

# Editorial Foreword

*Post-Revolutionary Stress Syndromes.* Among the continuities that persist through revolutionary change, there are none more poignant than disillusionment and hope. Surging with the breakdown of the old regime, they connect ideologies and institutions to the daily practices through which ordinary people adapt to their altered circumstances. Katherine Verdery tells these stories of excitement, prosperity, and disappointment in an essay of notable range and penetration. In her hands a pyramid scheme that transfixed Romanians allows a subtle exploration of the social transformations that followed the fall of communism (compare, in *CSSH*, Joppke in 37:2, Lampert, 35:3; Fullbrook, 29:2; and the irony of the anonymous article in 20:2). Searching for ways to weather economic crisis, Romanians discovered the magical possibility of prosperity mixed with the familiar: long lines of waiting and institutional favoritism. Rumor and memory helped them contrive a plethora of inventive explanations for good fortune that could be seen as a lesson in the marvels of the impersonal market, but Verdery shows that this pyramid scheme fostered competing conceptions of the meaning of money and the nature of the nation (see Taussig, 19:2). Responses to it incorporated social networks and political parties, local loyalties and national paranoia, religion and folk wisdom and what Verdery labels millenarian anti-Marxism. Transitions, she suggests, are a special kind of time and one that, in the confusion of the post-communist world, offers more to the anarchic ambitions of second-level officials than to anyone else. Robert Reed also finds a millenarian element in Portuguese politics after the 1974 revolution, and his lucid account similarly shows how the contradictory processes of change attached to popular belief. Hope in Portugal, so pervasive that Reed writes in terms of utopia, tended after the revolution to dissipate in the confusion of multiple political parties (note Apter, 4:2). Still the village he studied had a thriving civic life that for the most part evolved an acceptable mode of compromise. For all that, the political and social divisions expressed in distinctive rhetorics became an enduring gulf, so that even when relatively content, the Portuguese continue to contrast contemporary reality with the utopia once envisioned from the purity of powerlessness.

*Ideologies of Identity.* Before World War II, when the literature on nationalism focused on European nationalism, an important historical debate considered whether the phenomenon was essentially very old or relatively new, whether since the Renaissance it had accompanied the development of vernacular literatures and the national state, or whether the nationalism so important in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was distinctive from earlier signs of patriotism. Despite the penchant of nationalists for tracing their claims to the middle ages, most historians now understand modern European nationalism to have its foundation in romanticism and the French Revolution and to have exploded in industrializing societies with the advent of universal education and mass politics. Subsequently, interest in nationalism outside Europe, in regionalism within Europe, and in cultural explanations has modified older interpretations without abolishing that chronology. Cynthia Talbot does not challenge this huge literature but, by building on current and broader interest in the formation of cultural identities, makes a strong case for

the development of premodern national identities in India. The sources are limited, and she reads the evidence with erudite care as well as imagination. Her emphasis is on the process of cultural confrontations and mutual influences across the frontiers between Muslims and others, identified as Hindus, whose developing sense of identity included language and religion as well as mythic histories (see Eriksen, 36:3; Klein, 34:3; Peabody, 33:4; Halperin, 26:3; Thapar, 13:4). Carol Smith also attends to the process by which cultural identity is formed, using Guatemala as her laboratory (note Handy, 30:4; Smith, 26:2). She bridges the interpretive frontier between the literatures on the projects of European state making and on movements of anti-colonial resistance (see Jackson and Maddox, 35:2) by showing the interrelationship of race, class, and gender. In itself that interpretive maneuver no longer surprises, but Smith's important essay does. Beginning with the simple question of why women are the principal bearers of Mayan ethnic identity (compare Bernal, 36:1; Seligmann, 31:4; Rogers, 20:1), she builds a striking argument that moves from European conceptions of blood, lineage, class, and nation to social practice in a culture of colonization to show both how and why Mayan women now construct an ethnic identity (also see Lambert, 35:2; Harrell, 32:3; Bentley, 29:1 and Bentley and Yelvington, 33:1) that makes an imagined community real. If her conclusions are somber, they cannot dim the exhilaration of her intellectual tour de force.

*Merchants and the State.* These articles about three different places in three different eras all explore the relationship of the state to commerce (compare Adams, 36:2; Stevens-Arroyo, 35:3; Finlay, 34:2; Chang, 33:1; Mann, 26:4), but what they more importantly share is the unmasking of assumptions that European states and Western entrepreneurs pursued policies that were economically more beneficial and socially more progressive than those of other societies. Each builds an alternative perspective with impressive research and unusual comparisons. Sanjay Subrahmanyam assesses standard answers to the classic question of why the West gained global economic dominance, then shows that these hardly fit three centuries of commerce among the trading cities of the Indian ocean. His unusual geographical focus thus opens the way to a fresh analysis through comparison of those often overlooked cities. Muriel Nazzari meticulously studies the laws of inheritance in Brazil and England. Viewing liberal England's restrictions on a widow's right to inherit through the lens of the commercial treaties by which Europeans sought exemption from Brazil's more generous rules, she suggests that British law was in fact, and was intended to be, a means to favor capital accumulation over family. Finally, Misah Parsa tests the widespread view that entrepreneurs are agents of democratization in an unusual comparison of the fall of autocratic regimes in the Shah's Iran (see Behdad, 36:4; Akhavi, 25:2; Burke and Lubeck, 29:4) and Marcos's Philippines (see Rafael, 32:2). In a systematic sociological analysis of these two societies, treated as in many ways characteristic of developing countries (compare Sklar, 29:4; Mouzelis, 28:1), he weighs the role of the military, international finance, and religious leaders. Thus his finding—that the political stance of businessmen is determined not by some inherent dynamic but by their structural capacity for collective action, their relations to labor and to the state, and their economic interests—has general significance.