

gether. Deng's reforms—which placed agriculture in private hands and dotted the cities with individual entrepreneurs—have undermined the communist economic system, while the collapse of Marxism-Leninism at its source, in Russia, has eroded the legitimacy of the ideology within China.

The big question looms: What will happen when the 87-year-old Deng dies? Thurston, the author of *Enemies of the People* (1987), provides some possible clues in her story of a contemporary Chinese dissident. Born in 1945, Ni Yuxian's life roughly coincides with that of the People's Republic of China. As a teenage soldier during Mao's Great Leap Forward, Ni witnessed the greatest famine in world history, one that killed 25 to 30 million people. He composed a protest letter, expecting Mao to do something. Mao did: Ni was dismissed from the Army. Ni's subsequent career as a protester and dissident earned similar recognition. He was declared a "nonperson" in 1970 and later spent two years on death-row. In 1986, feeling the noose tighten again, Ni outwitted the authorities, secured a false passport, and escaped directly to New York. Ni's outspoken, revolutionary approach, Thurston believes, is as courageous as it is exceptional. In China the traditional response to unjust politics is to retreat into private pursuits. Unlike Ni, China's other leading dissidents—the physicist Fang Lizhi and the journalist Liu Binyan—follow nonpolitical careers.

As much as Thurston admires Ni's bravery, she doubts whether he could—or even should—come to power in a postcommunist China. Ni's political style typifies that of China's highly splintered opposition: His Chinese Liberal Democratic Party spends more time feuding with other dissident organizations (of which there are hundreds) than opposing the regime in power. And for all Ni's talk of democracy, free elections, and a free press, "the structure of [his] party is disturbingly Leninist, duplicating in many respects the structure of the Communist Party itself." "Democracy for Ni," Thurston observes, "is more a way of overthrowing the Communist Party than an end in itself." But then, she reminds us, "China has no democratic political culture, no tradition of democratic institutions to guide those who lead the country to a more democratic future."

A reader puts down *A Chinese Odyssey* with a sad foreboding of *après Deng, le deluge*—or rather the *luan*, the Chinese word for the descent into disorder, chaos, and violence. One hopeful possibility, Thurston suggests, is that the next government may quietly permit the fragmentation of China into economic regions. But the Chinese themselves see their history as cyclical, and many now view the present days as a replay of the collapse of the Qing dynasty, which brought on the internal warfare of the 1920s and '30s. Yet who dares to imagine a civil war in the China of today, a country of 1.2 billion people?

THE OVERWORKED AMERICAN: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure. *By Juliet Schor. Basic. 336 pp. \$23*

Economists during the 1950s predicted for the near-future a "24-hour week, a six-month workyear, or a standard retirement age of 38." Increased automation and productivity would make work all but disappear. These prophecies appear in one way partially fulfilled: American workers today produce in six months the same quantity of goods that it took an entire year to manufacture in 1948. Yet greater productivity has not led to shorter work-weeks. During the last 20 years, Americans have, on average, increased their time at work by a month. American manufacturing employees currently work 320 more hours annually—at least two months more—than their counterparts in West Germany or France.

It is a myth, claims Harvard economist Schor, that the Industrial Revolution has led to declining human toil. Prior to the 18th century, agrarian labor was accompanied by far more leisure, thanks to fluctuations of weather, customary holidays, and the simple fact that poorer health and nutrition rendered people less able to work long hours. Once workers moved from the fields to the factories, however, they learned the iron law of industry: Profit depended on "operating [machinery] as continuously as possible." Corporate employers still want to operate their human machinery in the same way, Schor argues.

But even if employers favored it, could America afford to reduce work hours in a period of

intense international economic competition? After all, America's chief manufacturing rivals are not Germany or France but such Asian nations as Japan, where workers typically log six-day weeks and sometimes work even on Sundays. Schor finds that the Japanese model is not necessarily an ideal to emulate, not with the frequent reports of *karoshi*—"death by overwork"—among the salarymen. Recent studies, moreover, suggest that reducing work hours can actually increase productivity. In one Minneapolis firm, employees who worked 36-hour weeks for 40-hour pay produced more, thanks to lower absenteeism and increased morale. Similarly, a Texas insurance company saw sales dramatically rise despite—or because of—a shortening of work hours. Yet the "overwork ethic" will end only, Schor believes, with a different vision of society, one in which management varies its strategies and workers value free time as highly as increased wages. But such a change, she concedes, involves "altering a way of life and a way of thinking."

Science & Technology

IN THE PALACES OF MEMORY: How We Build the Worlds Inside Our Heads. By George Johnson. Knopf. 255 pp. \$22.95

Each of us remembers millions of things, important or trivial. Yet scientists cannot explain how we do so—how we can recall, say, that Voltaire lived in the 18th century or why, when we order a hamburger, we know it won't taste like tuna fish. Now, however, biologists, psychologists, physicists, and philosophers are knocking down disciplinary barriers to create a science of memory—one that will account for how both neurons *and* people behave.

To portray this "science in the making," Johnson, a science journalist at the *New York Times*, compares the work of a biologist, a physicist, and a philosopher. Gary Lynch, a neurobiologist at the University of California, hypothesizes that when a neuron in the brain is stimulated, channels in its cell membrane open and calcium flows in. This stimulates an enzyme which breaks down the cytoskeleton (the cell's frame), allowing buried receptors to surface and possibly to form a new synapse that

encodes memory. Leon Cooper, who won the Nobel Prize in 1972 for his theory of superconductivity, uses computer simulations to show that memory depends on the specific speed and intensity with which neurons fire in response to stimulation. Patricia Churchland, a philosopher tired of arid speculations about the nature of knowledge, went to medical school to discover how real human brains work. Her model of memory is a "Rube Goldberg machine," an evolutionary neural patchwork that translates sensory data into mental constructs which, because they can then be remembered, help ensure survival.

In addition to being unproved, these hypotheses have something else in common: They fly in the face of "received wisdom." Most ordinary people—and also such philosophers as John Searle—believe the human mind cannot be reduced to a biological machine. Yet it is hardly surprising that Lynch, Cooper, and Churchland all contend that mental states and brain states are one and the same. When the elusive consciousness of memory reduces to a matter of stimuli, neurons, and even computers, then scientists—and would-be scientists—are ready to get down to work.

THE CULTURE OF PAIN. By David Morris. Univ. of Calif. 342 pp. \$29.95

The writer C. S. Lewis was often accused of being a reactionary, yet he offered an eloquent one-word defense of the modern world: anaesthesia. Try to imagine what life was like before surgeons used ether or chloroform, he said, when doctors sawed through the limbs of fully conscious patients—as they did well into the 19th century. The conquest of acute pain, with "wonder drugs" ranging from simple aspirin to morphine, is considered the glory of modern medicine.

It may come as a surprise then to learn that 90 million Americans suffer from a "newer" kind of pain, from *chronic* pain, and that they spend almost \$90 billion annually trying to relieve their suffering. To understand this "invisible crisis at the center of contemporary life," Morris, the author of *Alexander Pope: The Genius of Sense*, ventured into hospitals and pain clinics; more importantly, he examined history