

Chapter 13

Uneasy Heritage: Remembering Everyday Life in Post-Socialist Memorials and Museums

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Introduction

The collapse of state socialism in 1989 meant the end of dictatorial rule in Central and Eastern Europe, a gradual transition to liberal democratic structures and, for several Eastern European nations, integration into the European Union. State socialism and the division of Europe were a thing of the past; however, the past continued and continues to cast its shadow over the present. Historical legacies remain in economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. In the early 1990s, economic and infrastructural recovery was the first priority for many post-socialist citizens and elites. Indeed, some would have preferred to draw a line under the state socialist era, in which they had often been active or complicit in repressive measures or the maintenance of dictatorial power. On the other hand, the victims of state repression demanded recognition, compensation, and the punishment of those responsible for human rights abuses.

Moreover, memories of repression were not the only things enduring from more than 40 years of authoritarian rule: the material culture of the past regime was also left behind, not only in public spaces—statues, official buildings—but also in the form of everyday objects associated with state socialism. As the website of the GDR Museum in Berlin announced prior to its opening, “the spirit of an epoch is not just reflected in pictures and books, but also in pots and frying pans” (Arnold-de Simone 2011, p. 105). As the initial euphoria following the revolutions of 1989 has given way to the realities of the market economy—price rises, mass unemployment, and more visible criminality—these everyday objects have acquired increased significance as markers of identity. Nostalgia for the apparent securities of the state socialist era is rife in the region (Light 2000b, p. 158). A recent survey suggested that 53% of Romanians, for example, would support a return to state socialist rule

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despite the fact that the Ceaușescu regime had been one of the most brutal in the region (Ziare.com 2012). A survey conducted amongst German school pupils in 2007 indicated that young Germans—particularly young eastern Germans—are reluctant to characterize the GDR as a dictatorship (Schroeder and Deutz-Schroeder 2009). Nostalgia also has, in the German context at least, been described as an “identity of defiance,” that is, a response to the perceived colonization of the East by the West and the definition of what kind of society the GDR was from without (Cooke 2005, p. 8). While we should be cautious to equate remembrance of the everyday with nostalgia for the East per se (Saunders and Pinfold 2012, p. 5), Blum sees the rapid increase in the consumption of East German goods shortly after unification as evidence that these everyday items are functioning as signifiers of a “group identity for their former consumers” (2000, p. 231)—an identity that is based on a rejection of “an increasingly unified Western consumer society that does not acknowledge and value the fundamental otherness of those who grew up and lived under a socialist system” (Blum 2000, p. 242).

My interest in this chapter is, however, not with consumer practices but with the institutionalization of state socialist heritage—particularly of the everyday consumer items that we might associate with the popular memory of this era. I want to consider if and how post-socialist governments in Romania, Hungary, and Germany are willing to incorporate this aspect of state socialist culture into state mandated heritage institutions¹—notably sites of public history such as memorials and museums. Steven Hoelscher argues that “questions of politics lie at the core of heritage. Such could hardly be otherwise, for debates about the past always occur within a larger socio-cultural framework, leading discussion of heritage eventually to a consideration of power” (2006, p. 206). An important part of this power is the ability to shape collective remembering and, in turn, national conceptions of the self. In this context, Duncan Light states that, through tourism, Central and Eastern European “countries are seeking to affirm that they have departed from state socialism” (2001, p. 1054). While this seems correct in principal, this chapter argues that post-socialist identities are multiple and multifaceted not only across the region but also within the nation, and that state-mandated strategies to contain these alternative identities exist in uneasy dialogue with variant interpretations of recent history as well as with the expectations of the international visitor.

Such alternative post-socialist identities are based not only on present difference in terms of gender, class, and ethnicity but also on divergent experiences of the state socialist period itself. Exploration of this complexity can therefore contribute to broader discussion of heritage management and its relationship with individual memories and collective memory politics.² An important part of this is the role of popular culture or the everyday in the (re)construction of national identities after moments of transition. It is at such moments that heritage policy frequently functions to (re)define those aspects of the past that are worthy of remembrance and

¹ I take the term “state-mandated” in reference to heritage from Beattie 2011, who attributes the concept to Sabine Moller.

