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Towards a collective memory of socialism? Grounding the discursive production of Hungarian and Czech post-communist anti-communism

Abstract

In spite of the demise of communism, anti-Communism has become a key competitive political dimension in which current political debates are framed in central-eastern Europe, often under 'democracy-building' justifications. However, post-communist anti-communism is better explained by the motivation of the actors to gain political and moral capital within existing structures. A specific constellation of historical, institutional and transnational conditions have allowed the Czech right to impose a 'regime of truth', whereas in Hungary 'contested memory' prevails.

Keywords: *memory, anti-communism, intellectuals, Hungary, Czech, transnational*

Introduction

In maintaining a discourse on the significance of the memory of socialism in public discourse, the right-wing elite and its associated intelligentsia in Hungary and the Czech Republic have found a competitive political dimension that maintains the momentum of transition and brings dividends in terms of political and moral capital. The right-wing 'memory' intelligentsia frames key and contentious political issues according to attitudes towards the socialist past, while reminding the public of its own role in thwarting a return to 'rule by communists' as well as enhancing its ability to de-legitimise those political rivals which are ideologically or institutionally associated with communism. Far from preventing political contestation, this framing does, however, enhance the ability of certain actors to dominate and set the terms of the debate, and is useful for 'mobilising anger'[1] against those elites which are associated with the communist past. Thus, a completely new form of anti-communism is emerging in the post-communist context; one which differs from dissident anti-communism in its nature and objectives and which is here defined by de-legitimating tendencies against competing democratic alternatives.

Bourdieu claimed that, in the struggle to impose a legitimate vision, agents possess power in proportion to their symbolic capital.[2] The struggle to impose a legitimate vision of the emerging polity follows a set of discursive strategies, but its success depends less on the intrinsic properties of this discourse than on the mobilising power that it exercises – that is, its capacity to gain the recognition of numerous and powerful groups that can identify with its dichotomies and its explicitly or implicitly expressed

1 Ost, D (2005) *Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe* Cornell University Press.
2 Bourdieu, P (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power* Harvard University Press, p. 106.

interests.[3] The attempts of political actors to concentrate the symbolic capital of anti-communism can thus be roughly summarised as a key feature of power consolidation processes in the region which, for the most part, have been an exclusive prerogative of the right. The right has benefited from a moral capital and historical legitimacy that the region's left lacks due to public perceptions of its promiscuity with socialist regimes and its cadres.

These developments are, often, in contrast with the non-communist post-authoritarian experience of other European nations, such as Portugal. After a short post-revolutionary spell in which many radical demands were made, the Portuguese political elite, whether right or left, has not associated the quality of democracy with the intensity of the politics of memory, with alleged nostalgia for the past or with public awareness of the crimes of the previous regime. Central-eastern Europe fundamentally differs from Portugal in that its authoritarian regime is perceived as having been externally imposed. Nevertheless, this begs the question of the actual roots of memory politics and whether the political processes in central-eastern Europe which are often defined as democracy-building actually boil down to attempts at institutionalising a collective memory[4] of socialism for the purposes of national reconstruction. This collective memory is to be internalised by citizens as their own at the expense of more informal, communicative forms of memory which would certainly complicate any endeavours to redefine national identity in terms which are favourable to anti-communist elites. These observations are concurrent with Verdery's assertion that, partly as a result of the dichotomised universe created under communism, the political elites have, from the very early transition period, sought to speak for the entire community of citizens by siding with the nation, legitimising themselves as the true defenders 'of an anti-communist national interest'.[5]

The two primary cases chosen here, the Czech Republic and Hungary, subjectively follow the trajectory of the author who has studied and lived in these countries. The primary comparison is also pertinent in view of these two countries' similar level of geopolitical integration in western institutions, intellectual participation in their transitions and their past attempts at reforming the socialist system: both have been pinpointed as front-runners in democratisation and/or market reform.

