodox transmissions of unapproved pasts, memory is a word that is too precious to abandon.

The construction of memory and the construction of history do not take place in isolation from each other. As Lass points out (indeed, as all the contributors

show), personal memory, shared memory, and narrative (written) history interact in highly complicated ways, shaping each other as versions of the past are constructed and reconstructed (see also Burke 1989). The important point is that shared memory and history tend not only to represent but also to transmit the past in characteristically different ways. A number of the contributors to this book suggest that in situations where alternative understandings of the past are tantamount to treason, shared memory expressed in oral and visual forms provides a particularly adaptive medium for expressing disagreement, dissent, opposition, and resistance.

In *The Politics of Memory*, Joanne Rappaport describes the appeal of the novelist's vision of the past. A writer like Gabriel García Márquez creates a powerful image of the past as he seeks to tell his stories "before the historians have time to arrive" (cited in Rappaport 1990:16). Shared memories produce powerful images by taking up themes, telling stories, and making it possible to reexperience events in ways that are significantly different from the history of the professional historian. In creating shared memories we construct visions of the past rather than chronologies. Time itself may be collapsed or made inconsequential as these memory visions are evoked, shared, transmitted, and continuously altered—while remaining ostensibly the same.

ENCAPSULATION, SOCIALISM, AND THE PAST

For purposes of understanding how the past was used and abused under state socialism, it is important to differentiate those societies upon which Marxism-Leninism was imposed from those where it developed in situ. China, discussed in chapters 3, 4, 6, and 7, is an example of the latter. But for the Czechoslovaks, Georgians, and Mongolians described in chapters 2, 5, and 8, state socialism was perceived as an alien intrusion. It is not that people failed to adjust to the new order—there were certainly Czechoslovakian, Georgian, and Mongolian communists—but rather that Moscow, not Prague, Tbilisi, or Ulan Bator, stood as the guarantor and the ultimate enforcer of that order. Because of Yugoslavia's history and internal divisions, its situation is more complicated. Increasingly, the Croats, Slovenians, and Bosnians have equated socialism with Serbian hegemony; the Serbs, not surprisingly, have taken a different view (see chapter 9).

In Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe and Georgia, representations of a cultural past were by no means free of party manipulation, yet these representations continued to play a significant role in constructing national and personal identities. E. M. Simmonds-Duke (1987) and Katherine Verdery (1991a:99) argue that a discourse on the nation was so powerfully instituted in Romanian culture and political life that it subverted the discourse of Marxism itself. For Romanians and others, the universalism of communism never managed to drown out the "localism" of the nation. During the 1960s, policy shifts in the Soviet Union seemed

to encourage, even promote, national distinctiveness (although, of course, local party officials defined what was to be “distinctive”). According to Jones (in chapter 8), this proved to be particularly important in Soviet republics like Georgia, where it was possible to sustain, sometimes surreptitiously, memories of a pre-Soviet past. In Mongolia, as Humphrey points out, Soviet dominators appear to have been especially rigorous in their control over the production of history and culture, but there too, the past, in the form of a hidden religious history transmitted through a rich oral tradition, continued to exist in a world of us versus them.

In some important respects the capacity to externalize communism—to give it a foreign origin, to associate it with an outside Soviet dominator—encouraged the retention and elaboration of national histories. Although this externalization was never completely successful—the dominated always had their own locally produced dominators—Georgians, Mongolians, and Czechoslovakians could maintain an attitude toward their national past that was significantly different, I believe, from the attitude we find in China.

