

cessfully resisted the expropriation of skill or centralization of control, just as in state socialism shop-floor operators and workers are often defenseless against the concerted efforts of trade union, party, and management to control production. While such economic and social factors explain variations both over time and between places within advanced capitalism and within state socialism, in no way do such variations refute the contention of this chapter that for the survival of these societies, the tendencies must be stronger than the countertendencies.

Finally, we don't want our conclusion to be misunderstood. We are not saying that autonomy on the shop floor will by itself resolve the dilemmas of socialist economies. Their fate hangs elsewhere, namely in the hierarchical relations between state and enterprises—relations which create the very problems to which self-organization is one adaptive response.

5 Painting Socialism

"New Evolutionism" is based on faith in the power of the working class, which, with a steady and unyielding stand, has on several occasions forced the government to make spectacular concessions. It is difficult to foresee developments in the working class, but there is no question that the power elite fears this social group most. Pressure from the working classes is a necessary condition for the evolution of public life toward democracy.

Adam Michnik, 1976

Following Marx, classical Marxism retained a boundless faith in the working class as deliverer of revolutionary promise. By virtue of its objective position in capitalist production, the working class bears the chains of all oppressed classes. Its revolutionary mission is to burst those chains by overthrowing capitalism and inaugurating the classless society of communism. In emancipating itself, the proletariat emancipates the entire human race. This mythology of an inevitable, teleological movement from class in itself to class for itself rides on two theses.

The first is the *polarization* thesis. Capitalism combines private ownership of the means of production with socialized organization of work. While capitalists dispose of their capital, workers—with only their la-

bor power to dispose of—are brought together into the factory, where the division of labor establishes their unity through interdependence. Here they form a collective worker, capable of running production independent of their employer. Driven by market competition to reduce the costs of production, individual capitalists cut wages, intensify work, and introduce new technology which deskills some workers, reducing them to appendages of machines, while throwing others into the reserve army of unemployed. The pursuit of profit impoverishes workers so that capitalists cannot find consumers for their products. Recurrent crises of overproduction lead to the bankruptcy of the weaker and smaller capitalists, who descend into the proletariat. The concentration and centralization of capital proceeds along with the disappearance of intermediate strata. Wealth accumulates at one pole of society and poverty at the other pole.

The polarization thesis only accounts for the objective conditions of the working class, the rise of a class *in* itself. Workers form a class *for* itself when they combine first into trade unions and then into a political party in order to pursue their interests in the political arena. According to the *class struggle* thesis, conflict between classes counters the isolating and atomizing effects of competition among firms and among workers. Class conflict not only builds solidarity but demystifies class relations. Workers recognize that their own interests are irreconcilable with those of capital and that, as a collective worker, they can autonomously set the means of production in motion. In short, class struggle begets class struggle, intensifying until workers expropriate the means of production through revolution and establish the kingdom of socialism.

Recent theorizing about class in advanced capitalist society takes as point of departure one or the other of these theses. There are those, such as Erik Wright, who contest the polarization thesis with theories of the generation of class positions outside as well as between capital and labor.¹ With these new categories Wright endeavors to explain variations in the distribution of class identity, class consciousness, and income inequality within and between capitalist societies. In pushing toward class consciousness he introduces class alliances and family relations as mediating social forms.² He *assumes* that the objective material interests of workers lie in socialism, and so his task is to redefine the working class—within a theoretically consistent scheme—to obtain the best fit between class position and class consciousness. He does not confront the problem of the revolutionary passivity of the working class, however defined, in all capitalist societies.

Whereas Wright works from class in itself toward class for itself, there are those who move in the opposite direction in order to challenge Marx's class-struggle thesis. According to Adam Przeworski, for example, because workers are able to advance their material interests within capitalism, class struggle—rather than developing in an intensifying spiral—leads to concessions, class compromise, and demobilization.³ Residual mobilization is orchestrated by macro-actors, in particular parties and trade unions, strategizing within capitalist democracy, thereby shaping the class identities of different occupations and assembling them into social forces. In this way Przeworski explains variations in class formation both over time and between countries. But such "class formation" is no longer rooted in any relationship to production.⁴

Starting from class for itself, Przeworski loses sight of class in itself just as Wright, starting from class in itself, loses sight of class for itself. They both fail to supply the link between class position and class formation because neither develops any microfoundations of class. They ignore the lived experience of class. In connecting class location to class consciousness, Wright leaps over the ideological and political institutions of production. Przeworski's analysis of class compromise is only concerned with the distribution of profits, while his examination of class formation turns workers into dupes of macro-actors. The experience of production is simply left out of account.

In my own studies of the microfoundations of working-class formation I have argued that it is impossible to read forward from class position to class subjectivity (Wright) or read backward from class actor to class position (Przeworski) without reference to the mediating political and ideological apparatuses of production.⁵ Because these apparatuses of production vary independently of production, and because production in turn varies independently of class structure, there is no one-to-one relationship between class position and class formation.⁶ In other words, the link between class in itself and class for itself depends on the lived experience in production, that is, on the organization of work and its regulation, that is, on what I call the *regime of production*. The link between class in itself and class for itself depends on the character of the regime of production. Under advanced capitalism, *hegemonic* regimes engender consent to capitalism by constituting workers as individuals and by coordinating their interests with those of managers and owners. This organization of consent takes place independently of the identities and consciousness forged outside work. We need go no further than the workplace to understand why the working class in advanced capitalism

does not become a revolutionary force *if* we examine the political and ideological institutions of production and the lived experience they generate.

In this chapter I turn to state socialism and argue that the production regimes of state socialism engender *dissent*. Like the consent organized under capitalism, dissent toward state socialism is not simply a mental orientation but is embedded in distinctive and compulsory rituals of everyday life. Moreover, under certain conditions, dissent leads workers to struggle for the transformation of state socialism toward a democratic socialism. This *negative* class consciousness produced by the state socialist regime of production provides the raw material for a *positive* class consciousness, a vision of an alternative order which can only be forged in class *mobilization*. If I am correct, then history has played an ironic trick on Marx. The polarization and class-struggle theses, which were supposed to demonstrate how proletarianization would give rise to a revolutionary working class under capitalism, in reality prove more relevant to state socialism. I hope to show that the reason for this lies in state socialism's creation of distinctive regimes of production.

Solidarity: A Workers' Revolt against a Workers' State

We begin with the most obvious instance of polarization and struggle in Eastern Europe: the origins and evolution of Solidarity. In 1980–81, for sixteen months, Polish workers attempted to construct a socialist society in their own image. Even in its temporary defeat this was a momentous victory: the first society-wide Marxian revolution in history. The working class gave Solidarity's ten million members its energy and determined its direction. Its leaders came from the working class, hardened by experiences in the earlier revolts of 1956, 1970, and 1976. Intellectuals expressed and often inspired the strategy of revolution, but they were not its directing force. Indeed, they played a rearguard role, containing working-class impulses to radicalization and deflating the movement's utopian aspirations.⁷ Initially Solidarity insisted on its trade union status, but the unfolding crisis drove it from a movement for the self-defense of society toward a self-governing republic.

If Solidarity was Marxian in its class basis and its goals, its context, its idiom, and its form violated all conventional Marxian norms. The movement did not arise in an advanced capitalist society but in a society that claimed to be socialist. The self-proclaimed vanguard of the working class, the Polish United Workers' party, found itself confronted by the organized representatives of the working class. At the same time,

although the members of Solidarity acted as a class, they did not label themselves as a class. Solidarity was not bound by a commitment to Marxism or even socialism but was profoundly anti-Marxist, driven by nationalist and democratic sentiment expressed in religious symbolism.⁸ Finally, this was a revolution in which no one was killed, a revolution that was as much moral as it was social and political. Yet, despite itself, Solidarity, inasmuch as it can be regarded as a homogeneous movement, aspired to socialist goals, a self-organized society in which the freedom of workers became the vehicle for the freedom of all. A nation stood united behind a workers' movement for the democratic transformation of state socialism.⁹

But Solidarity was not simply playing out a nineteenth-century vision; it invented a new form of revolution, the "self-limiting revolution." At one level its self-limiting character was tactical. It sought to avoid a repetition of the Soviet invasions of 1956 and 1968 by not challenging either the "leading role of party" or established international alliances. It always drew back from confrontation, sought common ground and compromise with the "authorities," and held down trade unionist demands that would plunge the country into a destabilizing economic crisis. However, self-limitation was more than a pragmatic response to the obdurate economic and geopolitical realities. It had its own *raison d'être*. Solidarity repudiated the Bolshevik model of "frontal assault" and substituted a "war of position." It sought to conquer the trenches of civil society rather than seize state power, to self-organize society while keeping its political shell intact.¹⁰ In 1970, Kuron, one of the intellectual architects of this "evolutionary revolution," advised irate workers who had been brutalized by the police: "Don't burn down [Party] Committees: found your own." Aspiring to political power not only invites Soviet tanks, it also sets in motion the logic of repression, reproducing the oppressive order it seeks to destroy.