I argue that, in spite of the similarities in the efforts of the countries' right-wing intelligentsias to institutionalise socialist memory, a specific constellation of conditions has allowed Czech right-wing elites to maximise politically the symbolic capital of anti-communism, allowing its interpretative frames to attain a quasi-monopolisation of the public sphere. This has been achieved through the pursuit of a 'politics of truth', which has consisted of a dominant and persistent framing of contested political issues under the logic of a collective memory of socialism within a broader and coherent

3 *ibid*. p.188-190.

4 'Collective Memory' is not understood as the collection of individual memories or a shared public memory which connects an imagined community, but rather as an ideal-typical concept to which the ambitions of specific political-intellectual elites are directed. Thus the 'Collective Memory of Socialism' signals the goals behind a specific framing of contentious issues and is not an actual, tangible reality.

5 Verdery, K (1994) *Beyond the Nation in Eastern Europe* Social Text No. 38, p. 188.

framework of identity and civilisational struggles. This quasi-monopoly is visible both in the Czech printed media and among think tanks, which overwhelmingly privilege access to specific intellectual resources aligned to the right, although this is far from signifying an absence of debate.

Such a 'regime of truth',[6] to which Foucault never equalled a totalitarian domination of discourse but which is rather one whose frames adopt common-sense contours in democratic states and which is supported by an entire 'truth' apparatus, has not been observed in Hungary. Here, framing under the logic of a collective memory of socialism has been unable to produce an equally monopolistic and coherent anti-communist discourse, resulting in a social and political atmosphere of 'contested memory'.

At this point, it should be noted that these differences do not translate into claims that ideas are the driving force of politics: observing and describing these differences in discourse would constitute a merely descriptive exercise. Thus, discourses need to be accounted for in terms of the institutional and transnational mechanisms of the knowledge-production that maintains them.

Research question and hypothesis

These considerations take me to my main research question, which asks: What are the historical, socio-institutional and transnational factors that created a regime of truth in the Czech Republic but not in Hungary? It is in explaining the influence of the following explanatory factors that I hope to provide a weighted answer:

a) historical 'raw materials', which provide an assortment of symbolic devices for the production of anti-communist discourse and for its setting in broader civilisational struggles. Historical accounts are insufficient as the choices between the different symbolic devices available require explanation
b) broadly understood socio-institutional incentives and constraints under socialist regimes and their successors. Everything from elite strategies to the existence of social cleavages is relevant
c) transnational factors which had a prominent and sometimes divergent influence from country to country in terms of intellectual affinity, financial backing and counselling. Relations between these links and the broader geopolitical processes of the region's integration into the global market economy can also help elucidate their substantiation into anti-communist discursive production.

I hypothesise that the institutional structure of state socialist regimes and the interactions they engendered between cadres, technocrats and intellectuals created diverging incentives and constraints regarding post-communist alliances. Anti-communism was the ideology of the managerial-intellectual alliance in the Czech Republic, where the communist party bureaucracy was less accommodating towards the intelligentsia, whereas in Hungary a more accommodating regime and the existence of other relevant cleavages meant that the managerial class found it preferable to remain in the communist successor party, making anti-communist rhetoric undesirable. In both countries,

6 Foucault, M (1980) *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* New York: Pantheon.

the managerial-intellectual alliance resulted from their mutual dependence: managers could grant intellectuals the resources they required for intellectual production, whereas intellectuals were in possession of much sought-after moral and symbolic capital. Therefore, the relative dominance of anti-communist discourse is linked to the resources its proponents could amass for discursive production by way of links with capital-endowed actors at home and abroad. However, the direct and indirect links of the members of this alliance to international capital and networks did not result merely in a strengthening of the domestically-engendered discourse; it also set limits and created opportunities for the precise nature of these discourses and the socio-political perceptions of their legitimacy.

A broader theoretical implication is that I also argue that ideologies may draw from specific historical experiences and intellectual contributions but that their propagation and substantiation into consistent and sustained discourses requires an infrastructure of social and financial capital that should be at the core of any inquiry into ideological processes.

