

## Antinomian Marxist

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It is my impression that Mr. Burawoy is hampered intellectually by excessive and unrealistic preoccupation with what he regards as conflicts between himself and the prevailing trends of sociological analysis in the United States. He seems to think that he must struggle to prevent himself from being overpowered or seduced by “mainstream sociology.” At the same time, I have not ever detected any originality on Mr. Burawoy’s part in analyses which he has made from the standpoint which he regards as disfavoured in American sociology. . . . It might be that there is no spark of originality in him, or it might be that he is holding it in reserve. Since, however, I have known him for a long time and he has never hesitated to express his opinions to me on a wide variety of political and other subjects, I would incline toward the former hypothesis. . . . When I first met him, I was very much struck by

his initiative. He knew nothing about sociology, and he knew nothing about India, but he struck out on his own, and that seemed to me to be admirable and worthy of encouragement. In the Department of Sociology he has done well in his examinations. . . . In seminars, I have been more struck by an obstinate conventionalism and a fear of being led into paths which might disturb his rather simple view of society. It is a great pity because he obviously likes to do research and he is not inhibited when it comes to writing. He also has a very good I.Q. But somehow, either the security of sectarianism or a juvenile antinomianism seems to have got the better of him. I first noticed the latter in Cambridge. At that time he was an undergraduate and I thought it would pass. Thus far it has not.

Edward Shils (1975)

One is not born but, rather, becomes a Marxist. One becomes a Marxist, in part, through the damnation of others. As woman is to man so Marxism is to sociology—its excluded, marginalized, calumniated, fabricated, silenced, and mythologized Other. Just as man needs woman, sociology needs Marxism to identify itself, to give meaning to its own existence. Without its Other, sociology loses its reason for being, its originality, and its vitality. But Marxism is not just made by others, for others. It also makes itself. I made my Marxism not by abstention from the world but by entering its bowels—mine shafts, machine shops, steel mills, champagne distilleries, and furniture factories—in Zambia, the United States, Hungary, and Russia, under capitalism and socialism, colonialism and postcolonialism. I translated my experiences not into a party ideology but for an ongoing and open Marxist tradition, forged in the political trenches of academe. Within this field of domination, together with teachers and students, friends and enemies, lovers and colleagues, I have rotated between the reconstruction of Marxism and the critique of sociology. If my Marxism has so far been from the working class, now the question is whether it can also be for the working class.

### Preludes to Marxism

It’s difficult to know how one’s social origins shape one’s future. My mother’s family fled Petrograd when she was thirteen, soon after the 1917 revolution.<sup>1</sup> My fa-

1. During World War I, St. Petersburg was renamed Petrograd, a more Russian sounding name. After Lenin died in 1924 it became Leningrad. After the fall of the Soviet Union the grandeur of the nineteenth-century city was recalled with the restoration of its old name.

ther, conversely, left earlier in 1912. He grew up in the Eastern Ukraine in Yekaterinoslav, a city that would later become the huge Soviet military-industrial complex of Dniepropetrovsk. Both families escaped to Germany, and my parents met in Leipzig while they were university students. They fled the Nazi regime for England in 1933. Before they left, they both had received doctorates in chemistry but only my father was to use his degree for employment in England. He became a lecturer in organic chemistry at the Manchester College of Science and Technology. We lived a lower-middle-class life on the south side of Manchester. As a foreigner and Jew, with a charming but immodest style, my father never adapted to the English academic scene. His proclamation of communist sympathies, perhaps prompted by his disaffection, only deepened his estrangement. As long as my father was alive, my mother stayed at home to look after my sister, eleven years my senior, and me.

When I was eleven my father died quite suddenly of a heart attack. My mother found a job as a technician in a cancer hospital and then as a Russian teacher. We had little money and so she took in lodgers—two at a time—so that our small semidetached house was always overflowing. Mainly doctoral students, they came from all over the world—from France, Italy, Germany, and a whole tribe from Greece but also from much farther afield: Hong Kong, Israel, Pakistan, India, Japan, Brazil, Peru, and Poland. They were devoted to my mother, appreciating her spontaneous and irresistible hospitality. She made a home for them and they became like family. Even if 22 Queensway was a veritable United Nations, I can't say it cultivated my sociological sensibility. Perhaps, it made me curious about the rest of the world. If the sociological spark was there it was latent, since in those days I had only two passions—soccer and astronomy—and the rest could go to the dogs. My mother cared only about my performance at school, and, under her watchful eye, I flowered in mathematics. Trying to live up to her hopes and believing mathematics was necessary for a career in astrophysics, I worked hard.

All this changed when I took off for New York in 1965 at the age of seventeen. In those days "America" was very far away, but remoteness was the appeal. I found a place on a Norwegian cargo boat bound for Philadelphia, and thus began my six-month interlude between school and university. It was the era of civil rights, of the free speech movement, the beginnings of the antiwar movement and sit-ins. I watched from the sidelines but the American impression was deep. It nurtured a restless optimism. I returned to face three dismal years of mathematics at Cambridge. I had so specialized in high school that I was fit for noth-

ing else. I did experiment with economics, but here, too, I found lectures tedious. After America, Cambridge was quintessentially irrelevant—removed from any engagement with a world I could recognize as "real." I could think only of escape. Four-month summer vacations and a short three-year degree were, therefore, Cambridge's saving grace. Convinced that education was the world's panacea (had I unconsciously imbibed this from my parents' sacrifices, their obsession with my own education?) and students its revolutionary force (had Berkeley, even at a distance, already rubbed off on me?), I ventured forth to South Africa in 1966, at the end of my first year at university. If university education was beyond their grasp, might black South Africans benefit from correspondence education? What about an Open University for Africa? These were the questions that lingered in my mind as I set off to hitchhike through the rest of Africa.