In China, where socialism under Mao was accepted as a homemade affair and where there was considerable popular support for a Maoist version of socialism that promoted economic equality and industrial growth, the past has remained a forbidding, and often forbidden, territory. While the past in the form of a traditional culture was never fully rejected in China, there is no doubt that rituals, religious beliefs, and physical manifestations of cultural practices (i.e., texts, temples, ancestral halls, domestic altars, tombs, genealogies) were forthrightly and consistently attacked. In contrast to Georgia, Czechoslovakia, and Mongolia, in China the past became a highly problematical resource for the construction of identity. Myron Cohen describes what has happened in China as “cultural warfare” and argues that it has resulted in a nationalism that is “amazingly devoid of elaborated cultural content” (1991:128). Although China’s cultural turmoil is, to a considerable degree, a consequence of Maoist iconoclasm, Cohen points out that the long-standing and deeply held antitraditionalism of Chinese intellectuals should not be underestimated.

REMEMBERING UNOFFICIAL PASTS: “SILENT DISAGREEMENT” AND OPPOSITION

Under state socialism, the space for resistance, opposition, alternative views, and disagreement has been extremely small. As John Keane puts it in his preface to *The Power of the Powerless*, “in Soviet-type regimes . . . no citizen is innocent before the state,” and “public opposition of any kind is always regarded by the State authorities as seditious” (1985:8). In the present book, contributors probe the limits of state socialism in its capacities to colonize and dominate the private and public spaces of ordinary people. “The public sphere,” Kligman writes, “belonged to the party-state, which appropriated unto itself the rights to space, privilege,

discourse, and communication" (1990:398). In many of the societies described in the following chapters, the public sphere was indeed expansive as it encroached on the private realm, sometimes shrinking it to alarmingly small dimensions.

Under state socialism, party apparatchiks strived to control the bodies and minds not only of dissidents and counterrevolutionaries but also of ordinary workers and peasants. What could be written and what could be said was of central and abiding concern to the state. Because, as Verdery points out, the socialist order is a self-consciously constructed one, having been produced more through discourse than practice (1991b:430), control over the discursive realm is fundamental (on this point, see also Burawoy and Lukacs 1992). Under such circumstances, opposition must be camouflaged; Keane refers to the "silent disagreement" that is common in such societies (1985:8).

In chapter 2 of this volume, Humphrey develops the idea of the "evocative transcript" in order to capture the subtlety of what might be labeled a form of "non-oppositional opposition." Although Humphrey acknowledges her debt to the work of James Scott (1990), she argues that Scott's concept of the hidden transcript is not fully applicable to "encapsulated societies subject to Soviet-type domination." As Humphrey defines the term, an evocative transcript is not specific to a class or circle of people but is a common resource available to everyone in Mongolian society. In this respect, she argues, it is different from Scott's hidden transcripts, which are produced by enduring groups within their own social space. Evocative transcripts are inherently ambiguous and come to the fore when the restricted codes of classes and ethnic groups are replaced by new kinds of discourse. According to Humphrey, these transcripts are intended to elicit or evoke a reaction beyond their surface meaning. Humphrey describes these new discursive forms as "highly ideological, stilted, and mostly written official discourse, and 'all the rest,' which may be oral and informal but nevertheless must maintain a semblance of conformity in public." Humphrey shows how jokes, written texts, and various actions may be "deliberately designed to evoke a dual reaction." For example, a visit to a spring may commemorate a goddess-spirit, it may recall a dead empress, or people may simply say they are "taking a cure."

In Schwarcz's chapter on Chinese intellectuals, we are allowed a glimpse into the process by which private, unapproved memories are hesitantly and painfully shared. Schwarcz describes how, in May 1989, in the midst of the official commemorations of the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Movement, the "survivor-rememberer" Chen Hengzhen struggled to find a place "at the margin" where he could join personal memory to public history. According to the official version of Chinese history, communism is the only true outcome of May Fourth and of China's struggles to attain a prosperous and independent nation-state (see Schwarcz 1991c; Wasserstrom 1990). In a series of unofficial conferences at the fringes of public commemoration, however, forgotten figures of May Fourth could be talked about without the burden of correct criticism.