Literature review

Benoit and Laver[7] have shown that one of the key left/right predictors in the region springs from attitudes towards former communists, meaning that this competitive dimension has been deeply assimilated by post-communist political systems. Political actors have, among other elements, used anti-communism to shape collective identities that hold different societal segments together. Just as often, however, regime divides have been said to emerge as a result of the nature of the pre-existing regime, and Enyedi[8] goes as far as claiming that such divides may be comparable to classic cleavages, positing relatively stable social segments and engendering mechanisms to socialise new generations into this divide.

The first seeds of the political divisions that would come to dominate the region were found in the institutional structure of state socialist regimes and the social interactions they engendered between cadres, technocrats and intellectuals. In what Gouldner[9] considered to be a cross-systemic phenomenon, both the capitalist and communist systems were witnessing the rise of a New Class composed of intellectuals and a technical intelligentsia. This was making increasingly substantiated claims to power, to the detriment of groups already in control of the economy – that is, business leaders and party cadres respectively. In this internally-differentiated class, the technocracy assumed the preponderant role while intellectuals had to grapple with a subordinate position. Under state socialist regimes, the technocracy's domination and the ruling elite's more accommodating behaviour towards it was explained by the specialised and autonomous knowledge it possessed in regard to the mode of production; that is, by its

7 Benoit, K and M. Laver (2007) 'Estimating party policy positions: Comparing expert surveys and hand-coded content analysis' *Electoral Studies* 26.

8 Enyedi, Zs (2008) 'The Social and Attitudinal Basis of Political Parties: Cleavage Politics Revisited' *European Review* 16(3).

9 Gouldner, A (1979) *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of New Class* New York: Seabury Press.

possession of a cultural capital which was crucial to the rule of the party cadres. In contrast, intellectuals, working in fields of activity with less consensually validated paradigms, or less crucial ones, or which were even hostile to the survival of these regimes, generally possessed weaker bargaining powers.

In the same year as Gouldner published his seminal work, Konrad and Szelenyi confirmed many of his observations by viewing with optimism the Hungarian communist regime's increasing reliance on what they also called an emerging technocratic-intellectual New Class.[10] This New Class was on the 'road to class power' and would transform state socialist regimes into knowledge-based market-socialist systems. With hindsight, it can be now said, as Szelenyi admitted himself,[11] this proximity between intellectuals and the bureaucracy was never going to materialise in Czechoslovakia and was, at best, a hesitant, contradictory process in Hungary, hampered by the communist bureaucracy's stubbornness and inflexibility. Often, only small sectors of the exclusively technical and scientific wings of the intelligentsia were incorporated by the regimes in question, pushing many intellectuals towards a dissent in which not superior knowledge, but fundamental values, visions of the future and national consciousness set the tone of their discourse.[12] In the Hungarian case, communist cadres, in spite of a 'one step forward, two steps back' approach, never comprehensively alienated intellectuals and their ambitions to influence power, whereas in Czechoslovakia the divorce between humanistic intellectuals and the regime reached dramatic proportions and pushed the majority of the former group towards a position of radical 'anti-politics'.[13]

Yet, even under the socialist period of centralised power and institutional rigidity, the experiences and knowledge of sectors of the intelligentsia were already being occasionally moulded in transnational settings. Bockman and Eyal[14] claim that western and eastern European economists aligned their interests and reinforced their transnational ties throughout the Cold War in order to be better equipped to fight professional and political battles at home. American libertarian economists were interested in the data obtained by their reformist eastern European colleagues as a demonstration, under controlled conditions, of the failures of Keynesian state intervention in the economy, whereas east European economists were keen on innovative models which they could use in their domestic battles to promote market socialism. Post-communist economic reform became a crucial laboratory experiment to vindicate the economic theories that united two previously marginal groups, but whose joint thinking and intellectual ex-

10 Konrád, G and I. Szelényi (1979) *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

11 Szelényi, I (1987) 'The Prospects and Limits of the East European New Class Project: An Auto-Critical Reflection on Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power' *Politics and Society* 15(2).