I devoted the next academic year to preparing for my trip to India in the summer. This time I would be better organized and more focused. For no other reason than it seemed important and practical, I decided to explore the question of the appropriate language of instruction in higher education. I had discovered the issue in a Fabian pamphlet. I could find no one interested in such matters under Cambridge's dreamy spires, except for a bespectacled, white-haired, podgy old man, ensconced in spacious rooms in Kings College. There, buried in books and papers, behind what were surely the thickest double doors, was the distinguished American sociologist, renowned anticommunist, and the most learned man I have ever met—Edward Shils. At the time I knew nothing of this. All I knew was that he was supposed to be interested in Indian intellectuals. Curious that an undergraduate would dare to knock on his door, he beckoned me to sit down and kindly listened to the lunacy of my project. He laughed at my tenacity and ignorance—where fools rush in, angels fear to tread. Still he gave me more encouragement than anyone else.

Armed with questionnaires, comprehension tests, and the chutzpah of an eighteen-year-old I traveled the length and breadth of India to see if indeed university students would be better off learning in English, Hindi, or the regional language. I wrote up a report—for whom and why I cannot imagine—that defended English medium education for elite universities and regional language for the lower tiers. Shils even considered revising it for his journal *Minerva*, but I didn't see the point. This was after all spring of 1968. Our relationship nonetheless continued as I had become one of his specimens—one of his antinomian students who were creating chaos in the university. Now that I was graduating,

he thought I should pursue my interests as a sociologist at his own University of Chicago.<sup>2</sup> My passions needed disciplining if not taming. I laughed back at him and told him I'd had enough of universities and was off—back to Africa.

India left a deep impression—teeming, chaotic cities with the extremes of poverty and wealth mingling side by side, a world so utterly different from the sheltered suburbia of England. It was an existential watershed, so that now it is impossible to reconstruct life before 1967, uncolored by India. As to my project, if it taught me anything, it was that questions of education were questions of politics and that research detached from politics was a purely scholastic matter. I returned to South Africa in June 1968 less naive but unclear what I was about. Qualified whites were in short supply under apartheid and so, despite my clumsy English, I found a job that would have been beyond my reach anywhere else. I became a journalist with the then new liberal Afrikaner weekly, *Newscheck*, where I was given foreign affairs columns. I had no alternative but to learn to write. These were interesting times to be covering the international scene—the Biafran War, the Prague Spring, and student revolt across Europe. South Africa itself was ominously quiet and oppressively stable. The social movements of the 1970s—the Black Consciousness Movement, the Durban strikes, the Soweto uprising—lay in an unanticipated future. At the time it seemed as though change, if it would come at all, would percolate down through the liberalization of the regime. I had no inkling of the fires kindling in the belly of the beast.

### Marxism Discovered: Zambia

South Africa was too regulated and confining for my adventurous instincts. After six months I decamped to Zambia. It was 1968, four years into Zambian “independence.” I was still remarkably unclear what I was about. I talked with Jack Simons—longstanding member of the South African Communist Party, darling of the liberation movement and of his students at University of Cape Town, the closest to a true organic intellectual that I would ever meet, then in exile from South Africa and teaching sociology at the University of Zambia. He was skeptical of my (petty bourgeois?) interests in students and higher education. Hearing of my contacts with Anglo American Mining Corporation—I had camped out in

2. Little did I know what was happening in Chicago in 1968. I refer not just to the Democratic Convention but to student protest and the persecution of Dick Flacks and Marlene Dixon. Had I known about this I may never have gone to Chicago and my career would have been very different.

the garden of one of its chief executives two years earlier—he proposed that I investigate what the mining companies were up to, now that Zambia was no longer a colony. It was an important question since 95 percent of foreign earnings came from copper and the industry employed some 50,000 relatively well-paid workers, a considerable number in a population of 4 million. I needed the money anyhow, so I applied and received a job in the industry's Personnel Research Unit, located on the Copperbelt. I had never been trained as a sociologist, so this is where my career really began.

With my math degree I lodged myself in the Personnel Research Unit and made myself indispensable to management. I held the key to the industry's mammoth job evaluation exercise, which would integrate the pay scales of blacks and white—pay scales that had always been separated to reflect the colonial order. The leverage gave me access to the mines, and I launched surveys into the conditions of the working class. These were administered by Zambian personnel officers—amateurish surveys about job satisfaction, family background, labor and migration history, and above all attitudes to Zambianization. For I had secretly become interested in the question of the Zambianization, that is, the localization of the labor force, and particularly its managerial ranks. I was shocked by the persistence of the color bar. To be sure it was floating upward, so that shift bosses were already black and mine captains were increasingly black, but the racial principle obtained—no black should have authority over any white. I then began to study processes of Zambianization first hand, seeking out the broader forces at work in reproducing the racial order of the mines.

Enter class—the class interests behind Zambianization. White managers and skilled workers wanted to retain their monopoly of jobs—that was not surprising. African trade unions, which represented unskilled and semi-skilled workers, however, seemed equally uninterested in the upward mobility of a small elite from within their ranks. Instead, they wanted better working conditions and higher wages for their members who were equally unimpressed by Zambianization. As far as they were concerned, it was often better to be supervised by politically restrained whites than token blacks. As for the new Zambian state, it depended on its copper revenues and so did not want to rock the boat by threatening white expertise with displacement. Ironically enough, the copper companies were the most opposed to the color bar, most concerned to replace expensive expatriates with cheap black labor. But so long as the price of copper was high, they'd go along with the floating color bar, let sleeping dogs lie. In short, in postcolonial Zambia, the balance of class forces favored the retention of racism. *The Colour*

of *Class on the Copperbelt: From African Advancement to Zambianization* was published in 1972 by the local Institute of African Studies. It caused more dispute and debate than anything else I would ever write. It was given wide coverage in newspapers and television and promoted by the government agency responsible for Zambianization on the mines. This class analysis, this Fanonite account, was used by corporate head offices of Anglo American against their own managers, instructing them to get their own racial house in order. Early on I learned that one has little control over what one writes, especially if one is so fortunate as to have it circulating beyond the academy.