At one of these unofficial conferences, Schwarcz met Chen, the 60-year-old son of a victim of China's antirightist campaign, who was seeking "to rehabilitate his mother's reputation in the annals of the Chinese revolution." The mother, a French literature specialist who had helped found the Paris cell of the Chinese Communist party in 1921, had been labeled a rightist (and therefore a nonperson) in 1957. At the conference, Schwarcz recounts, the son was engaged in a rectification of history as he attempted to find a place for an acceptable memory of his mother in a newly emerging public, but not quite official, account of May Fourth. Outside the conference format, however, during a lunch break, Chen's talk changed as he spoke to Schwarcz of more personal, less palatable remembrances—memories of his mother's betrayal, of violent political campaigns, and of his own suffering. "She tried to protect herself and ended by blackening twenty years of my life," Chen said of his mother. In 1958, "when she could no longer defend herself, she went mad" and ended her life by committing suicide. "She trusted the authorities with everything," he exclaimed, "as if the party were a benevolent, faultless father. She sacrificed her son for this father." Schwarcz's description of a son who strives to contribute to a new representation of modern Chinese history, yet struggles with private memories that have no history, no framework, to which they can be attached and thereby given meaning, captures the conflicting, eruptive nature of memory in a China that is still deeply at odds with its past.

In a recent essay, Lisa Rofel, who, like Schwarcz, discusses a victim of the Cultural Revolution, writes of the way in which memories of violence are lived in silence but may suddenly erupt only "to disappear again, seemingly without a ripple" (1991:1). In the 1980s, Rofel argues, memories of the Cultural Revolution were officially acceptable if they replicated a version of the master narrative that placed blame on the Gang of Four and characterized the violence as senseless. For many, however, it has not been easy to connect their own memories to this accepted understanding of events. Bad memories of the Cultural Revolution, according to Rofel, are sayable if they "draw a clear border between then and now." But there are those who refuse to weave together their fragmented memories "into a tale of progress and redemption" (1991:10). Neither the Cultural Revolution victim Rofel describes nor the son Schwarcz discusses (both of whom, it is worth noting, were betrayed by a family member), has resolved his or her personal memories, and so their "cultural revolutions" remain unfinished business. In this, they are certainly not alone.

Whereas Schwarcz describes a failed attempt to transform personal memory, Lass is concerned with the process of transformation itself. He examines the making of histories in postsocialist Czechoslovakia and asks how "individuals' events [become] society's history." Like Hayden and Jones, he examines how the "new histories" of the 1990s are being created. Lass is concerned with the complicated interplay between recollection, memory, and narrative history—the process by which private recollection structures and is structured by historically marked events. How, he asks, does "my past" become "our past?" Transformations of rec-

ollection into memory and memory into history, he argues, are thought by some to involve the construction of distance through a process of rethinking rather than reliving—of remembering rather than recollecting. Lass maintains, however, that there is a “lived” aspect to the new histories of Czechoslovakia as the events of 1989 are turned into an artistic drama about the past. The closer we get to the “new histories,” Lass concludes, the more history comes alive again as it is reproduced as art, as spectacle, as final absolution.

In chapter 4 I am concerned, like Schwarcz and Lass, with the transmission of an unofficial past, and I consider the expressive forms that are available for creating shared meaning out of personal mourning in Chinese society. In examining how the anonymous victims who died during the violent political upheavals of Maoist China are remembered, I discuss the elaborate, state-orchestrated memorials of the 1980s. Of special importance are the eruptions of unsanctioned remembrance that, on at least two occasions (in 1976 and 1989), overwhelmed official acts of memorialization. In China, mourning is highly charged with moral significance and continues, as in the past, to provide a dramatic medium for expressing injustice. I am concerned with what happens when personal memory is so much at odds with official history that the former would be branded subversive if it were shared. What is the cost for the individual and for society when there is no meaningful framework for publicly exploring traumatic memories of political violence?