Solidarity is the twentieth century's response to the Paris Commune, symbolizing a new type of prefigurative revolution. Its evolution refused the classical opposition of reform and revolution. It began as a social movement for the defense of society against the state, withdrawing from responsibility for the administration of society. After nine months the economic crisis assumed such proportions that Solidarity was compelled to move from self-defense to self-government, from a self-limiting revolution to what Staniszkis calls an "institutional revolution." The state's refusal to enter into any social accord combined with acts of provocation to sow seeds of dissension within the Solidarity leadership and of despair among the people. Although self-limitation

remained until the very end, mounting frustration eroded self-censorship in the autumn of 1981, a year after the government had signed the Gdansk accord. Despite Solidarity's massive, disciplined, and enthusiastic support, without compromise from the regime it could not close the gap between aspiration and reality. Public attacks on the party apparatus and its leading personnel, fraternal messages to the "working people of Eastern Europe and all the nations of the Soviet Union," and continuing demonstrations and strikes greeted the regime's turn to the offensive after the July party congress. Solidarity was set on an inevitable collision course with the authorities. Here struggle and polarization fed one another in an ever-expanding and ever-deepening spiral of conflagration.

Was this convulsion a purely Polish phenomenon, one more in a long history of national insurrections, or did it betray a general tendency of state socialism? Historians have stressed the heritage of an ancient culture which has enabled an underground society to develop and persist for almost two centuries of occupation with brief and partial respites in the last century and for twenty-five years of disenchanting independence between the two world wars this century. They give special attention to the Roman Catholic church as protector of the national conscience, to the legacy of noble democracy, and to a rich spiritual and literary heritage which fed and consoled the political frustrations of an oppressed nation. Solidarity is but the most recent of a series of uprisings—1733, 1768, 1791, 1794, 1830, 1863, 1905, 1920, 1944—against foreign and in particular Russian occupation. These are the pegs upon which the Polish collective consciousness is hung. Timothy Garton Ash writes of the Polish revolution: "But there was no society in eastern Europe less prepared voluntarily to accept *Soviet* socialism, imposed by Russian bayonets. Soviet socialism did not start from scratch in Poland; it started with a huge political and moral debit. Stalin himself said that introducing communism to Poland was like putting a saddle on a cow; the Poles thought it was like putting a yoke on a stallion. This fundamental historic opposition and incompatibility is the most basic cause of the Polish revolt against Yalta and Soviet socialism in 1980."¹¹

Social scientists, on the other hand, have tried to subsume the rise of Solidarity under more universal rubrics. Inevitably there are those who argue that Solidarity was the result of deprivation—declining living standards, longer queues for basic goods, denial of political freedoms, and so on. Because there is always deprivation and because people experience relative rather than absolute deprivation, other commentators

have dwelt on the frustration of rising expectations, the false promises of the Gierek decade accentuated by economic bungling, corruption, and increasing inequality. Those who regard relative deprivation as always present among the oppressed turn to theories of "resource mobilization" to explain Solidarity's success, such as it was. The Roman Catholic church, intellectuals organized for the defense of workers, and binding ties between workers and peasants, white-collar and blue-collar workers, provided the basis for Solidarity.¹²

Others pay more attention to the movement itself. For those who view Poland as a form of state capitalism, Solidarity is an example of a revolutionary working-class struggle that inevitably afflicts all capitalist societies. Although he sheds much light on Solidarity's continuing blindness to the realities of state power, to the importance of the police and military, Colin Barker makes little attempt to explain the occurrence of Solidarity.¹³ Applying his ideas of the development of collective identity and the "self-production" of society, Alain Touraine and his collaborators undertake a detailed analysis of Solidarity as an evolving social movement. They explore the changing balance of trade union, national, and democratic interests in relation to tensions between Solidarity's identity as an upsurge of social will and as a force for the reconstruction of society, between its defensive and counteroffensive impulses. However, when it comes to explaining its appearance they too fall short, appealing alternately to the category of totalitarianism and to a shopping list of factors—economic stagnation, blocked social mobility, migration of workers from rural areas to cities with different cultural traditions, and the illegitimacy of the regime.¹⁴

Those who focus on the character of Poland's political regime have more adequate explanations for the rise and form of Solidarity. Andrew Arato, for example, analyzes the Polish situation in terms of the opposition of state and civil society.¹⁵ He considers the concept of "corporatism" (as opposed to pluralism and totalitarianism) as most appropriate to understand the dynamics of the Polish regime.¹⁶ Yet others, such as Bronislaw Misztal, have drawn parallels between the rise of social movements in capitalist and state socialist societies due to growing state intervention in social life.¹⁷ Always careful to examine both sides of the conflict, the dynamics of both regime and movement, Jadwiga Staniszkis argues that Solidarity springs from the combination of two forms of protest absorption: corporatist attempts to segment the population into groups with greater or lesser access to the state, and populist status inversion, in which top officials plead with workers to accept compro-

mise.¹⁸ While they are sensitive to the discourse of Solidarity, these excellent analyses do not plumb the depths of the lived experience that drove the Polish working class to invent a new type of revolution.

All these explanations either emphasize Poland's unique history or adduce the working-out of some general principle. In both tendencies, working-class revolt against state socialism becomes an expression of something more fundamental—Poland's long history of resistance to foreign domination, civil society versus the state, the oppressed rising up against totalitarianism, authoritarianism, corporatism. Comparisons with previous uprisings in postwar Eastern Europe cast light on what is unique to Solidarity and what may be more general. Adam Michnik, for example, considers the revolts of 1956, 1968, and 1980 as a learning process in which successive strategies for transforming society are abandoned. The Hungarian and Czechoslovakian catastrophes demonstrated the failure of revolt from below and of reform from above, leaving Solidarity to experiment with reform from below.¹⁹ Touraine and his coauthors see the evolution of struggles against the regimes of Eastern Europe as a shift of initiative from intellectuals to workers, from divisions within the ruling circles to the unity of the working class. But this learning process, this teleology, goes unexplained. Moreover, it overlooks the remarkable fact that even in 1956 and 1968 the defense of the uprising very quickly shifted to workers and the alternative institutions they created. Why should workers play such a central role in challenging a regime that claims to represent their interests?²⁰

Rather than treat Solidarity as an oasis of struggle, a model to be upheld or refuted, approved or condemned, I am concerned to explore its roots in specific working-class experiences of state socialism. I try to understand in what ways Solidarity typified working-class opposition to state socialism and in what ways it was unique. Why should the first Marxian revolution take place in state socialism rather than advanced capitalism and why, of all state socialist societies, in Poland? This was the project that took me into Hungarian factories.

Hungary is a particularly apt comparison since, like Poland, it too has suffered national humiliation at the hands of surrounding powers, it too experienced working-class revolt in 1956, and it too has had a relatively open civil society. But there the parallels stop. For in the 1980s, Hungary possessed none of those characteristics that made the rise of Solidarity so distinctive. Instead of a collective memory inspired by nationalism and Catholicism, binding society into a force hostile to the state, Hungary is a fragmented society, ambivalent about its past,

driven by individualism and entrepreneurship. Hungarian workers have learned to maneuver within the socialist order rather than revolt against it. They are contemptuous of the Solidarity movement which plunged Poland into economic chaos. "They got what they deserved. Unlike we Hungarians, who work for our living, the Poles expect to have meat on their table by striking."²¹ From being a land of brothers and sisters, overnight Poland became, in Hungarian eyes, a nation of loafers and hustlers. Their collective mobilization sent shivers down the Hungarian spine.²² Surely Hungary points to the uniqueness of the Polish Solidarity movement?