Class analysis was not my invention! It was encouraged by my teachers — Jack Simons and Jaap van Velsen — at the University of Zambia where I enrolled for a master's degree in its fledgling department of sociology and anthropology. Week in, week out, I received a battering from these vigorous intellects who squawked over my slim offerings and those of two African students. I learned sociology and anthropology on the anvil of terror — healthy preparation for the University of Chicago but devastating for my ego! Jack and Ray Simons had just finished their classic of South African history — *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850–1950* — a history from below, which brought class and race movements into complex relation. It became the definitive Marxist history of South Africa until it was displaced by new generations — those schooled in French structuralism (who would find the Simonses theoretically rigid) and those schooled in E. P. Thompson's social history (who would find the Simonses empirically limited).

My other teacher, and one who had a much deeper influence on my sociology, was Jaap van Velsen. Student of Max Gluckman, apostle of the Manchester school of social anthropology, student of kinship politics, he had already anticipated much that would later appear as novel in Pierre Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. The only trouble was he seemed to have a perpetual writing block. His medium was oral, and I was the chief beneficiary. For hours on end I would listen to his booming intonement, meekly protesting his definitive critiques. It was a baptism of fire, permanently scarred into my sociological habitus. Jaap was no romantic anthropologist. He had long been interested in the system of migrant labor — the way colonial states had turned African territories into labor reservoirs to feed the various mining industries of Southern Africa. For him, too, like Jack Simons, no analysis could be complete without the consideration of class.

That, of course, was not everyone's view. Thus, the young American political scientist, Robert Bates, also spent time on the Copperbelt in the immediate years

after independence. His dissertation and book, *Unions, Parties, and Political Development: A Study of Mineworkers in Zambia*, sought to demonstrate that the Zambian government had failed to elicit the cooperation of the miners in its development program. He deployed mining industry data that showed declining productivity, heightened turnover, absenteeism, strikes, and so forth — data produced by the very unit where I had worked. Familiar with its one-sidedness, I cut my sociological teeth in a long critical review of his book. He had, so I implied, been duped by the regime's postcolonial ideology that portrayed the working class as recalcitrant and indigent, an ideology that masked the class interests of state and capital. Bates's argument was also in line with then fashionable cultural explanations of backwardness — continuing despite independence. Mired in tribalism and primordiality (shades of Shils!), Africa was not ready for Western democracy or capitalism. At the time, modernization theory was just being challenged by underdevelopment theory. The refreshing and persuasive writing from Latin America, particularly the writing of Gundar Frank, argued that the development of the West had depended on but also continued to depend on the underdevelopment of the Third World. Liberating though it was, I had my doubts about this analysis of "neocolonialism" — all too convenient for the new ruling classes of Africa who could escape responsibility for Africa's slump by focusing attention on external enemies.

I was more influenced by Frantz Fanon's radical account of colonialism's class structure and its disabling legacies. *The Colour of Class* was intended as an extension of *The Wretched of the Earth* from Algeria to the very different context of Zambia. Even if there were few signs of a radical peasantry, there was a powerful labor aristocracy that sought to protect its relative privileges and a national bourgeoisie that collaborated with international capital. But what of the intellectuals, so prominent in Fanon's exposé — the conservative and the radical? I finally did what I had come to do. While at the University of Zambia, I undertook the study of students of which I had dreamed — making this my master's thesis. As one of a handful of whites, I immersed myself in student life, writing Fanonite columns for the student newspaper, setting up a sociological association, conducting opinion polls, inviting leading politicians to campus, and otherwise fueling student hostility to the government. In this case, my analysis was blinded by my participation. Identifying so unquestioningly with students, I was unable to see their distinctive class interests. I was unable to turn Fanon back on to this incipient national bourgeoisie. Instead, I succumbed to sociology, seeking to comprehend the precarious location of the university in terms of its contradictory functions

and the rebelliousness of students in terms of their social and geographical mobility. My theoretical commitments were not strong enough to counterbalance my practical, nay incestuous, involvement with student politics. It was quite a lesson in participant observation!

### Marxism Europeanized: Chicago

I had been four years in Zambia. It was time to move on, so I called on the avuncular Edward Shils once again. Could he help me find a place in an American sociology department? I applied to Chicago's department but *The Colour of Class*, then still in manuscript form, proved, not for the last time, to be a liability, sending me down the list of applicants. I just squeaked in but without any funding. I wrote to James Davis, then director of the National Opinion Research Center, to see if he had any research assistantships. He wrote back saying he didn't have any assistantships and, in a curt way, advised me against coming to Chicago. That settled it. I arrived in the fall of 1972 and poured all my Copperbelt savings into that first year.

After Zambia, Chicago sociology seemed enormously parochial. But as luck would have it William Julius Wilson arrived the same year as me. Bill's course on race relations looked the most interesting offering that fall. His lectures were based on his first book, *Power, Racism, and Privilege*. There I combined forces with Ida Susser, a fellow Mancunian and graduate student in anthropology, to shower Bill with a barrage of critical commentary. How could he reduce institutional racism to two monolithic categories—black and white? With my work on the class bases of Zambianization and Ida's parallel research on the class bases of ethnic and racial mobility in New York schools, we insisted on the broader political, economic, and especially class bases of racial conflagration. To his unending credit Bill took us very seriously. He was ready to hear our message as we know from *The Declining Significance of Race*!

I remember going to Bill's office one day to protest the idea of a midquarter in-class examination—I had not come all the way from Africa on my own money to be treated like an undergraduate! I emerged from his office some four hours later, having talked Bill's head off. By the end of it he had invited me to write a book with him on black workers. This was the high point of my first year, making it possible to endure what his colleagues were serving up. Under his stimulus, I recharged my interest in South Africa. Many a time Bill was to save my skin or find funding for me in those four and a half Chicago years. Still, I think I would

have quit were it not for the sustenance I got from Raymond Smith in anthropology and, especially, Adam Przeworski in political science. Indeed, my second windfall was to discover Adam, just as he arrived in the fall quarter of 1973. I was wandering through the bookstore and to my disbelief came upon copies of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, Ralph Miliband's *State in Capitalist Society*, Althusser and Balibar's *Reading Capital*, and Nicos Poulantzas's *Political Power and Social Classes*. These books, ordered for Adam's course, were becoming fashionable in Marxist strongholds across the country, but the University of Chicago? Adam had been in Paris for the year and he was now offering a course on Marxist theories of the state. Try as he might, he could not get rid of me from his seminar. Like Marx, Adam was infatuated by mathematics, and so in the end my math degree convinced him to let me stay. This was the most exhilarating seminar of my life, made up of remarkable students, with Adam pacing and chain-smoking his way through Gramsci, Poulantzas, and Althusser.