In chapter 6, Ellen Judd discusses a form of opera that in China has long been associated with the transmission of the past. The explosive potential of folk drama is highlighted as Judd describes the meticulous control a group of Chinese officials exercised over a 1989 (post-Beijing Massacre) performance of *The Story of Mulian*. Although many traditional operas were revived in China during the 1980s, this particular opera, in part because of its timing and the presence of foreign guests, was too invested with political significance to be “just an opera.” One is reminded of the “civilizing” and controlling attempts of China’s imperial literati as Judd describes a popular opera from which the populace has been excluded. The “erasure of the popular audience” (only official guests were allowed to attend) considerably augmented, Judd argues, the complex mix of official and unofficial politics that the authorities hoped to dampen or avoid.

In Judd’s view, the danger of Mulian opera lies not in its portrayal of “hungry ghosts” or the promotion of “superstitious beliefs,” but rather in the way in which the central tenets of Chinese political culture are presented. Conflict and ambiguity, play, and magical transformation make this drama hugely complex and in some fundamental sense uncontrollable. Paraphrasing Walter Benjamin (1969), Judd argues that it is memory’s ability to flash up at a point of historical danger that frightens China’s ruling elite.

TOTALITARIAN MODELS, MEMORY, AND OPPOSITION

No state is completely successful in domesticating the old to construct the new; in practice, there are always varying degrees of success. Official historians, try as they might, are unable to turn their fellow citizens into blank pages upon which the new can be inscribed. This observation should not, however, make us lose sight of the fact that under state socialism party elements jealously guarded the cultural realm—including the domain of memory and forgetting. Censors, state-supported writers' organizations, state-employed thought workers, and, ultimately, the security police oversaw this realm. Beyond these external sanctioning agents lay self-censorship. As Miklos Haraszti so eloquently points out in *The Velvet Prison* (1987), compliance is not always or even primarily coerced from above. In a discussion of intellectuals living under "totalitarian socialism," Haraszti writes: "Censorship is no longer a matter of simple state intervention. A new aesthetic culture has emerged in which censors and artists alike are entangled in a mutual embrace" (1987:5).¹⁰ Andrew Walder describes the more prosaic embrace that characterized Chinese factory workers, managers, and party officials in the 1970s, when, as he argues, political loyalty was "rewarded systematically with career opportunities, special distributions, and other favors that officials in communist societies are uniquely able to dispense" (1986:6).

Scholars working with totalitarian models argue that the public destroys the private under statist regimes. Control, they contend, is effectively exerted as the state engulfs its citizens (see, e.g., Arendt 1951; Kornhauser 1959; Wittfogel 1957). Given that one's livelihood and access to such basic resources as employment, housing, food, health care, education, and travel are controlled by organs of the party state, active protest is something that only a few consider. Yet even under harsh regimes, certain domains of personal and community life remain uncolonized. Jones shows in chapter 8 that although texts of "correct histories" were lavishly produced in Soviet Georgia, one could also find unofficial histories, often in the form of oral literature. In China, the state maintained a vigilant population-reduction program during the 1980s, but had little concern for nonreproductive domestic matters, including family violence. In effect, the Chinese state claimed control over women's bodies as instruments of reproduction but took little interest when those same bodies were subjected to physical aggression (see Gilmartin 1990; cf. Kligman 1990:424).

It is clear that under state socialism resistance, passive or otherwise, did and does exist, and not only among intellectuals of Solzhenitsyn's or Liu Binyan's stature. In this volume, Paul Pickowicz describes a rare piece of oppositional history written by a Chinese villager: a dissenter's history of rural life in northern China from the 1930s to the late 1980s. Part memoir and part history, the document is handwritten; the author, peasant Geng Xiufeng—a "rural intellectual" (*nongcun zhishifenzi*), one-time minor official, and party member—believes that government policies long ago turned from the true path of socialism. Geng begins his

memoir with the forthright statement that his initial interest in agrarian socialism was inspired by neither the policies of the Communist party nor the writings of Mao Zedong. Geng, who intends that his history be published, has repeatedly and publicly objected to what he considers the efforts of state agents to usurp credit for the work he and others had done to promote agrarian socialism. "Time and again," Pickowicz writes, "[Geng] irritated petty state authorities by insisting that the official party view of the history of cooperative formation in Hebei was incorrect." As in the case of Huang Shu-min's (1989) political biography of a party secretary in Fujian Province, one gets the strong impression that local support for the Communist party has always been conditional. Geng's manuscript provides a decidedly unofficial view of recent Chinese history and an alternate vision of what rural China could have been.