12 Karabel, J (1996) 'Towards a Theory of Intellectuals and Politics' *Theory and Society* 25(2).

13 Renwick, A (2006) 'Anti-Political or Just Anti-Communist? Varieties of Dissidence in East Central Europe and Their Implications for the Development of Political Society' *East European Politics and Societies* 20(2).

14 Bockman, J and G. Eyal (2002) 'Eastern Europe as a Laboratory for Economic Knowledge: The Transnational Roots of Neoliberalism' *American Journal of Sociology* 108(2).

change at various conferences resulted in what is now termed 'neoliberalism'. The rapid adoption of neoliberal economic policies in the region was:

> Simply another instance of this translation and alignment of interests. Western economists' diagnosis of East European economies as wastelands, for example, did not reflect the economic situation as they found it, but the assessments conveyed to them by East European reformers and economists.[15]

Many authors have noted a lack of transnational dimensions in post-communist research agendas. However, various separate contributions are helping to draw a coherent picture of the international context in which collapsing state socialist states found themselves in the 1990s. Epstein[16] defines the central-eastern European transition as anchored to the liberal worldview that dominated world politics at the time of the collapse of socialist regimes, allowing for a great degree of transnational influence in these transformations:

> In a social context defined by uncertainty, status, and credibility, international institutions can cultivate transnational coalitions that strengthen their domestic members – not by virtue of their authority in terms of popular support but by virtue of their internationally recognized status.[17]

Epstein has also noted that international institutions often worked with domestic interlocutors to overcome opposition to the loss of national (or domestic private) control by 'shifting the terms of debate in favor of liberal economic principles', as well as that the power of transnational actors was contingent upon their ability to:

> Mobilize politically positioned domestic reformers in favor of a shared set of policy prescriptions.[18]

Verdery[19] concurs with this claim. Not only was democracy a powerful symbol through which both dissidents and post-1989 anti-communist political groups invoked the 'West', but the implantation of democracy was monitored by an international community that certified newly-propitious climates for foreign capital investment, which meant that:

> Power flowing across borders intersected with political pluralization inside them.

15 *ibid*. p. 337.
16 Epstein, R (2008) *In Pursuit of Liberalism: International Institutions in Postcommunist Europe* Johns Hopkins University Press.
17 *ibid*. p. 9.
18 Epstein, R (2008) 'Transnational Actors and Bank Privatization' in M. Orenstein, S. Bloom and N. Lindstrom (Eds.) *Transnational Actors in Central and East European Transitions* University of Pittsburgh Press, p. 103.
19 Verdery, K (1998) 'Transnationalism, Nationalism, Citizenship and Property: Eastern Europe since 1989' *American Ethnologist* 25(2), p. 293.

Yet, the manner in which the emerging domestic power configurations were absorbed by transnational networks is the result of path-dependencies whose origins can be traced back to the regimes' level of engagement with the technocracy and intellectuals. In the absence of a powerful local bourgeoisie, intellectuals and the technocratic managerial elite emerged victoriously to define post-communist politics for much of the 1990s, by:

> Exercising power principally on the basis of knowledge, expertise and the capacity to manipulate symbols, in short, 'cultural capital'.[20]

The new power configuration privileged a dominant, managerial elite and a dominated, albeit still privileged, intellectual elite who, in the entire central-eastern European region, had reached an agreement on cohabitation with the managerial class. This relation of mutual dependence was predicted in previous theoretical contributions to the field of elite studies. Gouldner[21] noted that, for those wielding political and economic power, intellectuals have the capacity to endow them with ideological legitimation whereas these same elites have control over a set of resources allowing intellectuals to produce culture.