I was an instant convert. My Zambianization study had already taught me that the state is not an instrument of capital except in crisis situations, that for the most part the state does what capital needs without much prompting. It was much more effective for each to let the other get on with its business. But it was in Pick Hall that, for the first time, I began to appreciate the wonders of Marxist theory—a version of French structuralism that celebrated Marx's science and was thus perfectly suited to my contempt for Chicago sociology. During that year I grew intellectually by leaps and bounds. I saw Marxism as vanquishing sociology, and I sketched out the “definitive piece” on the end of sociology! At the same time I never lost an opportunity to irritate Adam by pointing to the parallels between Talcott Parsons and the functionalism of Althusser, Poulantzas, and even Gramsci. So, tired of my tirades, Adam proposed that we teach a course together on Marxism and functionalism, which we did, twice. At his side, I learned to develop a more sophisticated understanding of both structural functionalism and structural Marxism! From Adam I learned to teach, and from him I also learned the virtue of simplicity.

After all this intellectual sparring, I was ready for more practical engagement with the world. Determined to take on the Chicago school on its own terrain as well as earn my keep, I looked for and eventually found an industrial job in the environs of Chicago. Industrial sociology had been in remission for many years both in Chicago and in sociology more broadly—ever since the quiescence of blue-collar workers had put another nail in the Marxist coffin. Little did I know that studies of industrial work were about to enjoy a renaissance with the publi-

cation of Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. At this point, however, I was more concerned with my daily battles for survival at Allied Corporation. In the beginning, it was difficult enough to stand on my feet for eight hours, never mind making the piece rates. Then it became a matter of negotiating the human obstacles — fellow operators, the inspectors, the truck drivers, the crib attendants, my foreman — as well as material threats to life and limb in the struggle to “make out.” It was the analogue of my induction into Chicago's sociology department, and so I gave my coworkers the names of Chicago faculty — Bill, Jim, Morris, Ed, and so on. They were the *dramatis personae* in *Manufacturing Consent* as I revealed on one of my returns to Chicago, to the vast amusement of all those assembled.

My ineptitude as an industrial worker may have endangered my life but not my employment or, for that matter, my wages. As my dayman never ceased to tell me, “No one pushes you around here.” But that was the puzzle: Why then do people work as hard as they do? Why do they bust their asses to make out? Money was only part of the story since marginal returns for extra effort were small and even negative. Industrial sociology, originating with management's concern to increase productivity, had always been interested in the opposite question: Why people don't work harder. Restriction of output had been the question of Chicago's great ethnographer of work, Donald Roy, who had coincidentally labored in the same factory thirty years before.

If industrial sociology asked the “wrong” question, Marxism asked the right question but gave the wrong answer. Marxists — from Marx to Braverman — insisted on coercion as the instrument to extract labor from labor power. Coercion did not make sense at Allied, where our employment and minimum wage were protected and where workers spontaneously consented to managerial expectations. More than that, when managerial incompetence impeded workers, rather than sitting back on their laurels they would often invent some new angle to achieve managerial goals. Braverman's focus on the historical transformation of work through deskilling missed the subjective side of work. I argued that politics and ideology are not the preserve of the superstructure but are firmly rooted in the economic base itself. Gramsci's conception of force and consent, his notion of the concrete coordination of class interests, Poulantzas's conception of citizenship and the relative autonomy of the capitalist state, and Althusser's notion of ideology as lived experience all had their place there in the regulation of production. Marxism had located the organization of consent in the state, in civil society, in the family, in school — anywhere but production, which was presumed

to be the crucible of class struggle. My experiences, by contrast, taught me how consent was manufactured in production. What I discovered and elaborated in my dissertation and subsequent book, *Manufacturing Consent*, was the hegemonic organization of work. Needless to say, my focus on the politics of production was also consonant with Foucault's insistence on the ubiquity of micropowers.

Many criticisms have been leveled against *Manufacturing Consent*, but the criticism I would level at it now is its static functionalism. For a Marxist, the functionalist question is a reasonable one: in an age of revolutionary optimism one wants to know what keeps capitalism going and why workers actively reproduce the conditions of their own exploitation. But there can be no final, unchanging answer to a functionalist question. I made the mistake of constituting the hegemonic organization of work as the metaphorical end of American history and turned, instead, to other parts of the world. I should have seen that hegemonic organization of work sowed the seeds of its own destruction. The effectiveness with which the “internal state” and the “internal labor market” demobilized class struggle and constituted workers as individuals with interests in capital accumulation would make organized labor easy targets of the Reagan offensive and of global competition. From then on, instead of capital making material concessions to labor, labor began to make material concessions to capital so as to simply hold onto jobs. Instead of hegemony, the working class increasingly faced despotism. The years 1974–75, when I was working at Allied, proved to be a watershed in the history of organized American labor, after which its decline has been continuous.

There are methodological lessons here, too: in constituting the macrofoundations of microprocesses, we should not forget that external forces are but shorthand for the effects of further, unexamined microprocesses. As a practical expedient, the ethnography of work may have to reify the state, but one shouldn't forget that states, too, can change as a result of internal (or external) processes. Similarly, in identifying the relevant external forces, one should allow new ones that had been latent to come into play. Perhaps global competition was not important when I was working at Allied but it surely became important very soon afterward. *Manufacturing Consent* suffered not only from the reification of external forces but also from tendencies in the opposite direction: the individualizing of social processes, overlooking the possibility that such processes could themselves congeal into a force, that individual consent could turn into a social movement, that making out could become making a strike. I had imbibed too much rational choice theory, forgetting that individual rationality was a contin-

gent social effect! Rick Fantasia's *Cultures of Solidarity* would make this point deftly.