People like Geng no doubt existed in the Soviet Union as well as in China, although their opposition might have been less forthright than his. As Pickowicz points out, Geng's opposition has not gone unnoticed: he has been marginalized, labeled a crank, and ridiculed by local officials. More recently he has been described by some local authorities as a "Soviet-style dissident." In earlier decades, the marginalization of such dissenters could have had far greater consequences.

As I noted previously, perhaps the most telling criticism of the totalitarian model is that it does little to illuminate "actually existing socialism." If one accepts the model, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to understand how alternative versions of the past, the second economy, and nepotism could emerge. As reliance on overt political terror and mass mobilization declined in many socialist societies in the 1970s and 1980s, clientelism and elaborate subcultures of instrumental-personal ties developed, making it possible for people to circumvent formal regulations and acquire everything from better housing to the latest rock music videos (see, e.g., Walder 1986:5–14). Citing these developments, many observers have rejected the term *totalitarian*. Walder prefers *neotraditionalism* because, he argues, it better captures the "formally organized particularism" (1986:7) of Chinese society after the 1950s. Václav Havel, writing of Czechoslovakia in the 1970s, uses the term *post-totalitarian*, which he contrasts with the totalitarianism of "classic dictatorships" (1985:24–27). Others write of bureaucratic centrism, and some retain the totalitarian label (Haraszti's "totalitarian socialism," for example), wishing perhaps to highlight the fact that political control continues to be highly centralized and fundamentally noncompetitive.

Havel (1985:28) provides a vignette that captures important elements of the culture of state socialism—perhaps especially "late state socialism." The manager of a fruit and vegetable shop places in his window the slogan "Workers of the World Unite." Why, Havel asks, does he do this, and what is he trying to communicate? In Havel's view, "the greengrocer is indifferent to the semantic content of the slogan," but the slogan is not meaningless. It proclaims, "I, the greengrocer XY, live here and I know what I must do. I behave in the manner expected of me. I can be depended upon and am beyond reproach. I am obedient and therefore I have the right to be

left in peace." This message, according to Havel, is addressed to the greengrocer's superiors, neighbors, and customers, and it shields him from potential informers.

In China, the issues and periodization of socialist culture are different, but Havel's insights are relevant. When, we may ask, did people in China shift from displaying a picture of Mao out of devotion to doing so as a prophylactic of the "leave me in peace, I am reliable" kind?¹¹ What do such shifts indicate? In the 1960s and 1970s, Havel says, Czechoslovaks had to act as though military occupation was fraternal assistance, as though the lack of free expression was the highest form of freedom, and as though the destruction of culture was its development (1985: 30–31). The party state, he writes, "pretends to pretend nothing," and individuals must give this lie credibility by behaving as though there is no pretense (1985: 31). As Humphrey points out in her chapter on Mongolia, "there is a shared sense that the official truth is not true" (cf. Link 1992: 6–10, 176–91).¹² In Soviet Georgia, Jones relates, official history became suspect as "official reality" became unreal. In such circumstances, personal memory becomes more reliable than the official narrative, which is so often contradicted by experience.

It is important to note that during some periods of intense political and economic mobilization, silent disagreement and pretending not to pretend have been impossible. Schwarcz argues that during China's antirightist campaign of 1957, and again during the Cultural Revolution of 1966–76, millions of Chinese were robbed of their silence. Confucianism, she points out, teaches that it is possible to maintain inner autonomy through self-cultivation, but in Mao's China "this spiritual practice was increasingly difficult to maintain [as] intellectuals were repeatedly required to castigate themselves, to incriminate themselves and their colleagues" (Schwarcz 1991c: 104).