As I shall argue, this is only partially correct. Despite their differences, Polish and Hungarian workers share a common class consciousness—one that is critical of socialism for failing to realize its own proclaimed goals of efficiency and equality. Precisely how this negative class consciousness emerges can be understood only by entering the daily life of workers, in particular by examining the distinctive features of the socialist factory. Of course, class consciousness implies class mobilization only under certain conditions: the development of collective interests and of the collective capacities to pursue those interests. So the possibilities of collective mobilization are undermined by channels for individual mobility and the absence of autonomous institutions operating in a relatively open civil society. In these latter respects, Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union differ markedly. But first let us turn to what these societies share by stepping once more into the hidden abode of production.

The October Revolution Socialist Brigade

Between 1985 and 1987 I worked three times in the Lenin Steel Works for about a year in all. Each time I was a furnaceman in the October Revolution Socialist Brigade. I had made my way into the heart of the socialist proletariat, the Hungarian equivalent of the Lenin Shipyards, the Ursus tractor factory, the coal mines of Upper Silesia, the steel plants of Huta Warszawa, Nowa Huta, and Huta Katowice. If an embryonic Solidarity was to be found anywhere, then it would be found here. In all socialist countries, steelworkers have been glorified as the heroic vanguard of the proletariat. Their Promethean struggle with nature provides the irreplaceable foundation for socialist development. Acclaimed in the monuments and placards of socialist realism, they were the home of Stakhanovites and their mythological feats of socialist

emulation. But now in the Hungary of reform, with the period of heroic socialism long since past, what has happened to the glamorous steel worker? What marks him as a socialist worker?

Certainly I had arrived in a proletarian city. With a quarter of a million inhabitants, Miskolc is Hungary's second biggest town and industrial center. Its pulse is ruled by the factory siren. Chimneys belch smoke and dust into a polluted atmosphere; at the turn of the shifts, buses spread through the city—jam-packed with the silence of the weary; housing projects are cramped and overflowing; bars bulge on payday; and tiny weekend homes, planted next to one another in the surrounding hills, provide an eagerly sought refuge when work, weather, and family permit. The city's character is engraved in the rhythm of its time and its distribution in space. Although quite a distance from the center and not easily visible from the main street running from one end of town to the other, the Lenin Steel Works and the Diósgyőr Machine Factory are the directing forces of city life. The symbols of heroic socialism may have been painted out, but the hard life remains.

The Lenin Steel Works is the oldest of three integrated steel mills in Hungary, having celebrated the end of its second century of production in 1970. In 1985, out of the total 3.8 million tons of steel produced in Hungary, the sixteen thousand workers at the Lenin Steel Works produced around 1.2 million tons.²³ I was given a job in the new Combined Steel Works, constructed in 1980 and 1981 with the most advanced technology imported from Sweden, Germany, and Japan. It contains a mixer, which holds the pig iron coming from the old blast furnaces, as well as a scrap bay. Both feed the spectacular eighty-ton DEMAG basic oxygen converter which gradually replaced the eight antiquated Siemens-Martin furnaces. There is also an eighty-ton electric arc furnace which melts down scrap steel, after which it is further purified in a vacuum degasser. From the converter and electric arc furnace the molten steel is taken either to the new five-strand continuous caster or to the casting bay where it is solidified into ingots. In both cases the steel then proceeds out of the Combined Steel Works to the rolling mills, somewhat outdated with the exception of an East German finishing mill.

To get to my workplace I join the crowds passing through the number one gate. On top of the gate they have fixed Lenin's head. Like the red star that hovers over the largest blast furnace, Lenin escapes our notice as we flash our passes at the attendants and hurry on to our work stations. The Combined Steel Works is a brisk twelve-minute walk away

along a main thoroughfare. It's a walk into the past as I pass the old foundry, various warehouses, the antiquated primary mill, the small electric arc furnaces hidden from view but noisily pulverizing scrap steel into a molten bath, and the old Martins with only their eight towering chimneys still erect. Steelworkers fondly refer to their plant as an industrial museum. All along are the disorderly scrap yards—mounds of wasted steel and rubbish to be deposited in one of the furnaces. Away in the distance the three blast furnaces face what looks like a huge petrochemical works but is in fact the Combined Steel Works. On a bridge overhead I can just make out the lettering of a slogan from yesteryear: "With increases in the quantity and quality of steel let us struggle for peace." Here too the trappings of socialism have faded. So it seems from the outside.

I work as a furnaceman around the huge barrel-shaped vessel that is the basic oxygen converter. Inside, molten pig iron and scrap steel combine under a high-pressure injection of oxygen to form steel and slag in batches of eight tons, called "heats." I am one of eight members of the October Revolution Socialist Brigade—six furnacemen, a steel maker, and his assistant, the "operator." As furnacemen we tend to the converter's needs as it goes through its cycle of production. We begin by opening the huge steel doors in front of the converter, and then guide the two overhead crane drivers barely visible through the dust a hundred feet above. The first rests the beaked tip of a scrap car on the lip of the converter's mouth. Slowly raising the back of the car, he sends twenty tons of scrap crashing into the vessel. We signal the second crane driver, and a ladle with some sixty tons of pig iron sails in overhead. As the pig iron is teemed (poured) into the vessel, the entire podium is lit up by huge flames leaping up out of its mouth. We close the doors and run away from the screaming whistle of the oxygen lance as it passes down into the now upright converter. A departing Boeing couldn't make more noise.

For fifteen minutes we take refuge in our cubbyhole—"the eating room"—away from hostile eyes and ears. Here I listen to endless reminiscences from the past, when steelworkers were steelworkers. Gyuri, our lead furnaceman and winner of innumerable medals and honorific titles, recounts the good old days at the Martin furnaces when there were no computers to dictate the amount of scrap, pig iron, carbon, fluorspar, and lime, or fancy sampling devices or electronic thermocouples. "We had to use our judgment. Experience really counted. Now any untrained peasant from a cooperative can be a furnaceman." Józsi, at forty-five the oldest in the brigade, whose father had been a big shot

at the rolling mills, says he would never let his son follow in his footsteps: "There's no future in steel anymore." He too appreciates the Martin, where he could work in peace, take a rest when the furnace was filled and being fired, without interference from incompetent bosses. He was his own man with a specific job to do. True to his word, before I left in 1985, he returned to one of the two Martins still in operation.

But haven't conditions improved? Isn't it safer, less hot, less exhausting? Csaba, from a younger generation, is the first to agree. But others are more ambivalent about losing old skills even when working conditions improve. They miss the challenge of the old furnaces, unplugging the taphole in excruciating heat, shoveling away at the alloys, and arguing about the steel maker's judgment. And none like the nervousness which surrounds the converter. When there were eight Martin furnaces, if one broke down there were seven others. But if the converter stops production it's a catastrophe. Everyone goes crazy. Never the heroes they were painted, the furnacemen nevertheless retain a nostalgia for a work rhythm that they controlled. Life was harder but more human. From the way they talk, even the furnaces were human. Now they are chained to a charmless monster. We hear the oxygen infusion reach its final roar as the lance is withdrawn. We file or stagger out.

Gyuri, using the controls at the side, turns the converter horizontally to pour off slag. We take up our stations in front of the steel doors separating us from the fiery mouth and the steel bubbling away inside at sixteen hundred or even seventeen hundred degrees. Peering through the windows in the doors or, if the converter is still vertical, examining the flame leaping upward out of the mouth, the experienced eye of the steel maker can tell immediately whether the oxygen blow was successful. Clad in our fireproof clothing and squinting through our filtered lenses attached to our hard hats, we thrust thermocouples on long steel lances into the turbulent bath. With a long heavy spoon we take out samples. The podium in front of the steel doors is a sea of activity, people running backward and forward with flaming torches, thumping cardboard tubes against the floor, plunging glass tubes into spoons of sparkling steel, and then bringing those spoons down with a resounding crash to remove the steel shell stuck inside.