² For an overview, see Benton 2010.

representation and those that are “unmemorable”—that is, “well-known and shared by many individuals at the same time, but wrapped in silence; present in the mind, but hidden from view” (Vukov 2008, p. 312). Sharon Macdonald notes that “one of the most important accomplishments of heritage is to turn the past from something that is simply there, or has merely happened, into an arena from which selections can be made and values derived” (2013, p. 18). Twenty-five years after the transition from authoritarianism to liberal democracy we can observe some of the processes of conflict, negotiation, and dialogue that determine, to paraphrase Macdonald, which aspects of “the past” will become “The Past” (2013, p. 18).

Romania

The first context I will consider is that of post-socialist Romania. In 2010, I toured the capitals of Central and Eastern Europe in an effort to determine how the state socialist past was being refracted in different national contexts. What struck me in Bucharest was the absence of any central museum or memorial dedicated to the history of state socialism or to the victims of Ceaușescu’s particularly authoritarian regime. Although a museum of Communism located in Romania’s capital city has since been proposed by four representatives of the Liberal Democratic Party (PDL), the suggestion was rejected in April 2013 by the Chamber of Deputies (Zachmann 2013). A survey conducted in 2010 demonstrated that 51 % of Romanians would be in favor of such a museum—a split that has been interpreted variously as indicative of divided opinion (Ciocoiu 2013), popular support for the initiative (Bogdan 2013), and a sign that “only half of the population is in agreement with the opening of the museum” (Arun 2013).³ What is clear, however, is that the idea of a central Bucharest-based museum dedicated to the state socialist period remains contentious at both an elite and popular level.

This tension between the expectations of the “commie tourist” (Diener and Hagen 2013, p. 489)—as which I might identify myself—and the heritage on display in Bucharest is also noted by Light (2000a, 2000b, 2001). Light (2000a, p. 157, 2000b, p. 171, 2001) observes that even at the Palace of the Parliament (*Palatul Parlamentului*)—conceived by Ceaușescu and one of the most monumental pieces of state socialist architecture—visitors are given little if any information about the building’s history. The focus instead is on Romanian craftsmanship and the site’s contemporary use as the locus of parliamentary democracy.

There is also no exhibition on state socialism in the Natural History Museum, which ends its narrative of Romanian history in the 1920s (Light 2000a, p. 156; Stan 2013, p. 216). Light (2000a, pp. 154–156; 2000b, p. 171; 2001) sees this as evidence of a desire in Romania to forget the experience of state socialism in favor of a new national identity based on a “return” to (Western) Europe and pluralist democracy. Indeed, Romania has been slow to address the legacy of state socialism

³ Unless otherwise stated, all translations from German and Romanian are my own.

at political, judicial, and cultural levels. The continuation in positions of power of leading Communists after 1989, and particularly under Ion Iliescu until 1996, meant that transitional justice measures—lustration, opening the Securitate files, property restitution, truth commissions—were not enacted until several years after the revolution and were inconsistent, unstable, and contested (González-Enríquez 2001; Stan 2013).

Nonetheless, the situation is perhaps rather more complex than Light suggests. Post-socialist identities are not only “fluid, unstable and sometimes fragile” (Light 2000b, p. 173), they are also plural and evolving: where some would prefer to forget, others assert the importance of remembrance. Civil society groups, often constituted of victims of the former regime, have erected a large number of monuments and memorials around the country (Cristea and Radu-Bucurenci 2008, pp. 281–286; Stan 2013, p. 218). Since 1993, the Civic Academy Foundation runs the Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Resistance on the site of a former political prison in Sighetu Marmăției on the Ukrainian border (Cristea and Radu-Bucurenci 2008, pp. 297–303; Mark 2010, pp. 69–74; Stan 2013, pp. 216–218). In May 2013, the Sighet Memorial permanent exhibition space was opened in Bucharest: on the Sighet website this event is described as “striking, because it proved that Sighet does exist, despite the absurd canard propagated by the press, according to which Romania ‘has no museum of communism’” (Memorial Sighet 2013). In Timișoara, the Association Memorial of the Revolution has founded a documentation center and a series of memorials dotted around the city. Both sites have achieved a certain degree of state recognition: the memorial in Sighet was established as a national historical site in 1997 and the complex in Timișoara in 2000. Moreover, there were reportedly plans to extend the memorial headquarters in Timișoara into a Museum of the Revolution by the end of 2014 (Iedu 2013; Panduru 2012). The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania and the Memory of the Romanian Exile not only has played a central role in the recent charges of crimes against humanity brought against former prison head Alexandru Vișinescu and labor camp commander Ion Ficior, it is also aiming to develop memorial museums in prisons in Jilava and Râmnicu Sărat (see <http://www.iicr.ro/en/>). From September 2013, visitors to Târgoviște, 70 kilometers northwest of Bucharest, can view the barracks where the Ceaușescu couple was held before their execution (Ciocoiu 2013).