These observations do not, however, suffice in explaining precisely why managerial elites gained a grip on economic power in post-communism. Eyal *et al*. argue that the struggles over privatisation in the 1990s were more about control and less about the ownership of productive assets, given the substantial risks involved in mass ownership in a situation of economic and political instability. It was these circumstances of diffuse ownership rights which managers found ideal as a means of increasing their power in the new polity – which the authors term *managerialism* – by monopolising the power to make investment decisions by virtue of their claim to technical knowledge. The most powerful figure in this period is, therefore, the financial manager who, by virtue of working in banks, investment funds, finance ministries or international financial organisations and agencies, came to control much sought-after knowledge of the functioning of capitalism and who has benefited from the experience of working in socialist universities, research institutes or government bureaucracies advocating reform communism. Thus, and contrary to popular myths, it is not 'communists' who have mostly benefited from the process of privatisation, but communist-era low-level managers[22] better known for their weak loyalty and preferences for reform communism and for the introduction of market mechanisms under the previous regime.

Gouldner associated a culture of critical discourse with this emerging social formation, but claimed it was likely to bear the 'seeds of a new domination' through which the New Class aimed at a monopoly of truth and its guardianship, seeing itself as the embodiment of non-partisan, legitimate rationality and justice.[23] Similarly, Eyal *et al*.

20 Eyal, G, I. Szelényi and E. Townsley (1997) 'The Theory of Post-Communist Managerialism' *New Left Review* 222.
21 Gouldner, A *op. cit.*
22 Eyal, G, I. Szelényi and E. Townsley *op. cit.* p. 85.
23 Gouldner, A *op. cit.* p. 85-86.

detect a new dominant ideology produced by the technocratic-intellectual alliance – monetarism – which, by no coincidence, was the hegemonic world view at the time, giving:

> Particular stability and breadth to managerial power in East Central Europe.[24]

With managers seeking to co-opt the:

> Intelligentsia, academics, social scientists, artists, and most importantly, the media, all those who form public opinion,

the discourse of anti-politics begins to becomes translated into an often monetarist,

> Anti-ideological discourse which legitimates technocratic knowledge 'by default'.[25]

The process of intellectual co-option has many facets, the direct incorporation of intellectuals in the political elite being only one of them, and – while this alliance is often a source of discomfort for many intellectuals – it remains intentional and beneficial to both.

These observations seem to fit quite neatly the Czech context, where:

> An innovative, populist right-wing ideology linked to a hegemonic project of social transformation,

emerged in the early-mid 1990s, enjoying:

> A position of unassailable intellectual and political dominance

that:

> Reached well beyond their own electorates.[26]

Hanley claims this ideology drew from the Anglo-American New Right and was initially developed in think tanks and academia, but that it:

> Later made it into popular common sense via the media and party politics.[27]

24 Eyal, G, I. Szelényi and E. Townsley *op. cit*. p. 74.
25 *ibid*. p. 79-80.
26 Hanley, S (1999) 'The New Right in the New Europe? Unravelling the ideology of "Czech Thatcherism"' *Journal of Political Ideologies* 4(2), p. 163-164.
27 *ibid*. p. 166.

Eyal[28] argues that the Czech transition saw three influential ideological groups emerge: reform communists; dissidents; and monetarists. There was no immediate reason for Czech dissident intellectuals to seek an alliance with the internally-exiled technocrats rather than with the reform communists: reformists had shared with dissidents the 'platform of the opposition' during communism and had been more vociferous in criticising the regime than monetarist technocrats, who:

> For all intents and purposes could have been mistaken for loyal (albeit lowly) servants of the regime.[29]

Nevertheless, dissidents and monetarists identified themselves with the role of speaking on behalf of an emerging civil society that had to begin by distancing itself from the past, resulting in a strategic alliance which was used to isolate and beat reform communists in the struggle to impose a new economic orthodoxy. The importance of keeping symbolic control of the communist past was essential in defining the position and strategies of this alliance, which gave dissidents wider support while endowing monetarists with much-needed symbolic capital. Monetarists quickly dismissed:

> Any attempt to add some adjectives to the market economy as synonymous with restoring communism,

whereas most dissidents concurred with the assertion that there was no difference:

> Between a reform communist and a communist 'with no adjectives'.[30]

Those dissidents, termed 'liberal' by Eyal, who resisted such a conceptualisation of the past, were gradually marginalised by conservative dissidents often through unsubstantiated accusations of collaboration with the previous regime.