In such environments, Humphrey notes, everyone has a double life. Anyone can be an informer; the victim can also be a victimizer. In ways that many who have never lived in a statist society may find difficult to comprehend, "the fundamental lines of conflict run right through each person" (Havel 1985: 70). Jan Gross (1988: 120) has argued that under Stalin, the pervasive fear of the informer enhanced the perception of the state as omnipresent and therefore omnipotent. This perception was created not because the state was necessarily powerful but because the instruments of coercion were privatized; in effect, terror and compliance were produced by making denunciation available to everyone (Gross 1988: 120).

The chapters in this book support the view that as the party overreached itself, a process of delegitimization gained momentum. In controlling one domain of social life, party leaders and their agents left another to blossom; unintended effects flowed from mandated policies. In the end, the party state and its exhausted, confused, increasingly cynical officials could deliver on neither the party's threats nor its promises. Ordinary people, however, continued to operate "as though" the system worked, and the party state was not completely bereft of either its positive or its negative inducements. But with increasing frequency the party state had to share the stage with the informal economy and the personal network.

As I have already noted, in the post-1989 era it has become fashionable to see state socialism as a house of cards. Why, we now ask, did it not fall sooner? In claiming greater territory for itself, the state, it has been argued, destroyed or disabled competing institutions, structures, and practices. Gross refers to this as a process of "spoiling," and to socialist states as spoiler states; what cannot be controlled, he argues, must be destroyed or disabled (1988). Gradually, the enormous public/official sphere, perhaps because it colonizes so much but delivers too little, becomes suspect, corrupt, and alienating. At the same time, institutions, associations, and alliances that could fill the void—what some refer to as civil society—have been destroyed or rendered ineffective.¹³ Many people retreat into private life. In China, for example, the late 1980s and early 1990s were marked by a craze for *qigong* (breath and body control) and by a voracious demand for romance novels.¹⁴ In Eastern Europe, summer villas, rock music, private writing, and alcohol offered opportunities for escape or introspection.

There is nothing inevitable, of course, about the collapse of state socialism. In a recent article titled "What Happened in Eastern Europe in 1989?" Daniel Chirot summarizes the economic factors that led to collapse, arguing that investment and production decisions were based largely on political will, making it impossible to determine which firms were profitable and efficient (1991:216–217). But why, he asks, did the collapse occur in 1989? Why did these systems not last longer or change in less dramatic ways? After all, these societies experienced no catastrophic economic declines. Chirot answers his question by arguing that state socialism in Eastern Europe fell when it did because ordinary people and their leaders "lost confidence in the moral validity of their social and political systems" (1991:221; see also Ash 1990; Gellner 1991). But why did they lose confidence?

In a recent book, Michael Burawoy and Janos Lukacs argue that "the production regimes of state socialism engender dissent" (1992:114). By engaging in the practices that build socialism, people are regularly and often dramatically reminded of the gap between what is and what should be (1992:127). Echoing Havel, Burawoy and Lukacs argue: "Socialism becomes an elaborate game of pretense which everyone sees through but which everyone is compelled to play" (1992:129). In the end, the rituals that are meant both to construct and to celebrate socialism become its undoing.¹⁵ Ernest Gellner makes a similar argument: "The salvation doctrine of Marxism is centred on the economy. In various ways, this was probably its undoing. It meant that a promise of collective salvation was formulated in terms which were only too clearly open to testing; and in the end, the verdict of history and experience damned the theory" (1991:504–5).¹⁶

NEW STATES AND "NEW" HISTORIES

Today in Eastern Europe, Mongolia, Georgia, and Russia, the task is to rebuild the public domain in a new image. Can this be done after the ravages of the "spoiler state"? The past is crucial to this rebuilding process. In chapter 8, Jones

argues that a number of factors account for the intensity of what he labels "memory politics" in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Looking back at the Soviet period, he describes an apparent contradiction between, on the one hand, republican state structures that encouraged the development of national—in his case, Georgian—constitutions, emblems, hymns, and approved Soviet-republic histories and, on the other hand, domination from the center, which was intrusive and harsh. Georgian memories of a pre-Soviet past survived in the interstices of history, where they were kept alive in ritual, in oral literature and song, in monuments and public buildings, in poetry and historical novels, and in films.