However, these sites are firmly dedicated to the victims of state socialism, those who died in the revolution that overthrew the Ceaușescu regime, or, in the case of Târgoviște, the fatal end of the dictator himself. What about those whose post-socialist identities are founded not on repression and control but rather on everyday life? Where can one find their memories represented in the capital? The legacy—or even heritage—of state socialism is not only that of monumental buildings and sites of repression but also the everyday experiences of life under authoritarianism, including its material culture. The visitor to Bucharest—and indeed the Romanian citizen—will have to search hard to find this aspect of the socialist past. In terms of state-supported sites, perhaps the closest we might come is the small—and easily missed—permanent exhibition in the basement of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant (*Muzeul Țăranului Român*), formerly the History Museum of

the Communist Party and Revolutionary and Democratic Movement of Romania (Cristea and Radu-Bucurenci 2008, p. 286). Here, the visitor can view a collection of Lenin and Stalin busts, portraits of Communist leaders, newspaper clippings, original documents, photographs, cartoon strips, and objects representing the history of collectivization.⁴

Although this exhibition—with the title “The Plague” (*Ciuma*)—might be interpreted as a representation of the everyday life of the Romanian peasant under (the early years of) state socialism, this would be to ignore the evident focus on repression and state intervention (Cristea and Radu-Bucurenci 2008, p. 293). Despite the proliferation of “communist kitsch” (Cristea and Radu-Bucurenci 2008, p. 294), this exhibition clearly is *not* about popular material culture. Moreover, it is situated in the context of an ethnographic museum that seeks to present the life of the Romanian peasant as the epitome of “traditional man” (Cristea and Radu-Bucurenci 2008, p. 292). In contrast, as Cristea and Radu-Bucurenci (2008, p. 293) note, the exhibition on state socialism is placed explicitly within history and, thereby, excluded from the museum’s narrative about “timeless” Romanian national traditions.⁵ In a number of ways, this lacuna in cultural representation of state socialist legacies mirrors official discourse, and, in particular, the narrative constructed in the 2006 report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania. As Tileaga notes, “the report [...] seems to be proposing a specific method of reasoning about society, history and memory that constitutes communism as Other, not ‘us.’ The narrative of Communism is not self-condemnatory or self-blaming, but rather Communism is distanced from (the national) self” (2012, p. 471).

Hungary

A comparable treatment of everyday life and material culture under state socialism can be seen in the city of Budapest’s House of Terror (*Terror Háza*). Built with the support of right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, and “one of the most controversial Hungarian cultural institutions” (Rátz 2006, p. 246), the narrative attached to the displays construct the national self as both victim and heroic resister of an ideology imposed from without (Horváth 2008, p. 271; Jones 2011, p. 104; Kerékgyártó 2006, p. 302; Mark 2010, pp. 66–67). This reflects the political rhetoric of the ruling party, Fidesz, whose anti-Communist narrative constructed socialists as “not fully Hungarian,” but as “national traitors who had allied themselves with an ‘eastern ideology’” (Mark 2010, p. 9). The section “Life under Communism” permits little

⁴ Details of the exhibition are taken from field notes made during a visit to the museum in August 2010. The description of the exhibition is based on its features at this time.

⁵ See also Mark 2010, p. 90. Light (2001, p. 1068) notes that the history of state socialism is also bracketed in narratives attached to the Palace of the Parliament, with a direct line being drawn from Romania’s pre-war democracy to its post-socialist political system.

room for normality: Party ideology is described as spreading “its tentacles over the economy, cultural life, education and daily life”.⁶ Indeed, Rátz argues that “the House of Terror is not a real museum in the general understanding of the term,” (2006, p. 247) because it displays only a relatively limited number of authentic objects from the represented period. Instead, it is perhaps better described as an institution of political education or, in the words of Horváth “a memorial representation with a teleological function, whose main purpose is the affirmation and confirmation of a political identity” (2008, p. 270). Once again, although the focus here is on life under state socialism, the emphasis is on a particular aspect of that life, and it is principally not a museum of material culture.