In the Czech lands, the communist regime divide tended to coincide with a redistributive divide[31] and allowed the party of the former technocracy and new managers, the neoliberal ODS, successfully to produce a dominant discourse bringing anti-communism and monetarism together with the intellectual assistance of several former dissidents endowed with symbolic capital.

However, the situation in Hungary appears more complex, since the relevance of cross-cutting divides, such as the urban-rural or cosmopolitan-nationalist divisions, necessarily challenged the centrality of the regime divide. These structural characteristics of Hungarian society influenced political alliances in the country and, concomitantly, the discursive strategies that could be pursued. Hungarian anti-communism was

28 Eyal, G (2003) *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites* University of Minnesota Press.
29 *ibid*. p. XXIV.
30 *ibid*. p. 153.
31 Kitschelt, H, Z. Mansfeldova, R. Markowski and G. Tóka (1999) *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

not a rhetoric that helped push the agendas of radical market reform and privatisation. Instead, these policies found decisive support among the powerful managerial and transnationally well-connected elite which was strongly influential in the reformed Hungarian Socialist Party, the successor to the ruling party of the previous regime.[32]

Crucially, when the party of Hungarian dissident intellectuals, the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats, decided to form a government in alliance with the Socialists in 1994, this lent an enormous hand to the attempts by former communists to gain domestic and international legitimacy. The liberals' move also meant anti-communism had to be halted and, thus, the symbolic capital implied by it was suddenly up for grabs. This created a situation on which the then liberal and younger FIDESZ fully capitalised, successfully monopolising mainstream anti-communism and later finding within it a formula to hold an initially diverse right-wing together.[33]

Similarly to many Czech right-wing politicians, FIDESZ leader Viktor Orban often claimed that voting for the left meant aligning oneself with the communist past, but he was exceptional in that he identified neo-liberalism as inimical to the nation and claimed that the socialist government served the interests of international capital. The market-critical attitude had its roots in the socialist government's policies of accelerated deregulation and privatisation in the 1990s, made in the name of international competitiveness.[34] In contrast, FIDESZ began to strengthen its support base by showing sensitivity to popular discontent and advocating a strong state – clearly at odds with international prescriptions. This discursive strategy provided FIDESZ with electoral success, but it hardly gave it a coherent ideology that could promote the alignment of the strategic interests of its intelligentsia *vis-à-vis* capital-endowed domestic and international actors.

The Czech and Hungarian managerial classes that found themselves in privileged positions in the post-1989 political-economic system had divergent experiences under communism, with decisive consequences for the shape and ideological nature of post-communist power alliances. Hungary's managerial elite had previously been integrated into power structures to an unparalleled extent in the Soviet-dominated region, their links to both the old cadre and intellectuals being worthy of attention. The Czechoslovak regime paled in comparison, as the centralised bureaucracy had maintained a substantially more sceptical attitude towards the regime's technocracy, while showing outright hostility towards its intellectuals. Eyal *et al*.[35] point out that, over the long-term, post-communism has rewarded those parties (MSZP in Hungary and ODS in the Czech Republic) that represented the old technocracy but which, for reasons of political expediency and the legitimacy deficit, did not necessarily converge in their interests in sustaining an intellectual elite bent on producing an anti-communist discourse.

32 Eyal, G, I. Szelényi and E. Townsley *op. cit*.
33 Egedy, G (2009) 'Political Conservatism in Post-Communist Hungary' *Problems of Post-Communism* 56(3).
34 Bozóki, A (2008) 'Consolidation or Second Revolution? The Politics of the New Right in Hungary' *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 24(2).
35 Eyal, G, I. Szelényi and E. Townsley *op. cit*.