### Marxism Historicized: Berkeley

But I am getting ahead of myself. Long before the dissertation was finished I started looking for an academic job. My penchant for kamikaze acts led me to call on my erstwhile benefactor Edward Shils for a letter of recommendation. What could be better than a letter from Edward Shils—sociology's *éminence grise*? Sure enough it arrived, damning me with faint praise, intelligent and hard-working yes, but also sectarian and antinomian. If my high school cramming had not snuffed out any imagination, then my mathematical training at university surely had. Through this thinly disguised red baiting, the message was clear: don't hire this adolescent. So unusual was this letter that it drew attention to my case wherever I applied and prompted a flurry of interviews. I found out about the letter from Erik Wright, then a graduate student at Berkeley, whom I knew to be a Marxist sociologist like myself. He said I'd better put a stop to Shils's letter as it had already destroyed my chances at Berkeley. Since I had been invited for an interview at the University of California, Los Angeles, Erik invited me up to Berkeley to visit with him. That visit was the beginning of a life-long friendship and joint commitment to Marxism. We discovered the first of our many Marxist complementarities—he the survey researcher of relations of production and I the ethnographer of the relations in production.

As I was to learn over the years, organizing is one of Erik's many strengths, and for my visit he'd already set up a little talk to graduate students as well as interviews with five faculty. They included the reluctant Neil Smelser, then chair of the department, who told me I was on a back burner. Next time I heard from him, some three weeks later, he offered me the job, the result of artful logrolling in a fractious department. Although I had assembled quite a few offers by that time, there was no doubt where I wanted to be! Still, I insisted on the real interview I had missed and presented my dissertation to an amazed audience, clearly divided into those delighted and those dismayed that I had somehow landed the job without a formal interview—surely the secret of my good fortune. I duly thanked Edward Shils for all his help and generous support. We would never meet again.

When it comes to self-education there's nothing like teaching, especially at Berkeley. Neil Smelser decided I should teach the required undergraduate the-

ory course, and I've never stopped since I began in 1977. Then it was a quarter long, today it is two semesters. I teach it as a course on Marxism and sociology. The first semester plots the historical reconstruction of Marxism from Marx and Engels to Lenin, Gramsci, and Fanon. The second semester organizes a critical engagement with Marxism: Durkheim with Marx, Weber with Lenin, Foucault with Gramsci, de Beauvoir with Fanon. Over the years, the course has marched in tune with my own theoretical shifts—it has become a summation and repository of where I am theoretically. With ever more undergraduates, ever more poorly prepared by California's schools, ever more pressured by increasing fees and multiple jobs, and taking ever more courses simultaneously, it's ever more difficult to convince them to read difficult texts and write analytical essays. Still, so far, without fail they rise to the challenge. Whatever the class-size numbers, and now they are up to 220, I try to teach the course as an engagement with texts and with contemporary life—their own and others—as well as with me, with one another, and above all with Berkeley's dedicated teaching assistants. I think of teaching as I think of research, not as extraction or imposition but as dialogue, in which teachers, too, have to be taught.

When I arrived in 1976, crowds of graduate students were awaiting their token Marxist. But they thinned out quite rapidly when I announced that the first half of my Marxism seminar would be devoted to the writings of Talcott Parsons—a replay of the course I had taught with Adam Przeworski. Those who stuck with it gave me a hard time, quite hostile to the scientism of structural Marxism, having been schooled in its great rival, critical theory. This was after all Berkeley and the home of Leo Lowenthal. I was terrified of graduate teaching and still am. Fearing discussion, I would try to lecture straight through, but that never worked. I had to learn the hard way that student engagement was how learning occurred, and if this came at the cost of humiliating or derailing the instructor so much the better.

As to my colleagues, I was too intimidated and defensive to learn much from them. Besides, they were too preoccupied with their own battles to care much about their antinomian Marxist—except when it came to voting! But there were others, including the brilliant Margaret Cerullo, a visiting lecturer in 1977, who provoked me into taking critical theory and radical feminism seriously. At the time, this was quite a shock to my system, from which I only gradually recovered. Worldly, generous, passionate, and always challenging, she has been my unerring critic ever since. And there was Tom Long, subsequently a sociology graduate student, but at the time an undergraduate, giving his own courses on critical

theory, Habermas, and Foucault. From him I learned more than from anyone else. There was also Carol Hatch, curriculum administrator, Marxist-feminist manqué, dedicated member of the *Socialist Review* collective, whose office was always a beehive of intellectual and political activity. She was usually the first and most exacting reader of my papers, indefatigable arguer in my courses, conscience of us all. She died in 1989—far too young to die—reflecting on the meaning of Tiananmen Square. Thus, it was from the “margins” of the department that I learned the most.

Berkeley forced me to confront a plethora of Marxisms, all of which had something to say about my twin areas of interest: production and politics. So my sanitized scientific Marxism took a historical turn as I tried to grasp Marxism’s self-transformation, following one historical challenge after another. This historicized view of Marxism congealed in the undergraduate theory course but it also gave new impetus to my research. I became especially interested in the challenge of communism or, as I would call it, following Ivan Szelenyi, state socialism. Some, such as my friend Erik Wright, could never take real communism seriously, regarding it as a form of statism unrelated to Marxist communism. Erik refused the bourgeois provocation that associated actually existing socialism with Marxism and instead has sought out alternative “real utopias.” I, however, always took the view that we have much to learn from communism’s remarkable detour in history, which was undoubtedly inspired by Marxist ideas. We cannot afford to ignore it.