All along, Béla, the steel maker, curses when there's the slightest delay. Every second is precious. It takes five minutes to get the chemical analysis back from the laboratory, by which time the steel can cool fifty degrees. Bandi flicks a switch in the control room and the alloys come crashing down the chute from the bunkers overhead, plunging into the

swirling steel. Gyuri swings the vessel over to the other side so that steel flows out of its underbelly through the taphole in a silver arc into the ladle waiting below. Ten minutes later, eighty tons of steel are ready for casting. We take a final temperature and Béla signals us to toss in a number of bags of carbon or girders of cold steel as a last adjustment to its chemical composition or temperature. If we are on a run then already some of us will be preparing for the next heat, taking a sample of the pig iron, beckoning the scrap-yard supervisor to get a move on, while Gyuri teems out the slag remaining in the bottom of the vessel.

The cycle for a single heat is about thirty-five minutes; if things go according to plan we should produce thirteen heats a shift. But things don't go according to plan and we are doing well if we complete seven or eight heats; the average is about five.²⁴ To fill the time we are saddled with a panoply of dreaded auxiliary tasks, such as repairing the taphole of the converter if it becomes too large or too small. A platform carries us right to the edge of the converter, where it may be fifty or even sixty degrees centigrade. There we melt away slag with an oxygen torch or reline the hole with cement. When the vessel's brick lining thins after about five hundred heats, we have to regularly repair the weak patches by spraying special refractory material through a long thin pipe.²⁵ Sometimes we have to clean the trolley that moves the slag dish backward and forward on the lower level. We have to crowbar off the still-warm lava that has accumulated all over its base—not to mention the cleaning operations at the end of every shift, hosing down the podium and bulldozing the rubble below.

Flexible specialization this may well be, but the restoration of craft control it is certainly not. Here there's nothing to distinguish state socialism from advanced capitalism. But where furnacemen at the Lenin Steel Works greet the closure of the Martin furnaces with ambivalent nostalgia or smoldering resentment, depending on how they are affected, for their confreres in Pittsburgh, South Chicago, or Gary such technological innovation creates a double bind. On the one hand it accelerates unemployment and thus anger and despair; on the other hand, to resist could court the even greater catastrophe of irrevocable plant closure. Their situation is desperate, yet still they find little fault with capitalism. Paradoxically, the furnacemen of the October Revolution Brigade, although more or less insulated from the ravages of the world market and unable to comprehend what it means to be without a job, nevertheless know only too well how to criticize their system. From where comes their perspicacity?

"The Prime Minister Is Coming"

In fieldwork the meaning of an event depends on what follows and not on what precedes it.²⁶ *Manufacturing Consent* emerged from the continual interpretation and reinterpretation of what perplexed me when I first entered my South Chicago machine shop: the furious rate at which people worked for no apparent reason. Similarly, I have been and continue to be riveted by the drama which unfolded during my first two weeks at the Lenin Steel Works.

It was a freezing February morning in 1985 when I began my first shift. There was a lull in production and I was casually talking to Feri, whose job was to clean the oxygen lance, when Stegermajer, the plant superintendent, came up yelling at us to get on with sweeping the place clean. The look of disgust on Feri's face made it clear what he thought of the idea. Who'd ever heard of keeping a steel mill clean? And anyway it was not his job. But there was no arguing with the menacing look on Stegermajer's face, so we lazily took up our brooms and began brushing away at the railings, creating clouds of dust and graphite that would descend elsewhere to be swept up again by someone else's broom. Aggressiveness and shouting seemed a way of life here at the Lenin Steel Works. The bosses were always on edge. What were they so nervous about? How different from Bánki, the auto plant where I had worked before. There we were left to our own devices to make out on our machines or not, to take a walk, visit a mate as we pleased. There was no make-work.

No sooner had we brushed the railings to reveal a dull green and yellow than painters appeared, brightening up the surroundings at least for a few minutes until the dust and graphite descended once more. "Was this normal?" I wondered. The next day the painting continued and I heard that some delegation would be visiting, but no one cared who, why, or when. As became clear in succeeding days, this was to be no ordinary visit. No less a person than the prime minister himself would be coming. The automatic chute, broken now for many weeks, that sends alloys from the bunkers overhead down into the ladle below, was being repaired. We would no longer have to shovel the alloys into a wheelbarrow and tip them down the chute ourselves, choking in the clouds of silicosis-producing dust as we did so. Thank God for the prime minister.

On the Friday before the Tuesday coming of the prime minister, production had come to a standstill. Welders were out in force with their tanks of acetylene, resting uncomfortably near to the converter. New

silver doors threaded by water pipes to prevent warping were being erected to fence off the vessel. Hordes of young lads from neighboring cooperatives were swarming around to give the converter and its surroundings a final touch. Preparations were as elaborate as for a satellite going into orbit. Soldiers were shoveling the snow away from the entrances below and cleaning up the debris that they uncovered. It seemed that the entire land had been mobilized for the visit of the prime minister.

I found Józsi swearing in our eating room. "This is a steel mill, not a pharmacy." He'd just been told to change into new overalls, with a new hat and gloves. I looked at him in disbelief, assuming I had not understood him properly. "You won't even be working when the prime minister comes," I said. He looked at me as though I'd come from the moon. "What's that to do with anything? Everybody has to conform. This is window-dressing politics." So we all trooped off to get our new outfits, and came back mockingly giving our hard hats a final polish. Five minutes later, let alone next Tuesday, we would be filthy again.

Today was our turn for a communist shift. In aid of charity, such as support for a children's hospital or the National Theatre, we work an extra shift. It's a socialist form of taxation. We were assigned to paint the "slag drawer" yellow and green. It is a huge machine which skims off slag from the pig iron as it passes on its way to the converter. There were not enough paint brushes to go around. I could only find a black one. What could I paint black? What better than the most treasured of the furnaceman's tools—his shovel? I had hardly begun this critical task when Stegermajer came storming over, with his hand behind his back and his hard hat bobbing, his head bowed for combat. "What the hell are you doing?" "Painting the shovels black," I replied as innocently as I could. But he was not amused, so I quickly added, "Haven't you got any more brushes so I can help the others?" No, there weren't any. "So I can't help build socialism?" I continued, somewhat riskily. My mates cracked up, amused at the thought of their "kefir furnaceman" building socialism. Even Stegermajer caved in when Józsi interceded, "Misi, Misi, you don't understand anything. You are not *building* socialism, you are *painting* socialism. And *black* at that."²⁷

The "painting" continued on Monday when we hauled out the always-ascending graphs demonstrating the superiority of the converter over the old Siemens-Martin furnaces. Party slogans and directives for the forthcoming party congress as well as photographs of earlier visits by dignitaries were displayed at resting points on Tuesday's scenic tour. At noon on Monday, Stegermajer came over to me with an embarrassed

look. "You know the prime minister is coming tomorrow." I nodded and smiled. "Well, why don't you take a holiday." They surely didn't want their yogurt furnaceman upsetting the visit.

I assume the prime minister came. I saw his picture in the newspaper, peering into the wondrous converter. When I returned on Wednesday, the flags were down and the graphs were returned to their storeroom together with the party directives and photos. The filming was over. Once more we were a steel mill, at least until the next painting.

Workers looked upon this cabaret as just another instance of socialist waste and deception. On seeing workers melting ice with a gas flame, Gyuri shakes his head in dismay. "Money doesn't count, the prime minister is coming." Socialism, it seems, can only conjure up an image of efficiency by calling on its workers to collaborate in a desperate and farcical cover-up. But are all irrationalities of a piece, as they appear to the workers? Is there a rationality behind the irrationality, a deeper meaning to the painting? What interests parade behind the facade? Is this any more than a ritual affirmation of state power, having little to do with Hungary's political economy?