Anti-communist rhetoric was strong in both countries, but in only one did the right-wing elites manage to amass sufficient resources to develop a hegemonic discourse. It was the managerial class that had the capacity to turn funds previously allocated for educational, scientific and cultural purposes under communism into endowments for the intelligentsia which were secure from the budget cuts that typify monetarist orthodoxy. Eyal *et al*.[36] consider the most evident and systematic aspect of this process to be the proliferation of foundations which, unlike in western Europe, are firmly controlled by the intelligentsia and suffer from a deficit of autonomy and independence. Also, unlike in the west, these funds originate not only from government agencies but also from financial institutions, mainly the banks. The authors put it thus:

> Here is the most obvious representation of the class compromise at the apex of the post-communist social structure: the new 'avant-garde' of the technocratic dominant fraction, the financial managers, use their specialized knowledge about tax loopholes to allocate funds to the new 'avant-garde' of the dominated fraction, most notably, the media. In this way, the loyalty of humanistic intellectuals is gained. They are not simply 'bought', since they have relative autonomy and control their own funds, but their self-interest is mobilized to protect the overall dominance of the elite, and the critical imagination of the East Central European intelligentsia is held in abeyance.[37]

It later turned out that managerialism was short-lived and managers and other elite circles showed an appetite for gaining property as soon as property relations had become stabilised.[38] However, this does not confound the validity of these observations for the decade in which power configurations were crystallised, creating unavoidable path-dependencies for future political actors.

Countless actors have been involved in the democratisation of the region: up to sixty North American and European private foundations became very active following 1989.[39] Many US aid projects were carried out by quasi-private organisations, mainly the National Endowment for Democracy, which received grants from Washington. NED provided training and assistance to political parties, such as the Czech Civic Forum and the Hungarian Alliance of Free Democrats, while it funded independent scholars and writers in Czechoslovakia. This support helped to crystallise certain elites at the expense of others, who often enjoyed equivalent or greater indigenous support or expertise but who lacked reputation and contacts in the west.

Predominantly, those aided were identified with programmes of market reform:

> Economic agendas appear to have been the decisive factor in many aid decisions said to be about democracy, pluralism, or civil society.[40]

36 Eyal, G, I. Szelényi and E. Townsley *op. cit*.
37 *ibid*. p. 81.
38 Bozóki, A (2003) 'Theoretical Interpretations of Elite Change in East Central Europe' *Comparative Sociology* 2(1).
39 Wedel, J (1998) *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe 1989-1998* St. Martin's Press: New York, p. 85-100.
40 *ibid*. p. 99.

Several projects provided funding and organisational support for sectors of the intelligentsia as well as for political parties: many donors' understanding of 'institution building' was to participate and provide support to those who had been recognised as heroes of the 1989 'revolutions'. Hoping to create a civil society, western aid instead generally funded partisan groups which went on to further their own political goals.

Donors privileged certain local organisations and groups, seeing them as vehicles for change, but their lack of knowledge of local conditions meant they were easily persuaded by long-standing and transnationally well-connected elite groups that gained politically crucial symbolic and economic capital. These groups, sometimes former communists, more often former dissidents, were well aware of western priorities and funding possibilities, and set up various NGOs and foundations to receive these funds. This meant a:

> Handful of brokers made decisions and amassed resources on a large scale, by local standards, and Western funding tended to reinforce their success.[41]

Many of these brokers were young and had a background in the intelligentsia, carving out:

> A triad of business, foundation, and scholarly activities,[42]

often becoming a monopolistic source of influence much greater than that of a mere faction or interest group.

