

Preface

The essays which appear in this volume have been written over the last six years, during which time Hungary has undergone major transformation.¹ Rather than rewrite our earlier essays in the light of all that has happened in the last two years, we have shown how the logic of our research led us from one case study to the next, as well as how we were affected by the political transformation. The first chapter in this book is therefore a sociological diary of research written in a time of transition. The last chapter brings together what we have learned from our studies in order to cast light on the transition from state socialism toward capitalism.

One theme runs through the entire book, namely, the relationship of ideology to reality. Contemporary commentaries all too often treat Eastern Europe like a blackboard, to use Ken Jowitt's felicitous metaphor, on which, first, Marxist-Leninist ideology is written. This is then rubbed off and the ideology of free enterprise and market capitalism is inscribed. Concentration on ideology hides the diverse realities that constitute the blackboard, making it impossible to study the relationship between ideology and reality. We argue, therefore, that ideology has been taken too seriously, but also not seriously enough.

To take the first proposition, that ideology has been taken too seriously: The old totalitarian models and their successors either saw ideology as an all-powerful tool of domination and Marxism as the root of all evil, or they were concerned to demonstrate the gap between Marxist-Leninist ideology and reality. The result was the same in both cases: an overly homogenized picture of state socialist societies which overlooked the great variety of societies that lived under the umbrella of Marxism-Leninism. They could not come to terms with the diverse institutions of, the adaptations to, and the struggles against state socialist regimes which varied within and between countries as well as over time.

Soviet studies have been victims of ideology in yet another sense, through the use of what can be called false comparisons. Too often studies compare the reality of one society with an ideal typical notion, often implicit rather than explicit, of another. Thus, the *ideology* of capitalism—the efficiency of market competition based on private property and the freedoms of liberal democracy—is contrasted with the *realities* of state socialism—the waste and inefficiency of planning and the repression of the one-party state. Such ideologically motivated views of state socialism deny it any dynamics and have been unable to understand, let alone predict, its demise in 1989.

Part 1 of this book is concerned, therefore, to show just how variable is the reality under state socialism, by pointing to a Hungarian machine factory (Bánki) more efficient at the micro level than an equivalent United States factory. Chapter 2 compares Burawoy's experiences working there in 1984 with his experiences working in a South Chicago plant in 1974. Chapter 3 examines the pressures which can lead state socialist firms to be efficient and capitalist firms to be inefficient. The point of this chapter is not to argue that socialism is more efficient than capitalism, but rather to open eyes to possibilities that have been systematically foreclosed—namely, that under certain conditions socialism can be efficient and capitalism can be inefficient, at least at the level of the shop floor.

We can now turn to the second proposition, that ideology has not been taken sufficiently seriously. Precisely because they have been so concerned to discredit Marxism-Leninism, most studies have not examined its effects, and specifically the different effects for different classes and in different spheres of life of the discrepancy between ideology and reality. In part 2, which is based on field research at the Lenin Steel Works between 1985 and 1987, we show how ideology becomes embodied in rituals of socialist affirmation. These rituals draw attention to the discrepancy between ideology and reality, leading workers to crit-

icize state socialism for failing to live up to its promises. State socialism develops a negative class consciousness within its work force, hostile to the dominant class of "Red Barons." Chapter 4 presents the "economic reality" of production in a shortage economy, while chapter 5 describes how the juxtaposition of "economic reality" and "ideological reality" leads workers to interpret their experiences in class terms.

The dominant class is also acutely aware of the gap between ideology and reality. For a dominant class to rule effectively it must believe in its ideology. This became increasingly impossible as neither political coercion nor economic reform could bring reality into conformity with ideology. Recognizing that state socialism engenders class rebellions from below and consonant with its own professionalization, the ruling class abandoned the project of transforming reality and instead rejected socialist ideology in favor of the ideology of free enterprise. But, as we make clear in the last chapter, this dramatic shift in strategy does not in fact close the gap between ideology and reality. Celebrating capitalist free enterprise no more transforms a centralized state-owned economy into a privatized market economy than celebrating Marxism-Leninism brings about democratic socialism.