Bureaucratic Competition

The growth of a capitalist enterprise depends on its profitability; growth of a state socialist enterprise depends on state-dispensed investment funds. There are three steel mills in Hungary. Their common interest in expanding the resources available to the steel industry is broken up by an intense rivalry over the distribution of what is available. The rivalry is made all the more intense by the unequal efficiency of the mills. Dunaújváros, built after the war with modern Soviet technology, is the most profitable of the three. The Lenin Steel Works and the smaller Ózd, both much older and in places operating with last century's technology, barely break even. Just as critical is the production profile of the different enterprises. In an economy driven by shortage, the enterprise that produces a relatively homogeneous product is able to plan ahead its material requirements and is in a much better position than a company which produces a wide variety of products and whose material supplies fluctuate correspondingly. This makes Dunaújváros with its sheet-steel production a more efficient enterprise than the Lenin Steel Works, which produces diverse high-quality steels for the machine industry. Furthermore, quality being less important at Dunaújváros, it is less vulnerable to supply constraints, further heighten-

ing its image of greater efficiency. Their distinctive products lead to a corresponding distribution of influence: Dunaújváros with the Ministry of Finance, Ózd and the Lenin Steel Works with the Ministry of Industry. Competition between enterprises becomes competition between government bodies.

In theory, the production of steel in Hungary could be all located at Dunaújváros. Certainly the capacity and space is available, and indeed, such was the proposal of a secret Soviet report. At the Lenin Steel Works they are skeptical that Dunaújváros has the expertise to produce the high-quality steel it specializes in. In any event, the plan came to nothing simply because it is impossible to close down steel plants in a state socialist society. Miskolc society would be decimated if the Lenin Steel Works closed down. A management proposal to reduce employment by just eight hundred workers met with instant rejection by party authorities.²⁸ The balance of political forces leads, therefore, to a roughly equal distribution of resources among the three enterprises: The Lenin Steel Works gets its Combined Steel Works, Ózd receives new rolling mills, and Dunaújváros receives a coking plant and two 120-ton Soviet basic oxygen converters. Rather than being concentrated in one enterprise, investment is distributed among all three, where its effectiveness is drowned in the surrounding obsolete technology. Thus, the new Combined Steel Works is marooned among antiquated rolling mills and blast furnaces. The distribution of resources through political bargaining in a hierarchical order leads not only to a characteristic uneven development of technology but also to widespread shortages in raw materials and machinery. Since there are no hard budget constraints, enterprises have an insatiable hunger for resources—insatiable because the success of enterprises, and thus of the careers of their managers, depends on garnering resources for expansion.²⁹ And that explains the seemingly absurd preparations for the visit of the prime minister. As a very influential person, he had to be convinced that the Lenin Steel Works was at the forefront of the building of socialism.

Thus, by its own logic, building socialism turns into its painting, reminding all of the gap between what is and what should be, deepening the critical consciousness of workers and managers alike. This ritual juxtaposition of the real and the imaginary is not confined to the exceptional. It is part and parcel of factory life: the union elections, the production conferences, competition among socialist brigades and the communist shifts. Because it is embedded in real practices, the pretense unwittingly assumes a life of its own, a spontaneous critique of existing society and a potential force for an alternative society.³⁰

Nor is critique confined to economic rationality. It extends to the principles of social justice that socialism proclaims. "Money doesn't count, the prime minister is coming" expresses the powerful resentment toward the Red Barons who direct society, whom we have to entertain with these charades. Furnacemen are fond of the joke about the contribution to socialism of three men. "The first receives five thousand forints a month. He builds socialism. The second receives fifteen thousand forints a month. He directs the building of socialism. The third receives fifty thousand forints a month. For him, socialism is built."

Csaba, who is neither a member of the party nor a member of the trade union, says all the best jobs go to the party people. Thus, I am told how "connections" dictate membership of the famous inside contracting systems—self-selected, self-organized "economic work partnerships" (VGMKs) which receive specific lump-sum payments for the completion of specific tasks outside normal working hours.³¹ Pay can be three or four times the normal wage, which could easily double the pay a worker receives each month. Karcsi related the story of the VGMK assigned to clean up the roof of the Combined Steel Works—it contained the party secretary, the trade union secretary, and the communist youth secretary. How often did we berate Hegedüs, the day foreman, for being more concerned about his VGMK work than his formal duties. When we were on afternoon shift we would see him wandering around, sometimes supervising, sometimes even opening bags of cement for his mates in the VGMK which rebuilt the walls of the ladles.

Resentment is not leveled at inequality per se, since everyone wants to be rich, but against undeserved wealth accumulated through the exploitation of contacts or scarce skills without corresponding effort. Moreover, there are those who "deserve" to be poor. These are the half million Gypsies who, I am forever being told, despite government assistance continue to mangle and steal, live in a cesspool of poverty because they know no better, and thereby heap disrepute onto a nation of honest, decent, and hardworking people.

Many workers hold up East Germany as their model. Many have worked there and come back impressed by its egalitarianism as well as its efficiency. Béla, the steel maker and a party member, when production had stopped, often entered into heated arguments about the merits of the East German society, where the cleaning lady and the enterprise director received the same pension, where inflation was insignificant and you could survive on a single wage. "If there's socialism anywhere, it's in East Germany," Béla concluded. For Kálmán, a young ambitious furnaceman, on the other hand, NDK (East Germany) is "too politi-

cal," you can't travel abroad so easily, and to move up you need to be a party member. Even though he is married to an East German woman, he wouldn't consider living there permanently. He's interested in getting ahead. "To hell with socialism."³²

But socialism is all around, even in Hungary, compelling compliance with its rituals of affirmation. Painting *over* the sordid realities of socialism is simultaneously the painting *of* an appearance of brightness, efficiency, and justice. Socialism becomes an elaborate game of pretense which everyone sees through but which everyone is compelled to play.³³ It is an intermingling of a desultory reality and fabricated appearance in which the appearance takes on a reality of its own. The pretense becomes a basis against which to assess reality. If we have to paint a world of efficiency and equality—as we do in our production meetings, our brigade competitions, elections—we become more sensitive to and outraged by inefficiency and inequality.

Very different is the capitalist game through which workers spontaneously consent to its directing classes by *obscuring from themselves* its system of domination and inefficiency. We don't paint *over* the system of capitalism but rather paint it *out*. Socialism *calls on us to cover up* injustice and irrationality and to paint a vision of equality and efficiency. The very conditions that are hidden through participation in capitalist production, in socialist production become the focal concern of the players. The compulsion to participate in the socialist game is potentially explosive—the pretense becomes an alternative turned against reality.³⁴

The Contradictory Imperatives of Control and Autonomy

Doesn't public compliance with the rituals of affirmation mask a private indifference or rejection of the ideals of socialism? As Csaba would remind me, "Socialism is fine in principle, but in practice it doesn't work." Socialism is at odds with human nature, so let's forget about it. To be sure, there is no self-conscious embrace of socialism, just as there is equally no embrace of capitalism. The class consciousness that emerges is of a negative character, opposed to hierarchy, bureaucracy, injustice, inequality, and inefficiency. It recognizes the systemic and class origins of pathologies. By itself this critique of state socialism does not carry with it a positive program. Rather, the potentiality of this negativity to become a positive program is determined by the lived experience that goes along with it, the distinctive routines of production and its regulation.³⁵

Czeslaw Milosz draws on the Islamic practice of *ketman* to describe

the schizophrenic adaptation of Polish intellectuals to the state's demand for public conformity. Writers and artists find ways of retaining an inner integrity while complying with the ritualized demands of the regime. But he too recognizes that *ketman* "brings comfort, fostering dreams of what might be . . ." Still more important, *ketman* means "self-realization *against* something." Intellectuals in the West are suffocated by their freedoms; they have nothing against which to define themselves, unlike in the East, where battering against a wall gives life its meaning.³⁶ But Miłosz is writing about intellectuals who adapt by constructing an inner sanctuary. Poets, novelists, artists, by the very nature of their work, adopt *individual* solutions. It is otherwise with workers who have to paint socialism. They too realize themselves against something, but it is a collective realization, a realization that is shaped by the *social* character of production.³⁷

The ritual affirmation of socialism has ideological effects according to the lived experience in which it is embedded. We must turn, therefore, from the spiritual migration of the intellectual to the earthly realities of work and its regulation. An alternative vision of the possible originates first in the technical imperatives of a shortage economy, which calls forth worker self-organization, and second in the class imperatives of state appropriation and redistribution of products, which requires legitimization.