Neither, it might be argued, is the second site in Budapest that represents the legacy of state socialism, and which I wish to discuss further here: the Memento Statue Park (*Szoborpark*) situated in the suburbs of the city. Memento Park is the new home of the socialist-era statues that were once located in the center of the capital. Designed by architect Ákos Eleőd under the title “One Sentence about Tyranny,” the site has the double task “to call forth the atmosphere of dictatorship and to simultaneously provide the opportunity for this to be processed and critically analyzed” (Réthly 2010, p. 4). These monolithic monuments and statues are not perhaps that which first springs to mind when we think of popular material culture. However, as the back cover of the visitor’s guide informs us, the statues were once “the well-accustomed apparatus of the ‘living socialism’, and a part of the everyday life of millions” (Réthly 2010; see also Light 2000, p. 169). Moreover, the site’s shop, the “Red Star Store,” caters to the visitor in search of Communist kitsch through the sale of:

Soviet souvenirs, watches, flasks, lighters and other personal items. Fun T-shirts, mugs, postcards and posters decorated with the faces or slogans of the “wise men” of communism. Model tractors, Lenin-candles, authentic household items, retro souvenirs of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, Revolutionary music and military songs, Red Army medals, posters, books, the era’s most successful films and documentaries on DVD as well as lots of other interesting things. (Réthly 2010, p. 56)

The Statue Park thus combines play through the remembrance of material culture with a somber message about the nature of state socialism, which is described in the visitor guide as a “totalitarian” political system (Réthly 2010, p. 4). This combination of light-hearted and serious engagement is also promoted by the positioning of the statues. The visitor can touch, mimic, sit, or lie on the monuments, allowing a sense of mockery and fun in the park but simultaneously highlighting the dissolution of the authoritarian regime they represent and thereby legitimizing the democratic system that followed it. This ambivalence is perhaps best reflected in the visitor guide’s designation of the site as “a historical era theme park where everyone will be able to learn about the history of the era represented” (Réthly 2010, p. 5).

Moreover, the absence of any textual narrative attached to the statues and monuments directly (other than text originally part of the object) means that the visitors are guided by the spatial layout of the site but are nonetheless relatively free in their

⁶ The description of the exhibition is based on material gathered during a visit in August 2010.

interpretation (James 2005, p. 34). This reflects the aim of the designer to highlight the benefits of democracy as the only political system that provides “the opportunity for us to think freely about dictatorship, or about democracy, come to that, or about anything” (Réthly 2010, p. 6). The architect explicitly claims these objects—and the political system they represent—as “a part of the history of Hungary” (Réthly 2010, p. 6), which the democratic system allows us to remember in all its ambivalence and complexity. This might, therefore, permit space for the plurality and fluidity of post-socialist identities and a multiple (re)appropriation of these objects by different remembering groups. As James argues, the Statue Park “is postmodern in that it is a polysemic collage/montage, where bits and pieces of the Communist past provide the raw material for countless possible narratives” (2005, p. 26).

However, Horváth (2008, p. 264) notes that this relatively open approach to state socialist heritage is no longer favored by the Hungarian government: “whereas [...] the House of Terror benefited from exceptionally generous government funding, the unfinished and deteriorating Statue Park barely scrapes by” (see also Kerékgyártó 2006, pp. 299–300). Furthermore, the position of the park on the outskirts of the city removes the significance the statues might have had as presentations of national heritage had they remained in central locations (Light 2000, p. 168; Williams 2008, p. 190). The situation of the park in the suburbs of Budapest along with the brick walls and wire fences that mark the park’s boundaries also can be viewed as “symbolically [segregating] communism from the flow of everyday life” (James 2005, p. 32). This excludes, or contains, the monuments and the memories they might evoke and can therefore be related to a presentation of Hungarian identity, in which the ideology of Communism no longer has a place (James 2005, p. 32; Williams 2008, p. 193). Moreover, through their increasing significance as sites of “ironic consumption by international visitors,” it has been argued that the focus, in fact, becomes “the triumph of capitalism over communism” (Nadkarni in Sayner 2011, pp. 145–146; see also Horváth 2008, p. 273; James 2005, p. 33), and not nuanced reflection on complex histories.⁷ This sheds a different light on the objects of material culture available in the Red Star Store: rather than being emblematic of an alternative political system which failed, but in which many believed, the commodification of the symbols and artifacts of the former regime emphasizes the victory of one ideology over another.