While it is now fashionable to compare the transitions in Eastern Europe to processes of democratization in Latin America, perhaps more appropriate would be comparisons to decolonization in Africa. In Africa, just as in Eastern Europe, independence was to bring about a double transition—an economic transition of modernization and a political transition of democratization. Each side of the double transition was supposed to fuel the other. Just as they are now doing in Eastern Europe, so then, too, armies of social scientists from the West combed the continent promoting the magical virtues of free enterprise and democracy. But it wasn't long before optimism turned to pessimism as countries plunged further into underdevelopment. Democracies proved fragile, giving way to military regimes or one-party states. Enclave economies could not escape the vice of international capitalism. Modernization theorists threw up their hands and blamed the Africans, who were deemed unprepared for democracy and free enterprise. It was said that they were too bound into the primordial loyalties of tribalism and tradition. They were not in possession of the "correct" values or orientations. The famous winds of change did indeed bring change, but not the change that had been hoped for. Now the intellectuals have largely departed, the experiment is buried in history, and Africa, with the exception of its southern tip, is a forgotten continent, riddled with AIDS, poverty, and famine.

To be sure, Eastern Europe has not been underdeveloped to the same extent as countries of Africa. Indeed, by many measures state socialism was a success. Certainly, the extremes of poverty and wealth to be found in a country such as the United States were absent in Hungary. But there is little room for optimism about the future—that these countries will be able to grow economically or sustain democracy. As in Africa, we are already witnessing the unleashing of national and ethnic conflict that had been kept in check by state socialism. As in Africa, all the signs point toward economic decline and the rise of authoritarianism. The radiant future that is to be capitalism is no less utopian than the radiant future that was to be communism.

Acknowledgments

The acknowledgments for this book could make a book themselves. I first visited Hungary in the summer of 1982 at the invitation of Iván Szelényi, who had himself just returned after eight years in exile. Although the directions of our research have diverged, his work continues to exercise considerable influence over my own. His book, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, written with György Konrád, provides the theoretical point of departure for the studies presented here. The other signal intellectual influence has been János Kornai's book, *The Economics of Shortage*. Indeed, the framework we develop combines Kornai's microeconomics and Szelényi's class analysis.

During those two weeks in the summer of 1982 I was introduced to a number of Iván's former students, in particular Bálint Magyar, Gábor Kertesi, and Robi Manchin. Especially in the beginning they gave me the bearings to negotiate my way through Hungarian society. With wry smiles and benign tolerance they watched a Western Marxist grappling with socialism on earth. Péter Galasi and Zsuzsa Hunyadi adopted me as their helpless child—until Zsófi arrived. They always made me feel at home, listened with amusement to my stories from the factory, visited

me in towns across the country, and tried to steer me away from huge intellectual errors.

Between 1983 and 1990 I visited Hungary twice or even three times a year, spending three entire semesters as well as every summer there. Laci Bruszt, through his father, found me my first job in the village of Izsák. There I worked in a champagne factory of a state farm and was looked after by the family Tege. Bálint Magyar and Pali Juhász made the contact in the village of Felsővadász where I worked in a small spinning factory of the cooperative. That was in November and December of 1983. I have returned countless times to Felsővadász to play chess with Lajos Papp, to eat the sumptuous meals of Klára Papp, to attend weddings, to watch the cooperative grow under its ebullient president, Pista Tóth, and to gossip with villagers.

In the summer of 1984 I made my first entry into industry, working as a radial drill operator at the enterprise we have called Bánki. During this time Laci and Julia Kelemen and their little boy eased my passage into the rhythms and discipline of industrial life. In February 1985 I began work in the Lenin Steel Works and continued working there until the end of July, returning the following summer for two months, and then the spring after that for three months. Each time I joined the October Revolution Socialist Brigade. Józsi, Gyuri, Béla, Csaba, Karcsi (all pseudonyms), and many others welcomed me back every time I returned. They showed me what it was like to be a steelworker in the twilight of socialism. As constant companions outside work, Jutka and Kriszti taught me more about Hungarian life than I could ever express in writing.

Wherever I went I found the same extraordinary hospitality, warmth, and charm. It was the most enjoyable fieldwork—if fieldwork can ever be enjoyable—I have ever undertaken, although also the most exhausting. I had the advantage of being a Westerner and so could easily move between different social strata. The major obstacle to my research was language. Without the patient teaching of Kati Pusztai in Budapest and Ágnes Mihalik in Berkeley, I would have given up Hungarian as a lost cause. Whether it was on the shop floor, or in the bar, or at home, if at first I didn't understand, then I learned to ask and ask again. Early on, Robi Manchin, always one to turn a handicap into an advantage, suggested that lapses in understanding forced me to be more alert in my observations. I had to continually formulate theories about what transpired, and therefore I was more sensitive to unexpected happenings that had to be accommodated into an emerging framework. So he claimed!