Methodological, theoretical and conceptual considerations for further research

When referring to an intelligentsia, I essentially mean a set of different but interrelated actors:

- intellectuals whose cultural, symbolic and moral capital has been intentionally or unintentionally transformed into political capital benefiting dominant political parties
- professional politicians whose members engage in debates on contentious issues, taking de-legitimising anti-communist positions and who rely on a symbolic capital and intellectual production that does not necessarily result from their own creative intellectual activity or from any moral capital gained in opposing the previous regime
- a knowledge-production 'intellectual technocracy' incapable of creating new interpretative frames but which is skilful in adapting existing frames to contentious political issues and in using the social capital provided by its position in the media, think tanks and academia. People in this category would belong to the peripheral

41 *ibid*. p. 87.
42 *ibid*. p. 93.

category of transmitters or distributors of culture in Karabel's[43] typology, which distinguishes them from creators of culture at the core.

Case-oriented research needs to be based an interpretive, adductive approach under which data is gathered using a triangulation of various qualitative methods.

Firstly, a qualitative and critical discourse analysis needs to be undertaken into particular debates on polarising topics that have received extensive attention from local intelligentsias and which may be interpreted in the light of socialism. The findings here need to be contextualised by elite interviewing.

A cyclical process, consisting of a selection of a small but relevant body of texts from the printed media and political rhetoric, would be a suitable place from which to start. Analysing these would produce findings which would provide more accurate selection criteria, with these guiding subsequent data collection up to the point that no new insights are gained.[44]

Debates need to be chosen which are recent, hold the potential to re-emerge in different circumstances and are in receipt of extensive and contentious attention from the media, the intelligentsia and public opinion. In the Hungarian case, two topics present themselves: the 2002 controversy involving former Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy's counter-espionage activities before 1989; and the protracted debate which began with the leaking of a speech by former Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, in which he admitted to lying to the electorate on the country's economic condition and which has culminated in a controversial austerity programme. In the Czech Republic, clear topics are the (still ongoing) debate on welfare reform; and the dispute which exploded after the US began negotiations with the Czech Republic with a view to extending its missile defence system to the country. Within these debates, particular attention needs to be paid to the processes of symbolic appropriation, as well as at the attempts to create consistent ideological frameworks with reference to historical events and national identity. The goal is not only to grasp the nature of the relevant discourses but also the actors who, in sharing expertise, common goals and the mechanisms of inter-communication, help sustain the public relevance of their views.

Secondly, the research needs to address the assessment of broadly-understood institutions and political dynamics in the two countries. Following sociological institutionalism, the goal should be to detect instances of institutional change, institutional set-ups, class and political alliances and the social cleavages that have created the legacies, incentives and constraints which have shaped the nature of 'memory' discourses. This includes paying close attention to attempts to institutionalise versions of the past, such as with the creation of institutions which are directly responsible for dealing with the heritage of socialism, and to institutional change in the field of knowledge production, especially think tanks and media outlets. In employing elite interviewing, research should seek to unearth the personal links that tie different knowledge-

43 Karabel, J *op. cit.*

44 Mautner, G (2008) 'Analyzing Newspapers, Magazines and Other Print Media' in R. Wodak and M. Krzyzanowski (Eds.) *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

production institutions together, in both the domestic and the transnational sense. Reports on the sources of information they privilege, as well as their funding, membership and affiliations, may also provide valuable insights.

Finally, the research should focus on intelligentsias, at this stage relying on elite interviewing and using snowball sampling to map existing domestic and transnational networks as regards what constitutes an evolutionary and ethnographic network analysis. Valuable insights will also be gained into the backstage of the organised production processes behind public efforts at building a collective memory of socialism.

Conclusion

I have observed that anti-communism remains a key competitive dimension of post-communist politics in Hungary and the Czech Republic, and I have identified that right-wing elites continue to frame contested issues in the light of attitudes towards the past. At the core of this behaviour is an attempt to build a 'collective memory' of socialism by exploiting the symbolic capital of anti-communism. Through a discourse analysis grounded in sociological institutionalism and the political economy of knowledge production, I hope to have illuminated the peculiar logic of memory politics in central eastern Europe and to show why only in the Czech Republic has this discursive framing assumed hegemonic proportions.