My teacher Jaap van Velsen used to pose the challenge as follows: Marxists are always comparing some ideal typical notion of socialism with actually existing capitalism, but who of them dares to deal with actually existing socialism? Of course, there have been great Marxist scholars of actually existing socialism, from Trotsky to Deutscher, the young Kolakowski to the Budapest school, and there have been a host of scholars on the borderlands of Marxism, including Rudolf Bahro, Ivan Szelenyi, E. H. Carr, and Moshe Lewin. Still, I agree, run-of-the-mill Marxism has not worried enough about the significance of state socialism. It should be said, however, that anti-Marxists are no less guilty of “false comparisons.” In trying to discredit communism as inefficient and totalitarian they compare the realities of communism with ideal typical notions of capitalism. The conclusion is the same: we need to compare like with like: reality with reality, or, in more sophisticated analyses, the relation of reality to ideology in one context should be compared with the relation of reality to ideology in the other context.

There was yet another reason to turn to state socialism and that was the soci-

ologist’s critique of *Manufacturing Consent*—how do I know that the features of hegemonic production politics are a function of industrialism rather than capitalism? Only a comparison with noncapitalist industrial production might settle that issue. But how was I to garner information about the state socialist workplace—communism’s most heavily guarded secret? After stumbling around in a literature of innuendo, propaganda, and speculation, my work took a leap forward when I discovered Miklos Haraszti’s, *A Worker in a Worker’s State*. Lo and behold, this was a participant observation study of a machine shop in Hungary, very similar in technical make-up to the one I’d done at Allied, yet the differences in our experiences were stark. Haraszti was slaving under a relentless norm that required running two machines at once, a piece rate system that offered no guaranteed minimum wage, and a political regime of production that promoted arbitrary, despotic interventions from a conspiracy of party, trade union and management. This was a bureaucratic despotism that contrasted so vividly not only with the hegemonic regimes of advanced capitalism but with the despotisms of early capitalism and colonialism as well. Based on existing case studies and primary sources, *The Politics of Production* reconstructs political regimes of production in these different societies, as a function of state interventions, workplace-community relations, and market forces. My goal was to understand how workers not only produced things, relations and experiences but simultaneously produced themselves as a class actor.

Although the notion of production politics was taken up, my account of class formation persuaded few. Yet, ironically, my analysis of production politics in state socialism—bureaucratic despotism—anticipated working-class revolt in Eastern Europe even before Solidarity took to the stage of history. Once it appeared, Solidarity only quickened my interest in state socialism. I schemed to go to Poland, but the academic world doesn’t permit rapid transplantation. We are always following history at a distance. Before preparations could get under way, Solidarity’s self-limiting revolution had been hijacked by Jaruzelski’s military coup.

If truth be known, my own tenure at Berkeley was also being hijacked, which was providing distraction enough. My survival looked as unlikely as Solidarity’s, since the old regime decided to turn my tenure into a resolute battle to defend “standards” and a “politically free” academy that, in its view, had been eroding ever since the 1960s. These defenders of neutrality and objectivity pulled every stunt in the book, from rigging committees to rigging letters of recommendation, from discrediting my teaching as pandering (despite being the only person in the



department to have received the university teaching award) to dismissing my writing as ideological (despite articles in the two premier professional journals, the *American Sociological Review* and the *American Journal of Sociology*). A determined Robert Bellah, then chair of the sociology department at Berkeley, combining a legal brief with supportive external letters and unknown defenders in higher places, made my enemies look like the ideologues they were. With my future uncertain I went underground like Solidarity, taking up exile at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Just as Solidarity proved to be the beginning of the end of communism, so the struggle over my tenure was the beginning of the end of Berkeley's old guard. Through the 1980s, with the writing on the wall, the rump of the old guard took flight to other departments or to retirement. I returned from Madison with tenure to participate in rebuilding the sociology department. I had similar hopes for Eastern Europe — that the return of Solidarity at the Round Table Talks of 1989 would prefigure the reconstruction of state socialism in a more tolerant, democratic form. I was right about the reconstruction but wrong about the direction.

### Marxism Challenged: From Hungary to Russia

Exile or no exile, Madison, of course, was attractive in its own right. It was an altogether calmer place with a deep professional ethos, proud of rather than threatened by Marxist resurgence. In that enormous department, in 1982–83, I was effectively the lone ethnographer. In the eyes of those graduate students who were dissatisfied with Erik Wright's analytical Marxism, ethnography became *the* Marxist method! This was an exciting year for me, simultaneously teaching the history of Marxism and participant observation, forcing me to reflect on their interrelation. On top of that I was able to enjoy Erik's constant companionship. Madison also offered me Hungarian sociologist, Ivan Szelenyi, who had recently arrived from Australia. What a breath of fresh air that was!

I had already benefited from Ivan's generosity the previous summer. When my Polish plans collapsed, he offered to introduce me to Hungary to where he was returning after seven years of forced exile. I went to Budapest for ten exciting days in the summer of 1982 and would return there regularly for the next seven years, finding manual labor first in the rural areas in a champagne factory and textile shop, and then in the summer of 1984 I worked as a machine operator in a place analogous to Allied. Between 1985 and 1987 I graduated to the Lenin Steel Works as a furnaceman for three successive stints, for about a year in all. In all these ven-

tures I teamed up with local sociologist, János Lukács. His networking genius landed me in these impossible places.

What did we learn? First, Haraszti's experience was not at all typical. As a dissident and as a novice to the shop floor, he was ostracized by his fellow workers, leading to his overly atomized portrait. He worked in one of the first factories subjected to the economic reforms, which further intensified the despotism. On top of that, he had the dissident's eye for totalitarianism. Working in similar factories a decade later, I discovered a much stronger community on the shop floor, one that was mobilized to adapt to the exigencies of a shortage economy. Much to management's chagrin, Lukács and I proposed that leaving work in the hands of workers (rather than expropriating control) was necessary to get things done. Following János Kornai's theorizing, each system has its own rationality and irrationality, and each fashions workers who adapt to or resist those (ir)rationalities. Capitalist rationality called for deskilling, while state socialist rationality called for flexible autonomy.