Let us begin with issues of technical efficiency. We noted earlier that the transition from the open-hearth furnaces to the basic oxygen converter involved deskilling. At the Martin the furnacemen were flexibly organized to improvise in the face of shortages. Now they have lost that capacity, falling victim to the caprice of the converter. There is not much we can do about its sensitivity to the chemical composition of pig iron and scrap, or to temperature fluctuations arising from uncontrollable oxidation processes. As furnacemen, we carry out our routines but take little responsibility for the final result. That resides with the steel maker, Béla. Accustomed to the Martin, where he could nurse the process along through the eight-hour cycle, he never adjusted to the converter's forty-minute cycle. Critical judgments had to be made instantaneously without time for calculation or discussion. And he had to live with the consequences.

But what about the Japanese computer system, publicly boasted as state-of-the-art technology, designed to eliminate human judgment and thus human error—the secret of quality steel? Its flashing panels light up the walls of the control room; its monitors pour out information,

calculating exactly what has to be done next. But there's a snag; the calculations assume a Japanese economy in which the quality and quantity of all inputs can be calibrated exactly and ahead of time. It assumes that variables can be held constant—an impossibility in a shortage economy. To follow the directions of the computer would be to ruin three heats out of four. Béla never ceased to curse those half-billion forints down the drain. But it's worse than useless. The steel maker can't just ignore the computer, for it relentlessly monitors and records everything he does, pointing an accusing finger at any deviation. Those above have ready ammunition, if they need any, for disciplinary action should a heat go wrong. Supposedly his aid, the computer becomes his enemy. He is compelled to protect himself by deceiving it, to strategize against his tormenter. It all drove Béla insane—rushing frantically between the converter and the control room, screaming at us on the way, beads of sweat pouring from his brow.

Béla's career as a steel maker came to a tragic end. While helping to clean up the debris below he got trapped under a steel pipe as it bent under the pressure of being caught between two approaching carriages. His leg was sawn in two. The inexperienced Gabi, fresh from technical college, succeeded him. Like Béla, he lives in fear of imminent catastrophe—a simple miscalculation of alloys or carbon can ruin a heat. A leaky ladle that goes undetected can spread a carpet of steel onto the floor below and hold up production for days. As nervous as Béla, Gabi is too young to scream orders to the men in charge of the casting bay, the continuous caster, or the scrap bay, or yell at us. He has to use more subtle methods if he is to get his way and survive daily interrogation by the bosses. They and the bigger bosses, who have staked their reputations and careers on this modern capitalist technology, can only interfere and disrupt production, or fine for purported negligence. The steel maker is left to organize production as best he can under their punitive threats.

Confronted with shortages, management has no alternative but to concede shop-floor self-management—that is, if management wants production to be efficient. But such efficiency always threatens to slide into self-organization independent of management, which threatens the self-interest of management. Management responds with a repressive order, buttressed by trade union and party. As our chief steward said, "The trade union is good for one thing. Keeping your mouth shut." It collects our dues, 1 percent of our earnings, sending half upstairs to headquarters and redistributing the rest as assistance in times of need:

when members are ill for an extended period, have a child, or face funeral expenses. The union officers distribute places in the holiday homes. It is a bureaucratized friendly (or should I say unfriendly) society with little or no power to fight for workers' rights. To the contrary, it withholds assistance from members with bad disciplinary records. An *x* or two (absence without permission) means no benefits. Józsi, always a victim of *x*'s, shows me his pile of old trade union books at home and expresses his disgust by wiping them on his bottom. Long since he gave up his membership. Recognizing where its interests lie, management threatens to withdraw premiums from workers who are not union members or who haven't paid up all their dues.³⁸

The party and communist youth organization (KISZ) are the second arm of managerial domination. KISZ and then party membership is the way up, Gabi assured me, when he was still struggling to find the two party references necessary for entry. He points to Bandi, who, he says, will have nothing to do with the party and will be stuck in his present job as "operator"—the steel maker's assistant. But the party is losing its grip as credentialing, seniority and experience, and to a lesser extent patronage (*protekció*) become more important. The new steel makers are from the Miskolc Technical University or the Dunaújváros technical college, and Péter proudly tells me that he managed to get into a VGMK, which had excluded one of his friends, a party member. Karcsi, ambitious though he is, doesn't see the point in joining the party. But eventually, after being promoted to "operator," he succumbs to pressure and resigns himself to giving up 240 forints a month in party and trade union fees—"fifteen liters of benzene," as he sourly reminds me.

This tension between organizational imperatives (self-organization in the face of shortages) and class imperatives (the concerted hierarchical domination of union, party, and management) governs life in the mill.³⁹ The tension was the source of a tragedy which occurred at the converter a week before I began work in 1987. For each heat, the slag that forms on top of the steel has to be poured out of the converter and into the huge slag dish waiting below. Every two or three heats, the dish is full of slag. The crane driver then lifts the dish off its cradle and transports it out of the steelworks. It was a Sunday early in May. As the dish was being raised it swung dangerously from side to side, slopping molten slag over the side. Standing nearby was Pista, recently transferred to the Combined Steel Works from the closed-down Martin furnaces where he had been a furnaceman for thirty years. His reactions

were slowed by his rheumatism, and as he jumped away he tripped and molten slag splashed over his back. He was rushed to the hospital, where he died two days later.

Management determined that two people in particular were responsible for this fatality: the person who directs the crane driver and Gyuri, the lead furnaceman, who had overfilled the slag dish. Gyuri was told that his pay would be cut by four forints an hour for six months for fatal negligence. But all accidents have to be investigated by a safety committee and responsibility apportioned before any such fine can be imposed. Gyuri, himself a chief steward and a worker with an outstanding record of almost thirty years' service, went to the secretary of the enterprise trade union, but didn't get any satisfaction there. He quickly realized he would be on his own. He didn't see any point in fighting the case at the enterprise level, since management's definition of what happened would undoubtedly prevail. So he appealed to the city labor court. Here management tried to convince the judge that Gyuri had violated some work rule, so they produced a page photocopied from the handbook of "technical instructions" which set limits on how full the "ladle" should be. Fortunately for him, Gyuri had a copy of the manual too, and immediately saw that management was trying to hide the absence of any rules about handling the slag dish by substituting a rule applying to the very different ladle into which steel was poured.

Since the enterprise lawyer did not understand the technicalities of steel production, he couldn't defend management's interpretation, and a second meeting was called. Later on, recognizing the attempted deception, the lawyer resigned and refused to continue management's "dirty work." At the second meeting the judge threw the case out and Gyuri was exonerated. Suspicion was already raised long before any court case that management was in trouble when, a few months after the accident, they nominated Gyuri—their supposedly negligent furnaceman—for one of the highest "government honors." It was widely suspected that he was being bought off—a quid pro quo for bearing responsibility for the accident.⁴⁰ But he would not participate in what he viewed as a cover-up. As far as he was concerned, management was at fault. Not only were there no rules about filling the slag dish, but the root of the problem lay with the continual pressure on workers to get the heats out, no matter what. Empty dishes are often a long time in coming, so rather than wait, furnacemen overfill them. They know that management will not accept the excuse that there were no slag dishes if, for example, a run of heats going to the continuous caster is broken. In

order to avoid being bawled out or fined, they risk overfilling the dish rather than wait for an empty one. Annoyed at the lack of support he got from the enterprise trade union, Gyuri resigned his chief stewardship. His resignation wasn't accepted, but he refused to sign any documents in his official capacity.⁴¹ Gyuri's experience as a union official stood him in good stead as he fought his case through the courts. Without any collective support, others would have found themselves defenseless.