Throughout the research I had the good fortune to collaborate with János Lukács. Without him the entire research would have been impossible. As I make clear in the first chapter, he orchestrated my entry into Bánki and the Lenin Steel Works; he interviewed managers while I was working on the shop floor. We discussed our experiences and ideas in local bars and restaurants for long hours after shift or before shift. We worked closely together on chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 6 is largely based on his experiences. Ilona, András, and Péter stoically put up with János's disappearance for days at a time. His absence has intensified during the last year as he became absorbed in promoting employee ownership. Lukács undertook the task of convincing managers and workers, trade unions and workers' councils, members of parliament and civil servants, that employee ownership is economically viable. His efforts have paid off, as he was recently asked to prepare the draft legislation for an employee stock ownership program for Hungary.

We would both like to thank the managers and workers at Bánki and the Lenin Steel Works for all their cooperation in the conduct of our research. Lukács, in particular, would like to thank the workers and managers of Weirton for introducing him to the ins and outs of the employee stock ownership plan (ESOP) as well as to United States steel production during the six weeks he spent there in the summer of 1989.

The Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences played the crucial role of official sponsor for our research. Here Csaba Makó, László Cseh-Szombathy, and Elemér Hankiss willingly gave their advice and support. In different ways, either through commenting on our work or through discussion, the following have been particularly helpful: in Hungary, István Gábor, Péter Galasi, Gábor Kertesi, Pali Tamás, Ilona Erös, Miklós Haraszti, Gyuri Lengyel, Laci Bruszt, Ernő Kemenes, and Anna Halustyik, and outside Hungary, Martha Lamp-land, Włodzimierz Brus, Ed Hewett, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, Michael Liu, Brian Powers, Gay Seidman, Vicki Smith, Linda Fuller, Stephen Wood, Rob Wrenn, Linda Blum, Ellen Comisso, Vedat Milor, Mary Waters, Gail Kligman, David Stark, and Ron Weitzer. Numerous discussions with Joanna Goven about her study of Hungarian factory women reminded me of my own blinkers. In Arthur Stinchcombe and Andrew Arato, we couldn't have asked for two more challenging and encouraging referees. We have tried to respond to their criticisms in our revisions. It was a pleasure to work with Doug Mitchell who guided the manuscript smoothly through the editorial process. From the beginning to the end, Erik Wright commented on and enthusiastically sup-

ported my work, magically producing a stream of fourfold tables that he hoped would give analytical precision to my inchoate ideas.

A number of institutes and foundations supported our research. My own research was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (1984–87), by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and by several institutes at Berkeley—the Institute of Industrial Relations, the Institute of International Studies, and the Institute for Slavic and East European Studies. Lukács's research was supported by the Institute of Economic Planning, Budapest, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), which twice brought him to the United States, once for six weeks and once for a year. For the periods he spent in the United States he was hosted by the Institute of Industrial Relations at Berkeley.

My closest friend and conspirator, Carol Hatch, tragically died in June 1989. Throughout my fieldwork she sustained me with letters, rich in gossip, news, photographs, advice, humor, interrogation, and analysis. From the time I set foot in the Berkeley department, she was my most relentless critic and dogged supporter. Life is much the hollower without her.

Michael Burawoy

1 A Sociological Diary

“Where the Avenue of Marxism-Leninism meets Cosmonaut Square, a great permanent slogan was erected: LONG LIVE COMMUNISM—THE RADIANT FUTURE OF ALL MANKIND!” The fate of this slogan is the subject of *The Radiant Future*, a novel written by Soviet dissident Alexander Zinoviev.¹ Erected with great pomp and ceremony to celebrate the triumphs of communism, the sign soon becomes the meeting place of the rejects of Soviet society—drunks, drug addicts, youth gangs, and homosexuals. An embarrassment to the future it portrays, the slogan is fenced off so that its desecration now takes place in secret. Its titanium letters are filched by apparatchiks for their villas, while pigeons decorate what remains with their droppings. The slogan is reconstructed with the same triumphal, hollow speeches extolling the virtues of the radiant future.

The fate of the slogan symbolizes not only the fate of Soviet society but also the career of the narrator, head of the Department of Theoretical Problems in the Methodology of Scientific Communism. *The Radiant Future* portrays his daily life as a saga of instrumentalized relations, petty careerism, betrayal of lovers, denunciation of friends, jealousy of colleagues, exploitation of subordinates, corruption of