The state socialist production regime had distinctive political effects. Mobilized by the state to promote communist ideology, the production regime ritualized the celebration of socialism as egalitarian, efficient, and just, which encouraged workers to view the poverty of their experiences in precisely these terms. State socialism had the paradoxical effect of manufacturing dissent to the socialist regime for failing to live up to its socialist claims. Solidarity-type movements were incipient to state socialism, but they are more likely to occur where civil society creates breathing space for movements (e.g., under the protective umbrella of the Church in Poland) and where avenues for individual advancement (as in the informal in Hungary) are less developed.

I was busy working all this out, with my attention fixed on the steel furnace rather than the political hurricane that was sweeping across Eastern Europe. The dissolution of the regime proved anticlimactic, at least on the shop floor — a ripple on the surface of working-class life. Then privatization followed, and workers saw their supervisors and managers pocketing fortunes while their own jobs were disappearing. Let out of communism, its inmates rushed headlong into capitalism, only to discover a prison of another sort. Lukács and I closed our socialist chapter with a book we titled *The Radiant Past*. It was a play on Soviet dissident Alexander Zinoviev's *The Radiant Future*, which dwelled on the absurdity of communist ideology that nonetheless embedded itself in everyday life. We turned his satirical novel on its head arguing that from the standpoint of many, but particularly its working classes, communism even with all its flaws would

look unexpectedly rosy when seen from within its capitalist successor. As communism recedes into history, the truth of *The Radiant Past* becomes more palpable. Nostalgia for the guarantees and security, even for the communalism of communism, is an open secret. Still our book sunk without trace—too soon to capture postsocialist disillusionment with free markets and liberal democracy. A critical intelligentsia has yet to appear that would dare to recover the emancipatory visions and hopes lodged in the interstices of the past.

When it became clear that the Hungarian working class was nowhere to be seen in the crisis that beset state socialism, that the latter would be transformed from above not from below, and that the outcome was to be the radiant future promised by capitalism and not the promise of democratic socialism, I took off for the Soviet Union. In 1991, in what proved to be the twilight of perestroika, Kathie Hendley, then a political science graduate student at Berkeley, and I launched into a case study of a major Soviet enterprise in Moscow. After long exploratory talks, we bargained and bribed our way into Kauchuk. Starting in January 1991, we were there almost everyday and sometimes weekends for two months. Kauchuk had become an open book, a microcosm of the Soviet Union, caught between past and future. Arrayed on one side were the technicians from the Komsomol who defended Yeltsin, Russia, and the market. Arrayed on the other side were the old guard, heads of department with links to the ministries who defended planning and the Soviet status quo. Civil war divided management in all its collective rituals, fostering conspiracies behind closed doors, paralyzing production from within just as parallel battlefields disrupted supplies from elsewhere in the Soviet Union.

When our time was up, I accompanied Pavel Krotov to the Komi Republic, in northern Russia, where I found a job, once again as a machine operator in the local furniture factory that made wall systems for the entire Republic. Here in the periphery, life was quieter and the factory was making handsome profits as planning directives relaxed and management could exploit the proximity of raw materials (timber), its regional monopoly of the production of a basic commodity, and its cozy relation to the Komi Republican timber conglomerate. It was here and in Moscow that I learned the real meaning of Soviet enterprise—the end-of-month rush work, the work stoppages, the down time we spent playing cards and dominoes. In those months from April to July, Pavel and I mapped out the dynamics of the timber industry in the emerging market context where managers, with ever-shorter time horizons, were investing not in production but in

windfalls from trading wall systems for food and liquor, for holiday places in the sun, for apartments, and most important for needed factory supplies.

The Soviet Union disintegrated soon after I left, when the August counter-coup of hardliners failed. Yeltsin assumed power, and the transition to the market economy began. It was planned like the communist economy to be accomplished in record time. The ideology of shock therapy was shipped in from the West—any transition to the market would have to take place at lightning speed, disarming any opposition before it could regroup its forces. It is a classic war of movement that converged with Bolshevik ideas of revolution. Destroy the old command system, and the new market system would magically appear. Accordingly, prices were immediately liberalized with the result that inflation sky rocketed, impoverishing populations overnight. Privatization vouchers were distributed to every citizen, effectively handing over enterprises to managers who concentrated capital and dispossessed workers of their jobs, wages, and means of existence. This was a caricature of Marx's description of nineteenth-century capitalism.

Pavel and I have been watching the disintegration of the Soviet economy in Komi for ten years, studying the timber industry, the coal industry, banking, and construction in turn. Markets spread to be sure, but at the cost of accumulation. Resources flowed from production into the realm of exchange, along networks of trade, mafia, and finance that spontaneously arose across Russia and beyond, rushing into the vacuum created by the receding planning apparatus. The working class, once so mighty, was destroyed overnight as its leverage power was pulled from under it. Workers and their families tightened their belts, made the most of the trickle of government support, relied ever more on subsistence production. Dispossessed of their jobs, men were made superfluous to the household while women took up the slack, reorganizing the domestic economy. To paraphrase Walter Benjamin: the wreckage has been piling up to the sky, as the capitalist storm from paradise sends the angel of history, hurtling involuntarily into the future.

How could one make sense of this tragic drama? This surely stretched the Marxist imagination that had never been equipped to consider the transition from socialism to capitalism. The focus on the power of the market, the dogma of neoliberalism called to mind Karl Polanyi's critique of nineteenth-liberal creed, how market utopianism could lead right back to extreme forms of state regulation (fascism, communism). Institutional economists were skeptical of

shock therapy and the overnight creation of capitalism, favoring slower processes, which would build an adequate legal system, a financial infrastructure, and retain the power of the state. The evolutionists took China as their model, where the party state, rather than being destroyed, incubated market forces. The revolutionaries claimed Poland as their success story. But Russia was another story altogether. Neither revolutionary nor evolutionary, it was involutory, with market forces generating a self-destructive economy, the realm of exchange parasitical on production. This was not England's nineteenth-century Great Transformation but Russia's twentieth-century Great Involution.