Pista's death was at least in part the consequence of tensions that build up when workers try to adapt to the inadequate supply of materials and unreliable machinery in the face of intense pressure from their bosses to produce quality steel. That Gyuri won his case highlights management's increasing frustration as it became harder to discipline and intimidate the work force.⁴² Fewer and fewer men attend the technical high school for steelworkers. Among the entering cohort, the majority are now women. Once aristocrats and heroes of labor, the steelworkers now lag behind electricians and mechanics who can ply their skills in the "private sector" (*maszek*) as well as in the state sector. Who wants to work on continuous shifts the rest of their lives at a salary not much better than the average? Belatedly, management began to compensate its core workers with places in VGMKs, but these disrupt production as workers (so management claims) devote less energy to their normal daily tasks. Just as important, the VGMKs act like secret societies, becoming potential nuclei of solidarity and self-organization. Not surprisingly, they are already being phased out.

In Marx's theory of history, the forces of production can only advance under private property by engendering a revolutionary working class. Marx was wrong: Capitalism continues to expand and its working class remains effectively incorporated within capitalism's limits. His argument works much better for state socialism. First, the central appropriation of surplus engenders a shortage economy so that the expansion of the forces of production requires worker self-management. Second, the central appropriation of the surplus is managed directly and visibly by organs of the state at the point of production. Workers all over the country define themselves in relation to a common exploiter. Third, because it is visible, the extraction of surplus has to be legitimated, but as we have seen, this only heightens the contrast between what is and what could be. The ritual affirmation of socialism, the painting of socialism, generates an immanent critique because it combines with a lived experience which places a premium on self-organization and makes the source of oppression transparent. Here then are the economic, political,

and ideological bases for the development of a negative class consciousness, potentially threatening to the existing order.

The Political Effects of Economic Reform

But what turns the potentiality into reality, class consciousness into class mobilization? Here we must forsake the contrast between capitalism and state socialism and turn to the comparison of Hungary and Poland. From the standpoint of 1956, one would be hard-pressed to argue that Poland rather than Hungary would experience revolutionary turmoil twenty-five years later. Why has history turned out that way? Why has the strength and radicalism of the working class followed an ascending arc in Poland and a descending arc in Hungary?

The class consciousness of state socialist workers begets struggle under the following conditions. First, individual mobility is blocked so that advancement can only take place through group mobilization. Second, there exist political spaces and the organization of resources for collective mobilization. It is not difficult to fit Poland into this scheme. The economic crisis of the late Gierek years and an end to the rapid upward mobility of the fifties and sixties dramatically curtailed the opportunity for individual advancement. At the same time there was a convergence and deepening of opposition movements outside the party. This began after 1968, when the Polish state unleashed its fury on intellectuals and students and when the Soviet tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia to crush the last attempt at renewal of society from above. Oppositional intellectuals lost any ambivalence they had for working outside the party and finally came together in defense of workers arrested following the strikes at Radom and Poznan in 1976. The Catholic church also broadened its appeal by championing human rights for all, not just rights to freedom of worship but rights to free expression and to organization, culminating in the papal visit of June 1979. When strikes broke out in July 1980 over price increases, several workers' organizations had already been firmly established through the communications network set up by church, KOR, and such newspapers as *Robotnik*. The "sociological vacuum" between primary groups and the nation had been filled by the rise of civil society.

This is the conventional story of Poland's exceptionalism, stressing autonomous developments in the political sphere. Turning to Hungary, however, and asking how its working class has been pacified and demobilized since 1956, leads once more to a focus on how the economic substructure shapes politics and organization in civil society. From the

standpoint of economic development the Hungarian reforms have had at best mixed success, but from the standpoint of political stabilization they have so far been very effective. Looking at them from the perspective of their political implications, we can discern three dimensions of the reforms: first, the greater autonomy of enterprises in determining what to produce and where to sell it; second, the growth of market forces in consumer goods; and third, the development of a second economy, whether as the direct production of domestic goods and services or as the provision of income from private production.

The relaxation of the central direction of the economy has weakened the role within the enterprise of the party, which together with the trade union is effectively subordinated to management. At the same time, the consumer goods and services at the disposal of the enterprise have also fallen as the sphere of consumption assumed greater autonomy. This compounds the decline of the party and trade union as they no longer can compel the old dependence on the enterprise based on their influence in the distribution of housing, education, day care, plots of land, and miscellaneous goods. The erosion of the foundation of bureaucratic despotism has given way to a regime of bureaucratic hegemony.

Housing, for example, is now distributed independently of place of work or work references. There is a long waiting list for council flats, but the relevant criteria are family size, income, and present accommodation, not political credentials and supervisory reports. There is also cooperative housing distributed through the National Savings Bank. Here *protekció* may count, but more critical is the ability to pay. To receive sick benefits, pensions, and maternity payments it is necessary for one to be employed, but one is not tied to employment in a specific enterprise. Neither management, trade union, nor party has the power to withdraw such benefits.

As market forces gain ascendancy, so income becomes more important. And there are multiple sources of income. Not one but two wage earners are necessary to maintain a family of four, and even then this is usually supplemented by some *maszek* work in the second economy, whether it be market gardening or selling a service. Furnacemen are doubly handicapped in this respect. Shift work makes a regular second job impossible, and the skills they learn are not generalizable. So Tamás, Laci, and Józsi, before he left in disgust for the Martin, sought out "supplementary work," which is the equivalent of overtime. But it is not easy to obtain, depending on management's beneficence. Csaba, recently divorced with heavy child support, lives with his parents but

does no extra work. Gyuri, who lives in a village about an hour away, cultivates a big garden for home consumption. Karcsi is the entrepreneur. His rabbit business brought him enough money to take a honeymoon in Italy. Helped by his family, he was able to buy a two-and-a-half-room flat in the Diósgyőr housing estate. More recently his pig business brought in some twenty thousand forints, which took him to Germany, where he bought a music center and an electronic game, selling each at great profit back home. With a little capital, ingenuity, and entrepreneurial spirit, it is still possible to make quite a handsome sum of money.⁴³

Moreover, it is worth making money. Unlike in other Eastern European countries, you can buy pretty well anything from specialty foods to computers and videos, all for local currency, provided you have enough. Budapest is the consumer paradise of Eastern Europe, a bustling city attracting more and more tourists. There are no special shops for the apparatchiks. Instead the market rules, at least in consumer goods. Like Poland in the 1970s, Hungary has used some of its foreign currency to make imported luxury goods available to all, holding out rewards for those prepared to work hard or find other routes to riches. For the working class, day-to-day life is ruled by the almighty forint, not the queue or the party.

Facing a mounting economic crisis and increasing debt to Western banks, the state brandishes another instrument from its capitalist tool kit. Workers face a barrage of hostile propaganda in newspapers, on the radio, and on television as lazy, shiftless, and only interested in their GMK work. They must be disciplined with a little unemployment. Inefficient enterprises can declare bankruptcy or lay off workers. In 1987 the state's new hero is Ede Horvat, the Red Baron of Raba, acclaimed for the tough discipline he exercises over his work force and for closing down one of his plants. In 1988 the government is preparing plans to drastically curtail steel production at the Lenin Steel Works and at Ózd. Unemployment is regarded as unavoidable if the country is to recover from its economic crisis.

Harnessing capitalism to state socialism has rising human costs. The state tries to compensate for wages falling behind inflation by simultaneously creating more openings for private entrepreneurship. The assumption is that the work capacity of the Hungarian family is inexhaustible. Life is ordered according to a giant piece-rate system. As workers struggle to make ends meet, they have to exceed the norm, which justifies norm revision. Socialism has a long history of organizing

production in this way, but now it is extended to the sphere of consumption. Workers are helpless as they clamber up the down escalator, whose downward speed increases every year.

