



The Legacy and Memory of Communism in Europe

Workshop organized by EURHISTXX
European Network on Contemporary History
Réseau européen d'histoire du temps présent
(GDRE-CNRS)

17 December 2007

The workshop will be held at :

Institut historique allemand de Paris
Hotel Duret de Chevry
8 rue du Parc Royal
75003 Paris
metro : Chemin Vert ou Saint-Paul



Institut d'histoire du temps présent



9:15 - 13:00: CHAIR: **Martin Conway** (University of Oxford)

9:00 - 9:15: Welcome of the participants

9:15 - 10h:15:

Henry Rousso (Institut d'histoire du temps présent, CNRS, Paris), *Introduction*

Paweł Machcewicz (Institute of Political Studies, Warsaw), *On the Polish way of coming to terms with the Legacy of Communism*

Peter Apor (Central European University, Budapest), *Eurocommunism. Commemorating Communism in Contemporary Eastern Europe*

10:15 - 11:00: Discussion

11:00 - 11:20: Coffee break

11:20 - 12:00:

Thomas Lindenberger (Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung, Potsdam), *(N)ostalgia and the Search for Reconciliation: About Germany's Cinematic Ways to Memorialize Communism*

Philippe Buton (Université de Reims), *The Memory of Communism in France*

12:00 - 13:00: Discussion

13:00 - 14:30: Buffet

14:30 - 17:30: CHAIRS: **Pieter Lagrou** (Université libre de Bruxelles)

Dariusz Sztola (Institute of Political Studies, Warsaw)

14:30 - 15:10:

Tzvetan Todorov (Centre national de la recherche scientifique, Paris), *On Relativizing Evil? The Memory of the two Totalitarianisms in the 1990s.*

Maria Ferretti (Università della Tuscia, Viterbo), *La mémoire russe du communisme*

15:10 - 15:30: Coffee Break

15:30 - 17:15: General Discussion

17:15 - 17:30: **John Home** (Trinity College Dublin), *Conclusion*

According to a current trend in social sciences, in politics, in arts and literature, contemporaries societies are living in an “Age of memory”, an “Era of the witness”. They have developed a “culture of remembrance”. Public consciousness centers on the memories of recent history’s traumas. Oblivion, amnesia, official repressing or “taboos” over the past are, more and more, denounced. The figure of the victim has progressively replaced the figure of the hero.

But is this true for all the major historical episodes of the 20th century ? Have we reached such a high level of “homogenized” memory all over Europe ? Can we perceive an equivalent attention to the legacy of all totalitarian regimes or to all mass crimes and major assaults on human rights in recent European or global history ? Does European economic and political integration mean a common European memory that shares all the history of the “Dark Continent”?

If we look at the memory and the legacy of Communism in Europe, especially after 1989-1991 the answer is probably not. There is obviously a difference between the tremendous and necessary attention brought to the memory of Fascism and Nazism as major breaks in recent history, or to the memory of the Holocaust, a central issue in European contemporary culture, or even the memory of Slavery and Colonialism on the one hand, and the attention brought to the communist experiences, on the other hand. There is no consensus either on the criminal dimension of the Soviet regime and its death toll, nor on the way we must analyse the Communist system as a whole, some historians emphasizing the great differences in time and space, others focusing on its structural unity and coherence. Nor is there any consensus either on the comparison between totalitarian regimes.

This workshop would like to propose a discussion on how to evaluate what remains alive, what has been forgotten or ignored about this central experience of the 20th century, in European politics and societies. It focuses less on the history of Communism as such than on its memory and legacy within European societies since 1989. It will analyze the split between Eastern and Western perceptions of Communism as a historical process or the differences inside each former “bloc”. It will pay attention not only to traumatic memories, but to all forms of remembering and representing the past, including nostalgia, silences, revisionisms or denying, etc.

The workshop is intended not only for specialists of Communism but for all social scientists who wish to discuss the current place of Communist experience(s) in European recent history. It is organized by EURHISTXX, a new network and *Groupe de recherche européen* (GDRE-CNRS), dedicated to the *Europeanization* of contemporary history, and currently conducting an international project on the history of post-war periods (1918-1945-1989).



Central European University - Center for Historical studies (Hungary)



Institut d'histoire du temps présent (France)



Nederlands Institute for War documentation (The Netherlands)



Polskiej Akademii Nauk (Poland)



Università di Bologna (Italy)



Université libre de Bruxelles (Belgium)



University of Dublin - Trinity College (Ireland)



University of Edinburgh (Scotland)



University of Oxford - Faculty of History (United Kingdom)



Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam (Germany)