### Marxism Defended: Rapprochement with Sociology

With the demise of state socialism, the 1990s forced me to ponder Marxism anew. With the last holdout against market capitalism defeated, neoliberalism took hold of the world by storm. I saw it in South Africa most vividly and most surprisingly. Once the African National Congress boycott was over, I renewed old ties and began to visit South Africa regularly. It was always refreshing to be dropped into the cauldron of South African politics after Russia's political desert. But for all that, the trajectory of South Africa was no less antisocialist even though it started in a different place. The African National Congress came to power in alliance with the Communist Party and the labor unions. Within years its socialist program was in tatters, neoliberal economic policies were hegemonic, and demobilization of civil society became the order of the day. Liberated from the doctrinaire control of the Soviet Communist Party, the 1990s could have been a period of socialist experiment. If not in South Africa, where?

The new world conjuncture called for reassessing the Marxist agenda. I was floundering, losing my way in the storm of capitalism. Even as purified capitalism unleashed extremes of opulence and poverty, despotism and oppression, locally, nationally, and globally, resistance seemed paradoxically (for a Marxist) to have died down. The social movements that had nurtured Marxism in the past were in remission. I turned inward to the graduate students around me for inspiration.

Ever since I arrived at Berkeley I had taught a research practicum on participant observation. Unlike Wisconsin students, who thought it was the Marxist method, Berkeley students regarded participant observation as the antithesis of grand Marxist syntheses, which had to be garnered from historical and comparative research. I set about convincing them otherwise, by elaborating the ex-

tended case method that I had learned at the feet of Jaap Van Velsen. I sought to marry two Berkeley traditions—the ethnographic tradition of Herbert Blumer, Erving Goffman, Arlie Hochschild and others with the macrohistorical traditions of Reinhard Bendix, Seymour Martin Lipset, Franz Schurman, Philip Selznick, Neil Smelser, and Robert Bellah. At the end of one particularly successful participant observation course in the fall of 1988, I seized the moment and proposed we continue toward a book. The students were skeptical but sufficiently fond of one another to want to continue to meet—as long as it was over sumptuous meals. It turned out that they had quite a talent for culinary practice. After many trials and tribulations, the result was *Ethnography Unbound*—unbound from the micro, unbound from the present, unbound from induction. Rather than discovering grounded theory, the extended case method sought to reconstruct existing theory in the light of anomalies thrown up by the field. Rather than suspending “context,” our theoretically driven approach allowed the incorporation of historical and contemporary forces beyond the site.

Work on *Ethnography Unbound* began in the fall of 1988 and finished two years later, in the fall of 1990. Those were moments of historical optimism, stimulated by the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 1996, a time of political retrenchment, I turned for inspiration to a new group students whose dissertations I was supervising. Their research, broadly ethnographic, was scattered the world over: from Hungary to Brazil, from Ireland to San Francisco, from Kerala to Pittsburgh. Could we stretch the extended case method to embrace a vision of the globe rather than being confined to the national context. Could we collectively develop a view of globalization from below? None of us, and especially I, had any idea where we would end up. We simply began by calling our project “global ethnography.” Our task was to figure out what that might mean and what light it might shed on the world around us. Globalization was not of a piece, but how could we divide it up? After much thrashing around in the literature and our own studies, we decided on three approaches: globalization as supranational force, seemingly beyond human control; globalization as transnational connections that demystified the naturalness of forces, revealing them as the product of social processes that linked people across national boundaries; and finally, globalization as postnational imaginations that galvanize movements with alternative visions and possibilities. The further we extended from the micro to the macro, the more important it was to conduct historical explorations of our sites and utilize theory to connect local to global. Our ethnographies had to become ethnohistories.

This was as challenging a project as I'd ever undertaken. From start to finish,

it took us three years of Sturm und Drang and then a year to get it published. If the value of intellectual products varies with the suffering it calls forth, then this was indeed a very valuable project! I learned how limited was my own Marxism, which, like sociology, had such great difficulty in thinking beyond the nation state—something that came so much easier to my collaborators. Thus, when I thought of Russia's economic involution, I thought of comparing it with China's economic expansion rather than seeing it as the product of globalization, whether this be the information society, the ascendancy of finance capital, or the expansion of consumer capitalism. Significantly my contribution to *Global Ethnography* was confined to the introduction and conclusion.

If *Global Ethnography* was not distraction enough, my colleagues had another surprise in store for me. Desperate for a chairperson, they chose me! I was flattered and seized the opportunity to apply the extended case method to my own department. After all, I had been a participant observer there for more than twenty years. The least I could try to do was to give the department a sense of its own mission. I had always been in awe of Berkeley's illustrious past—the amazing people who had taught there in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, in the 1980s I had organized courses to get students to interview senior faculty on videotape or those, that is, who were still alive. Writing in 1970, my nemesis Edward Shils doubted whether the Berkeley department would ever add up to anything more than a “pluralistic assemblage of eminent figures” bereft of a unifying “line.” Now that the old guard had gone and with them the battles of the past, we could begin anew the dialogue about whom we were. If there was any identity to which we could all attach ourselves it was that of public sociology. Many of us actually engaged publics beyond the academy, and those of us who didn't, like myself, thought it was an important thing to do. Pummeled, prodded, and aided by Jonathan VanAntwerpen, I began to uncover the fascinating untold history of Berkeley sociology, a genealogy of its public engagements. After a life of importing “sociology from” the world I studied, I now embarked on a new venture—examining the possibilities and dilemmas of exporting “sociology to” society beyond the academy.

Fate decreed that I take my campaign for “public sociology” beyond the department. So it was that in the middle of my term as department chair, I became embroiled in a fracas with the American Sociological Association. I publicly resigned from its Publications Committee for what I regarded as high-handed action by their Executive Council. The president at the time sought my excommunication, charging me with unethical conduct. This came to naught except

that, unknowingly, I had tapped a groundswell of popular resentment toward the association's governing body and its oligarchic tendencies. I was swept into an ascendant path, from professional office to professional office. Within three years, I found myself elected president of the association, an unimagined honor indeed, which gives an ironic twist to those graduate school days in the Regenstein Library when I planned the end of sociology. There are those, of course, for whom my election does indeed mark the end of sociology. Edward Shils would no doubt be among them!