To celebrate the new year in 1988 the government introduced a two-pronged austerity measure—first, a personal income tax that would immediately penalize “extra work” whether in the private or in the state sector, and second, a value-added tax which in combination with the withdrawal of price subsidies led to about a 30 percent inflation overnight. Particularly galling was the almost fourfold increase in the price of children’s clothes. The state exploits the family’s desire for autonomy by multiplying the ways it can manage an ever-increasing burden. The costs of social security, care for the young, the elderly, and the emerging unemployed, are externalized to the family—the expanding welfare agency. The results are not difficult to foresee. Many collapse exhausted with heart attacks; some commit suicide, while others take to drink. Most of the working class is trapped in huge housing projects such as the Avas, where I used to live. Here eighty thousand workers struggle to make ends meet. In this maze of identical concrete blocks, families pressed into one-or two-room panel apartments crack at their seams. Divorce rates increase along with violence.

An increasing few, usually with the helping hand of others, manage to perch themselves on top of the escalator, building fancy houses in the Buda Hills or Tapolca, trying to remove themselves from the scramble below. Although inequality becomes more visible as it intensifies, workers are, so far, more intent on keeping up rather than combining to stop or slow the escalator.

As a mechanism of distribution, the market offers opportunities to all, though more to some than to others. Here individualism pays, providing one can obtain the materials and equipment necessary for participating in the private sector, and providing there is something to purchase with any profits that are made. This is still the case in Hungary. But in Poland, where shortages prevail, entrepreneurship is more difficult to sustain and an enormous amount of time is spent obtaining scarce goods. Well-being depends on networks based on ties of family, friendship, religion, profession, or work. Whom one knows and what one has to offer decide one’s fate. If such patronage is further concentrated in a party elite and its hangers-on, then individual striving can prove frustrating and collective solutions become more attractive. Always a potentiality, such a solution becomes a reality when the state is not just illegitimate but shows itself to be weak, when there is an alternative institution such as the Roman Catholic church commanding the

allegiance of the population, when powerful national sentiments galvanize into a vibrant collective memory, and when there are rudimentary channels for conveying information and engaging in public discussion.

But this is only half the explanation for the Polish trajectory. The other half comes from the spontaneous negative class consciousness which became the switch track that guided Solidarity along its ascendant but temporarily aborted path from independent trade union to self-organized society. In Hungary this same negative class consciousness combines with extra work in the second economy, with gardening and the VGMK work. However, if these opportunities become the preserve of a new class of entrepreneurs, if workers find the taxation rates on extra work too high to make it worthwhile, then Hungary could easily become another Poland.

Ideology, Interests, and Consciousness

I embarked on this study assuming that ideology, being externally constructed and imposed on day-to-day life, was unimportant. Least of all did I expect to find that a socialist ideology, one in which neither rulers nor ruled believe, would have significant effects. Paradoxically, not only despite but also because of their disbelief, rulers and ruled partake in rituals which underline all that the world could be, yet isn’t. Out of this divergence of ideology and reality there develops a distinctive working-class consciousness. State socialism becomes the brunt of critique for failing to live up to its own pretensions, pretensions that assume an independent force because they are repeatedly enacted in orchestrated, compulsory rituals and because they correspond to unrealized aims and aspirations embedded in the lived experience of work.

Capitalism is different. Workers are not called on to build capitalism, they are exhorted to pursue their own interests and in so doing deny themselves a critical systemic understanding of the world—an understanding so natural to their socialist colleagues. Instead of painting capitalism, they manufacture consent. Far from being unimportant, capitalist ideology insinuates itself unnoticed into microstructures of power. It does not announce itself through rituals of affirmation, clashing with the routines of lived experience, but silently merges with everyday life. Capitalist ideology has none of the coherence or monolithic character of socialist ideology. Its heterogeneity and ubiquity, not its absence, are what make it so powerful. It acts without agents, behind our backs, so to speak.⁴⁴

In my analysis of the South Chicago machine shop, I dissolved ide-

ology, interests, and consciousness into a single lived experience. In showing how consent was organized on the shop floor, I missed what made this process specific to advanced capitalism. I missed not only the possibility but, more important, the significance of the separation of ideological lived experience and material lived experience—a separation which produces that spontaneous critical consciousness I have already described. Ironically, in the name of uniting appearance and reality, state socialism digs an unbridgeable chasm between the two, inciting workers to recognize how the world could be but isn't.⁴⁵ Moreover, I was too hasty in universalizing a correspondence between spontaneous consciousness and the interests that guide responses to structures of opportunity. Consciousness and interests do not necessarily coincide—one can be critical of state socialism but at the same time maneuver one's way through its labyrinth.

I now realize that collapsing these different categories prevented me from understanding the emergence of radical social movements outside the realm of private production. In contemporary capitalist society there are spheres in which rituals of ideology disengage from and become opposed to reality, generating a more critical consciousness. As one might expect, this takes place in the public sphere. Thus, the ideology of social justice and social service has often radicalized the struggles of state workers, leading them beyond purely economic demands.⁴⁶ The so-called new social movements can be understood in a similar way. Here in the United States, for example, the rituals of democracy incite a comparison between ideals and reality, leading to the women's, civil rights, and green movements. Although one should not underestimate their importance as challenges to capitalist democracy, they are nowhere near as widespread, well entrenched, and fundamental as the challenges to state socialism.⁴⁷ This, I would argue, is because the language of individual rights is not as well entrenched in the lived experience of capitalism as socialist ideals are entrenched in the working-class experience of state socialism.

In this respect one should not, of course, view capitalist societies as identical. Just as the critique of socialism is more developed and sustained in some state socialist societies than in others, so the same is true of capitalist societies. Just as one has to distinguish the Soviet Union from Eastern Europe, so too one must distinguish the United States from Western Europe. From the standpoint of their satellites, both central powers command an almost inexplicable legitimacy over their own working classes. To be sure, among certain privileged strata there is a material basis to that consent, backed up by an impressive coercive ap-

paratus. Perhaps just as important is the identification of nationalism with socialism in the case of the Soviet Union and with capitalism in the case of the United States. In Eastern Europe and, of course, in many of the non-Russian republics in the Soviet Union itself, nationalist traditions are generally hostile to the center and therefore to state socialism, just as in Western Europe anticapitalist traditions have historical roots absent in the United States.

These differences notwithstanding, here I wish to stress what state socialist societies have in common, what distinguishes them from capitalism, namely, the generation of tendencies toward their usurpation in favor of workers' socialism. The following steelworkers' joke, recounted to me in 1985, says it all. "The Soviet locomotive cannot go any further because there are no more rails. The socialist train comes to a stop. Brezhnev instructs the steel industry to make more rails. It is done and the socialist train continues until once more it comes to the end of the track. Andropov is now general secretary of the party and discovers there is no more steel to be had. So he orders the track behind the train to be put in front of it. The socialist locomotive continues until once more it comes to a standstill. Now there is no track either in front of or behind the train. Chernyenko has assumed leadership, but there is neither steel nor rails. So he instructs all the communists to get out of the train and rock it backward and forward so that the passengers inside will think that the socialist locomotive is once more on its way." We see here how the endemic shortages generated by a hierarchical economy lead to arbitrary but very visible interventions from on high, exacerbating rather than solving the problem. Mobilizing efforts are geared to maintaining appearances rather than changing reality, digging an ever-widening chasm between the two. Workers are not deceived; they, after all, are telling the joke. The opposition of appearance and reality becomes the class opposition of planners and producers, conceivers and executors. The lived experience excites a critical consciousness, a vision of workers organizing their own society, free of political charades and deception. In Moscow (1988), the joke continues with the energetic Gorbachev leaping onto the engine, liberating the intellectuals, and telling the workers to get out and push. "We'll pay later," he promises.⁴⁸

The Russian Revolution of 1917 remains undigested, always ready to take revenge on the body that swallowed it. Unlike the English, French, or American revolutions, which have been more or less, rightly or wrongly, assimilated into their respective national histories, the Soviet revolution has been repressed for at least sixty years. The process of assimilation, which was abruptly halted in 1927 and achieved only a

brief respite in the immediate post-Stalin years, may now be entering a new phase. In the name of "reconstruction," Soviet society is being liberated from some of its most repressive legacies. A giant painting of socialism is in progress, a potentially explosive combination of openness for intellectuals and discipline for workers. It is difficult to predict outcomes, but we would do well to heed Trotsky's advice and not give a finished definition to an unfinished process.

CONCLUSION