Germany

This commodification of state socialist material culture is perhaps seen at its most extreme in post-socialist eastern Germany. Following an initial rejection of East German material culture and in the context of high unemployment and a sense of Western colonization, Germany saw “a general flowering of things eastern” (Bach 2002, p. 546)—including East German theme parties, an Ostcafé in East Berlin and

⁷ For an alternative interpretation, see Sayner 2011, p. 146.

the sale of numerous objects in the image of the now-famous East German “traffic-light man.” This became part of what is known as “Ostalgie,” a term that encompasses both a longing for the securities of the socialist past and the ironic consumption of eastern products by westerners and easterners alike (Bach 2002, p. 546).

The revalorization of the material culture of the GDR also has been reflected in the heritage landscape of the united Germany. Since 1990, a number of exhibitions of everyday life in East Germany have sprung up around the country, the largest and most well-known of which is the DDR Museum in Berlin (Arnold-de Simone 2011, pp. 103–107). Smaller displays in the eastern districts present collections of consumer goods from the GDR, often without any overarching political, social or cultural concept or narrative (Ludwig 2011, pp. 44–45; Zündorf 2012, p. 99). With the exception of the Documentation Centre of Everyday Culture in the GDR (*Dokumentationszentrum Alltagskultur der DDR*) in Eisenhüttenstadt (Arnold-de Simone 2011, pp. 101–03; Ludwig 2011, pp. 49–50), which is in fact underpinned by a well-founded museological conception, these sites are privately funded (Zündorf 2012, pp. 98–99). The Documentation Centre itself is at risk due to recent uncertainty relating to the funding contribution of the city government (Rennefanz 2012).

Indeed, the representation of the everyday and material culture of the GDR has not formed a significant part of the heritage policy of the united Germany. Mary Fulbrook commented in 2007 that only 80% of the former population of the GDR was represented in museums and memorials in Berlin. Leading officials and prominent intellectuals were, according to Fulbrook, overrepresented at the expense of the “middle level” of society (Großbölting 2010, p. 35). This seemed set to change at least partially following the publication of the most recent edition of the Federal Memorial Concept of 2008. The concept—which lays out the criteria for public financial support of memorials and museums relating to Germany’s National Socialist and state socialist pasts—recommended the inclusion of “everyday life in the GDR” in state-funded museums and memorials “in order to counteract decisively the distortion and trivialization of the SED dictatorship and all forms of ‘Ostalgie’” (Deutscher Bundestag 2008, p. 9).

It is clear, however, as this quotation illustrates, that any representation of material culture in state-mandated heritage sites must be firmly situated in the context of the GDR as an authoritarian—or, in this view, totalitarian—dictatorship. This is a particular inflection of the term “everyday life,” which aims to show that the SED was able “to infiltrate ideologically people’s lives in all areas” (Deutscher Bundestag 2008, p. 9). The Memorial Concept itself—alongside the numerous judicial, political, and cultural efforts to deal with the legacy of dictatorship carried out since 1989 (see, e.g., Bruce 2009; McAdams 2001; Müller 2001)—highlights the fact that the Federal Republic has not shied away from addressing its recent past. However, even here, the state socialist dictatorship is constructed as “other,” as the second dictatorship on German soil whose ideology was fundamentally at odds with the current liberal democratic system and national self-understanding. Revival of totalitarian theory in the 1990s—also reflected in the Memorial Concept—allowed the delegitimization of the GDR as an alternative political system through comparison

or even equation with the Nazi dictatorship (Brie 1994; Fritze 2006; Ross 2002, p. 19) and leaving very little space for “normal” life (Fulbrook 2004, 2005, 2007).

