

students of all said disciplines, as well as for those in any related area of cultural studies or anthropology.

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Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society. By Miroslav Vaněk and Pavel Mücke. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. xi, 251 pp. Notes. Appendixes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$34.95, hard bound.
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Not everyone who experienced state socialism in the Eastern Bloc remembers only oppression, fear, and misery. In *Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society*, Miroslav Vaněk and Pavel Mücke draw evidence from roughly 300 oral-history interviews conducted from 2006 to 2013 with “ordinary people” (1), including teachers, factory workers, farmers, a fire-fighter, and others outside dissident circles and Communist Party centers of power. Most were born between 1935 and 1955, and their diverse memories and opinions primarily treat the normalization period after the 1968 Prague Spring and the post-socialist era following “the crack,” more formally known as the Velvet Revolution (166). Throughout the volume, its authors consistently refer to the interviewees as “narrators,” a label connoting agency and the view that even under Communist Party rule, ordinary people had some power to shape the course of history and its outcomes.

In their introduction, Vaněk and Mücke quote and agree with Václav Havel’s 1990 contention that “We are all . . . responsible for the operation of the totalitarian machinery; no one is merely its victim; we are all also its co-creators” (3). Selections from the interviews provide some evidence for this argument about the mutually constituted nature of state socialism, showing a society in which people at times consciously worked to steer clear of public life, withdrawing into the private realm of family and home. In Chapter 1, “I Want to be Free! Civil and Political Rights,” the authors bring up strategies for survival before 1989, including avoidance of politics. A narrator recalled: “So you tried not to get involved in public life, keep away from activism of any kind, and if they forced you, you tried to wiggle out of it” (20). Chapter 2, “Transforming the Family in Socialism,” presents parents’ efforts to teach children to recognize and maintain lines between private and public spheres. One narrator related how she discussed Tomáš Masaryk with her children at home, but warned them “not to talk about it anywhere” (59); another described “a double life: that you must say one thing at home and something else in public” (60).

Chapter 3, “Friends and Others: How Czechs Evaluate Foreigners and Foreign Countries,” analyzes Czech evaluations of the west and the east during the Cold War. It reveals narrators’ appreciation for differences between propaganda about life outside Czechoslovakia and reality, pragmatic avoidance of politics for the sake of travel and work opportunities, and a blinkered conclusion that life in Czechoslovakia “was not as bad as in other places” (79). Chapter 4, “Education—Gateway to Success,” contains evidence of the great importance many Czechs attached to schooling, showing a variety of narrators’ educational experiences, including fun times, regrets about not working harder, and restricted study opportunities for young people whose families were not in the Party’s good graces.

Throughout the book, Vaněk and Mücke compare narrators’ memories of the socialist period to their evaluations of politics and everyday life since the Velvet Revolution, with the socialist past often viewed more favorably than the era of

renewed democracy. Chapter 5, “From Mandatory Employment to Unemployment,” reveals some narrators appreciating pre-1989 job security and expressing anxiety about work and well-being under capitalism when “you’re scared of losing your job” and there is “the terrible and ever widening gap between the rich and the poor” (141). Chapter 6, “The Meaning of Free Time: Work, Family, and Leisure,” shows that Czechs frequently enjoyed life and felt content before 1989, although they also appreciate expanded post-socialist leisure offerings, including more foreign-travel opportunities. Chapter 7, “Us and Them,” evaluates narrators’ perceptions of elites before and after “the crack,” with post-socialist political and economic leaders criticized for corruption, self-enrichment and, to quote from one interview, the perpetuation of “a situation where people would rather keep their mouths shut, and as I said, they put blinders on and keep going” (197).

Two appendices appear at the book’s end. One discusses the documentary photographer Jindřich Štreit, the creator of images in the volume of ordinary people during state socialism. The other lists all narrators with brief biographies. An appendix reproducing questions guiding the interviews could be helpful for readers wishing to learn more about oral-history methodologies. One expects better editing from Oxford University Press. The book’s main conclusions will not be new to experts in Czech history, although the evidentiary base is novel and important. The voices and memories that Vaněk and Mücke so carefully heard and preserved give this work a rare and special human multi-dimensionality, and enhance appreciation of oral history and non-tangible heritage.

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Whose Memory? Which Future? Remembering Ethnic Cleansing and Lost Cultural Diversity in Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe. Ed. Barbara Törnquist-Plewa. *Studies in Contemporary European History*, Vol. 18. New York: Berghahn Books, 2016. viii, 233 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$95.00, hard bound.

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The edited volume *Whose Memory? Which Future?* is comprised of seven chapters that theorize the formation of collective memory about mass violence in eastern, central, and southeastern Europe, with an excellent introduction and concluding chapter by volume editor Barbara Törnquist-Plewa. The book grew out from a research project at Lund University, enabling relatively consistent analysis of six different cases from Poland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Croatia, and Bosnia.

The book itself is the best argument in favor of comparative work in memory studies. The same research question, namely “how does the present day population relate to the memory of ethnic cleansing and the cultural heritage of the people that vanished?” (4), was addressed using different methods, sources, and disciplines, revealing complex memory dynamics *vis-à-vis* the Second World War (with the exception of Bosnia case). The research project’s multidisciplinary is an advantage rather than weakness of the book. It enables the reader to critically examine comparative advantages of different approaches, for example participant observation, skillfully used by Dragan Nikolić. It also provides a more intimate understanding of memory activism in Višegrad, compared to interviews with Wrocław’s inhabitants, which enable an insight into dynamics between individual and collective memory formation. Similarly, use of different sources such as urban landscapes, historiographical