The sense of alienation that people felt and the similarities between Soviet and nationalist conceptions of time were also important factors in the development of memory politics. Jones observes that "like Soviet propagandists, nationalists see past time as bound by and as part of the present." The constitutional and political privileges that were granted to a "titular group" in each republic have also intensified ethnic struggles. These privileges, Jones argues, contribute to the view that a unique relationship exists between the territory of a republic and a particular ethnic-national group. In post-Soviet Georgia, new official histories and new minorities are being created as the former "titular group"—the Georgians—make exclusive claims to "their" historical homeland.

Hayden, too, is concerned with questions of memory politics. In his chapter on late- and postcommunist Yugoslavia, Hayden demonstrates how hidden or secret histories and memories of atrocities provide a powerful framework for the "totalizing nationalisms" of Croatia and Serbia. In recent years, new categorical histories, based on reconstructions of a "forgotten past," have come to play a central role in Yugoslavia's violent politics. These histories, Hayden argues, allow emerging political leaders to claim legitimacy on the basis of the opposition's past record of immorality.

In contrast to Georgia, where a golden, pre-Soviet era has become an integral part of a new national charter (Georgians, it appears, have "forgotten" the Soviet period), Croatian and Serbian nationalisms are constructed upon the bitter and, in some cases, long-suppressed histories of the Second World War and Yugoslavia's own civil war. Charges and countercharges about moral culpability for past actions constitute the raw materials out of which these nationalisms are being created. Hayden's paper, more than any other in this volume, shows the process by which the revised histories of new national groups create their own counternarratives. In the territory that was once Yugoslavia, as in other societies where national ambitions have been recharged, the creation of "our past" often involves the negation of another group's history. Remembering and forgetting are thus locked together in a complicated web as one group's enfranchisement requires another's disenfranchisement.

MEMORY, OPPOSITION, AND HISTORY

The chapters in this volume show that personal memory can be constrained and reshaped by official campaigns of coercive forgetting and, further, that shared memory is considerably more problematical under state socialism than might first be assumed. Party apparatchiks never managed fully to domesticate the past, but at times the technology of amnesia was disturbingly effective.

Given that under state socialism resistance is often passive and the sharing of memory—of past experiences—hesitant, it is difficult, some might say foolhardy, to deploy the language of opposition. Nevertheless, the contributors to this book show that oppositional narratives were created by Chinese rural historians, émigré Croats, dissenters such as Yugoslavia's Milovan Djilas, and Chinese intellectuals as they first whispered and later shouted their unauthorized memories to foreign colleagues. Evidence of opposition is also found in the hidden histories enshrined in Georgia's national epics, in the unapproved memorializations that transform Chinese ritual and opera into protest, and in the orally transmitted religious histories of Mongolia. It is also clear, however, that new concepts are needed to capture the subtleties of opposition and compliance as experienced under state socialism—and it is here that we enter the domain of the evocative transcript, silent disagreement, passive resistance, and erupted memory.

The colonization of public and private space is one of the hallmarks of state socialism. Nonetheless, as the essays in this volume demonstrate, agents of the state were never able to stifle all forms of opposition—especially those enshrined in memory. These alternative representations of the past, we are learning, have become central to the new histories that are now defining national struggles in the postsocialist world. In this book we have focused most of our attention on memory, but as national and ethnic conflicts embroil many parts of the world, future studies may find the processes of forgetting more compelling.