Concretely, the Memorial Concept names four sites in relation to the history of the “everyday”: the Forum for Contemporary History in Leipzig (*Zeitgeschichtliches Forum*), the German Historical Museum in Berlin (*Deutsches Historisches Museum*), the House of History of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn (*Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*), the Documentation Centre in Eisenhüttenstadt and two sites that were, in 2008, in planning: the Palace of Tears (*Tränenpalast*) at the former border crossing station on Friedrichstraße in Berlin, and an exhibition in the Kulturbrauerei in the Berlin district Prenzlauer Berg (Deutscher Bundestag 2008, pp. 9–10). It is to the first of these two that I will turn my attention here.

Opened in September 2011 under the heading “Border Experiences: The Everyday of German Division,” the exhibition in the Palace of Tears—so-called because it was where loved ones from East and West had to say their goodbyes—comprises “biographical examples, 570 objects and 30 media stations” with the aim of showing “the German everyday in regard to division and borders” (Haus der Geschichte 2012). The information pamphlet advertising the exhibition similarly promises “dramatic and everyday real-life stories” (Haus der Geschichte 2013). Thus, material culture is indeed on display here: the visitor can view objects relating not only to the border regime itself—warning signs, uniforms, “propaganda bombs”⁸—but also objects individuals left behind in their flight to West Berlin or associated with the stories of couples and families divided by the Berlin Wall. These objects are, for the most part, accompanied by first-person testimony explaining their significance or use and situating the object in the context of the individual’s experience of the Berlin Wall and German division.

In many respects, it is, in fact, these personalized stories that represent the aspect of the “everyday” in the title of the exhibition. These individual accounts of “ordinary” people in the GDR are brought together in what I have described elsewhere as a “mediated remembering community”—a group of individuals who appear to remember together, but whose community is in fact constructed in a particular medium and which does not exist outside of that medium (Jones 2012). This grouping allows the different narratives to overlap, support, and authenticate each other, and suggests that individual experience is collective shared experience. This exhibition is, in this regard, using authentic objects coupled with first-person narratives to represent a very specific interpretation of the “everyday” that allows it to be absorbed into the dominant representation of the GDR as totalitarian dictatorship. Everyday life here is not used in the understanding of the term as popular material culture but as the extraordinary experiences of ordinary people. The Berlin Wall, crossing the border between East and West, and saying goodbye to loved ones living on the other

⁸ Leaflets encased in a metal container, which was fired across the Berlin Wall. Details of the exhibition are taken from field notes made during visits to the museum in August 2012, and February and August 2013.

side of the divide were not, after all, experiences that most former citizens would have encountered regularly and repeatedly.

In this way, the Federal government has simultaneously made moves to incorporate the lived experiences of a broader range of former GDR citizens and yet positioned popular culture within its interpretation of East Germany as a totalitarian dictatorship. A somewhat different approach has been taken in the exhibition in the Kulturbrauerei opened in November 2013 under the management of the House of History and focusing explicitly on everyday life in the GDR. The display incorporates 800 objects as well as 200 documents and audio-visual recordings, and includes consumer items and articles from areas of life such as work and school: material culture thus forms an important part of the design⁹. In his review of the exhibition, Ensikat (2013) suggests that this approach reflects the memories of those who lived their lives in the East German state: “Whoever lived through it [the GDR], occasionally feels rather strange [in the exhibition]: Have they just forgotten to conserve me in formaldehyde?” Nonetheless, an article in the House of History’s magazine reveals that the designers in fact aimed to use similar strategies to those seen in the Palace of Tears to contain popular heritage. The author, Ulrike Zander, asserts that the GDR “did not only consist of the Sandman, Spreewald gherkins and idyllic dacha” (Zander 2011). She opposes the “trivialisation” of the dictatorship—represented perhaps by these objects of everyday life—with the “reality” that the exhibition portrays (Zander 2011). Indeed, in reviews published immediately after the opening of the site, journalists point towards the repeated thematization in the display of the intrusion of the SED and the state into the private lives of GDR citizens (Ensikat 2013; Kaden 2013; Kliemann, 2013; Walter 2013).

