

Editorial

The political and economic changes accompanying the determination of Soviet/socialist regimes in East and Central Europe led to radical alterations in people's everyday lives. A new and specific environment emerged and conformation with and merging into it was not dependent on political beliefs of individuals, as a person who lives in a particular society cannot ignore its system indefinitely. People acquired skills to cope with the rules, practices and strategies of the state and its organs, at the same time adjusting and/or confronting their own strategies and practices to them. In the course of time the latter became normal and accepted daily behavioural routines.

Because of ideological and political reasons the so-called "everyday socialist life" never captured due academic attention in East and Central Europe, even when the "necessity" to describe it was ideologically prescribed to scholars as early as in the 1950s. Later on the analysis of everyday culture has been hindered by lack of distance and the inevitable emotional bondage with the events. Thus, paradoxically, most of the research on the everyday life in socialist countries originates from Western scholars. In the last decade, with the advent of respective public interest and social demand, the East European researchers have got down to investigation of everyday life of their own countries in the recent past. The present volume of *Pro Ethnologia*, which is initiated by the joint research project of the Department of Ethnology of the University of Tartu and the Estonian National Museum entitled "Strategies and Practices of Everyday Life in Soviet Estonia" (Estonian Science Foundation, Grant No. 5322), introduces the respective research on everyday life in socialism and post-socialism in Latvia, Poland and Estonia.

Besides the growing interest in everyday processes under socialism, another common feature of this volume is the biographical perspective on it. As Baiba Bela-Krūmiņa observes in her article, the study of everyday life is an excellent field for the biographical method: "Individual cases are rich in detail and they provide a comprehensive understanding about a particular period in time." There are also other reasons for focusing on private life-worlds. Even when, under socialism, the "voice from the people" was theoretically valued, it was only

heard when they were speaking with the words that the system had created to describe itself. The experience of sharp separation between the private and public in socialist society resulted in the “biographical boom” after the system had collapsed. As many of the authors point out in this volume, biographical narrating has also its political aspect in contributing to the public discourses about the socialist past. Besides the past, people also have a present and a future towards which the expectations are drawn from the previous experiences.

In the opening article Baiba Bela-Krūmiņa poses a question about the relationship between the private biography and social macro-processes and their reconstruction by studying the narratives of the process of radical social changes – the Stalinist period in post-war Latvia. The author focuses on everyday strategies used in the process of adaptation and construction of continuity, assisting them in identifying as the same people they used to be before the change. Besides active resistance and standing-apart strategies, more hidden, private strategies were developed by people to maintain a stable self-identification such as ethos of work and staying connected to traditions.

Reet Ruusmann takes another approach to the same kind of material. She analyses collectivisation narratives of Stalinist Estonia as images of history, expressions of social memory. She points out how stories about the life in a collective farm are simultaneously reflections upon life on a collective farm as such. By writing down their life stories, the popular autobiographers also make their contribution to the public discussion about the Soviet system.

The following four articles introduce different aspects of everyday life from a period we are used to call “mature socialism” and the transition into post-socialism. This is the time when people tried to make the best use of the system. In the article by Liis Palumets, an attempt is made to differentiate between the life styles formed by the generation of the 1960s, who were born already into the system. Based on Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*, she points out three main groups. First, the technical *intelligentsia* who values economic and professional success as well as active leisure; second, the so called working aristocracy, who enjoy a high economic status and a relatively low cultural capital and who orientate towards prestige and appreciation of horizontal social networks; and, third, the *intelligentsia* whose economic situation is relatively poor but who treasure creativity and identify themselves with education. It is only in the latter, as Liis Palumets argues, that the intergenerational transmission of *habitus* can

be clearly observed. In other groups the connection between life style and social origin is rather negligible which is explicable by the violent social transformation in the post-WWII period in Estonia.

Kirsti Jõesalu discusses a complementary source approach in her analysis of social relations in a career biography of a Soviet civil servant (who belongs to the first group of *habitus* analysed in the previous article). She argues that the advantage of using different biographical sources (in her case, written answers to both a structured questionnaire and an open-ended public call lies in the possibility of analysing social relations on different levels. Whereas a life story usually covers the emotional family relationships, a career biography is organised rather around instrumental connections. The inclusion of the primary relations in the career biography depends much on the narrator, their gender and marital status. By the example of one man's story Kirsti Jõesalu shows the significance of social networks as well as vertical and horizontal relationships in the working life in the ESSR.

Heavy industry and military power had an ideologically and strategically pivotal position in defending and legitimating the Soviet/socialist system. However, besides all that they also framed the life worlds of ordinary people. Tomasz Rakowski's article *Sacrifice and hope. Contemporary ghosts of modernisation* deals with the area of Bełchatów lignite mine – the pride of the socialist Poland and the “front-line of modernisation”, into which people from all over the country started to move in the middle of the seventies. Now the area serves as a perfect laboratory for an anthropologist to study hidden aspects of socialist modernisation and its expressions in a local world-view and everyday practices.

Aida Hachaturyan-Kisilenko poses a retrospective question on *modus vivendi* of a Soviet military garrison in order to understand the transitional experiences of the former Soviet servicemen and their families. She maintains that, for former military people, the life in a garrison meant not only closeness and discipline as a model of Soviet mentality, but also affectionate family life, active social life and social security, which serve as reference points in their contemporary social situation in Estonia.

Pille Runnel in her article gives a more thorough analysis of how experience, originating from the private sphere of individuals, is related to the fundamental transformation in the public sphere. The transformation here is the issue of Estonia's integration into the EU, the main categories underlying the popular discourses on the subject originate

from people's Soviet-time experience. At the beginning of the transition period in Estonia, hygiene became one of the central categories in popular discourse, through which the positive arguments for Europe were presented. Another central category – culture, however, remains an ambivalent concept as well as ambivalent experience on the basis of which both civilisational and survival narratives pro and against the EU are formed.

Also a review of books on the socialist period in Poland by Joanna Bar and a report on the conference on working life under socialism recently held in Tartu gives us a glimpse into what is going on in the field of studying everyday life under socialism. It is certainly a growing domain of research that *Pro Ethnologia* intends to report on in the future as well.

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