Notes

1. Exceptions might include Stalin's Soviet Union in the 1930s and Pol Pot's reign in Cambodia in the 1970s.

2. See, for example, Campeanu (1988); M. Djilas (1957); Haraszti (1979, 1987); Havel (1985); Konrad and Szelenyi (1979); Rev (1987); and Staniszkis (1991).

3. For discussion of "everyday forms of resistance," see, for example, Scott (1989, 1990); and Colburn (1989a). For discussions of opposition, resistance, and subversion under state socialism, see, for example, Anagnost (1989); Rev (1987); Rofel (1989); Sabel and Stark (1982); M. M. Yang (1988); and Zweig (1989b); for further discussion of this literature, see Verdery (1991b).

4. For critiques of the "romance of resistance," see Abu-Lughod (1990); and Turton (1986).

5. For discussion of process, practice, and agency, see, for example, Giddens (1979); Moore (1987); and Ortner (1984).

6. See, for example, Hanson (1989); Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983); and Lewis (1975).

7. For a discussion of the effectiveness of the "technology of amnesia" in China, see Fang Lizhi, "The Chinese Amnesia," in *The New York Review*, September 27, 1990.

8. For examples of such silent remembrances, see, on remembering the American liberation of Pilsen, *New York Times*, April 11, 1990; on a tribute to Stalin's disappeared, "Gulag Cemetery," *New York Times*, August 27, 1990; and on silent vigils, Kligman (1990:401).

9. On shared, social, or collective memory, see, for example, Benjamin (1969); Bloch (1925); Bodnar (1991); Burke (1989); Casey (1984); Connerton (1989); Halbwachs (1980); Hill (1988); Hosking (1989); Le Goff (1992); and Rappaport (1990).

10. On intellectuals under state socialism, see, for example, Barne (1989); Goldman, Cheek, and Hamrin (1987); Haraszti (1987); Konrad and Szelenyi (1979); Lee (1991); Link (1992); Simmonds-Duke (1987); Siu (1990); Siu and Stern (1983); Szelenyi (1982); and Verdery (1991a).

11. Since 1989, Mao buttons and pictures are once again being displayed (see *New York Times*, February 19, 1990; *Christian Science Monitor*, February 22, 1990). Now, however, they appear to have become a sign of dissent or "ambiguous protest" against the present leadership, or to be used in much the way a St. Christopher's medal might be used in a Boston taxicab.

12. In *Evening Chats in Beijing* (1992), Perry Link provides an interesting discussion of "official" and "unofficial" modes of expression in China during the late 1980s (cf. Weller 1993:chapter 12). "Both kinds of language are fully 'real,'" he argues, "and are equally essential to getting along in Chinese life" (Link 1992:7); but he goes on to note in a later chapter that the distinctions between the two are very clear. The official language "consists of standard phrases, slogans, and ideas that one uses not to express one's own thoughts or intentions . . . but through judicious manipulation to advance one's interests or to defend oneself" (1992:176). Link believes this bifurcation of language produces a profound identity problem for Chinese intellectuals "with their well-rooted cultural assumptions of the unity of language, morality, and public service" (1992:191).

13. On civil society, see, for example, Gellner (1991); Gramsci (1971); Habermas (1989); Keane (1988); Kligman (1990); and Lapidus (1988).

14. See, for example, Barne and Jaiven (1992:324, 374–85).

15. Burawoy and Lukacs write: "The very conditions that are hidden through participation in capitalist production, in socialist production become the focal concern of the players. The compulsion to participate in the socialist game is potentially explosive—the pretense becomes an alternative turned against reality" (1992:129). In their view, state socialism becomes the brunt of critiques because it is seen not to live up to its own values and goals.

16. In a recent book, Robert Weller makes the argument that official socialist language offers a "thin interpretation" that is easy to control but is neither powerful nor compelling in its appeal (1994:chapter 12).