Conclusion

To bring these disparate contexts together, I would like to argue that nearly 25 years after the end of state socialism, post-socialist governments have an uneasy relationship with the material culture of the previous regime. Different strategies are used to contain the everyday objects that might form the focus of nostalgia, but these strategies exist in dialogue with multifaceted post-socialist identities and with the expectations of the international tourist.

In Bucharest, the state socialist past is excluded almost completely from state-mandated institutions. Where it is included, it is bracketed off from the history of the nation and represented as alien to national culture. As argued by Light (2000a, 2000b, 2001), here it is perhaps the “communist heritage tourists” who most disrupt the efforts to contain history as they actively seek representations of the political “other.” Nonetheless, the numerous memorials and sites of remembrance founded by victims of the regime, and gradually receiving state recognition in shifting po-

⁹ Details of the exhibition are taken from field notes made during a visit to the museum in July 2014. The description of the exhibition is based on its features at this time.

litical environments, also challenge any efforts towards silence and point towards a dialogue between state and civil society. Indeed, if we understand the Communist heritage tourist as a kind of “dark tourist” (Sharpley 2009a), it is these two groups—victims and tourists—who drive the efforts towards memorialization in this context. That yet other visions of the past exist within the Romanian population itself was demonstrated by a temporary exhibition displayed in 2004 in a gallery in Bucharest. The display, designed by the anthropologist Gabriele Cristea under the title “Domestic Red” (*Roșu domestic*), and presented as part of the Biennial of Young Artists, was devoted to representing the domestic space of the era. It included objects ranging from tooth paste and egg-cups to an abortion kit (Cristea 2004; Iancu 2004). Cristea (2004) stated that she envisioned the representation of domestic space as complementary to the public space seen in the Sighet memorial—again indicating a dialogue between different forms of remembering.

In Hungary, material culture is, in the major national museum representing the state socialist period, embedded within a firmly anti-Communist narrative of repression and terror, which does not permit any space for normality. On the other hand, the Statue Park exists as a potentially pluralistic interpretation of Communist heritage, which might challenge the singular narrative of the House of Terror. Nonetheless, its focus on play perhaps risks a commodification of the past and an assertion of the victory of capitalism, rather than allowing space for alternative post-socialist identities. A similar mode of remembering can be seen in the Marxim café in the centre of the city: it is decorated with state socialist memorabilia and the Lonely Planet Budapest City Guide describes this eatery as “a joke that is now two decades old and kinda not funny” (Lonely Planet 2009, p. 128).

It is perhaps in Germany, where East and West meet within one state, that the process of dialogue is most apparent. Initial exclusion of state socialist heritage in official memorial policy was challenged by private initiatives—described by an expert commission set up to review public history of the GDR as “uncritical collections of the GDR everyday” (Sabrow et al. 2007, p. 35). The commission, along with the Memorial Concept that followed it, responded to this by calling for the incorporation of everyday life into state-mandated representations, in order to situate these memories within the context of the dictatorship. As we have seen, this has sometimes meant a quite specific (re)interpretation of the “everyday” to mean the extraordinary experiences of ordinary people. In a democratic museum landscape, moreover, these state representations continue to exist alongside private exhibitions which present a different view on the past and, in the case of the DDR Museum in Berlin at least, are very successful and a great draw for international tourists (Arnold-de Simine 2011, p. 104).

Indeed, this process of negotiation, contestation, and dialogue in the three countries is an important marker of the transition to democracy, in which there cannot and should not be a singular narrative about the national past. However, it also demonstrates the highly politicized nature of these representations and the strategies used, nonetheless, to contain certain memories. As Sharpley notes:

For any event, for any “past,” recent or distant, there is no single story or interpretation, but new or alternative interpretations [...] there are frequently multiple stakeholders in the

heritage of past events [...]. Therefore, the particular interpretation of the past may create an “inheritance” for one group of stakeholders, the inevitable outcome of which is the “disinheritance” of other stakeholders. (2009b, p. 150)

Post-socialist heritage managers and policy makers thus risk disinheriting certain groups—be it victims, perpetrators, fellow travelers, or ordinary citizens—if they do not make efforts to represent and interpret the divergent memories of these individuals. In this respect, I see the recent developments in Germany to be a positive step in the management of heritage “dissonance” (Sharpley 2009b, p. 151). But it remains to be seen if the presentation of the everyday will respond to or seek to contain such alternative visions of history.

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