

# Reflections on the Class Consciousness of Hungarian Steelworkers

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"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 a deliverer of revolutionary promise. By virtue of its objective position in capitalist production, the working class bares 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

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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 their capital, workers—with only their labor power to dispose—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 independently of their employer. Driven by market competition to reduce the costs of production, individual capitalists cut wages, intensify work, and introduce new technology that deskills some workers, reducing them to appendages of machines, while throwing others into the reserve army of the unemployed. The pursuit of profit so impoverishes workers 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 apace with the disappearance of intermediate strata. Wealth accumulates at one pole of society and poverty at the other.

The polarization thesis accounts only for the objective conditions of the working class, the rise of a class in itself. Workers form a class for itself when they combine to form first a trade union and then a political party to realize their interests in the political arena. According to the *class struggle* thesis, conflict between classes counters the isolating and atomizing effects of competition among first and among workers. Class conflict not only builds solidarity but also demystifies class relations. Workers recognize that their own interests and those of capital are irreconcilable, and, 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 Olin Wright, who contest the polarization thesis with theories of class positions outside as well as between capital and labor.<sup>1</sup> With these new categories, Wright endeavors to explain variations in the distribution of class identity, class consciousness, and income inequality within and among capitalist societies. In pushing toward class consciousness, he introduces class alliances and family relations as mediating social forms.<sup>2</sup> Since he *assumes* that the objective material interests of workers lie in socialism, 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 others 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.<sup>3</sup> Residual mobilization is orchestrated by macro-actors, in particular parties and trade unions, pursuing strategies within the rules of capitalist democracy, thereby shaping the identities of different occupations and assembling them into social forces. In this way, Przeworski explains variations in class formation both over time and among countries. But such "class formation" is no longer rooted in any relationship to production.<sup>4</sup>

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 micro-foundations 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 concerned only with the distribution of profits, and his examination of class formation turns workers into dupes of macro-actors. The experience of production is simply left out of their account.

In my own studies of the micro-foundations of the working class, I have argued that it is impossible to read forward from class position to class subjectivity (Wright) or read back from class actor to class position (Przeworski) without reference to the mediating political and ideological apparatuses of production.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the link between class in itself and class for itself depends on the lived experience in production; that is, it depends on the organization of work and its regulation, or 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 has not become a revolutionary force *if* we examine the political and ideological institutions of production and the lived experience they generate.

In this essay, 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; it 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 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 that can be forged only in class *mobilization*. If I am correct, history has played an ironic trick on Marx. The polarization and class struggle theses, which were supposed to dem-

onstrate 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.

# I

We begin with the most obvious instance of polarization and struggle in Eastern Europe: the origins and evolution of Solidarity. In 1980–1981, 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 toward radicalization and deflating the movement's utopian aspirations.<sup>7</sup> 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. It 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 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

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*. Soli-

darity 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.<sup>10</sup> In 1970 Jacek 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 repudiated 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 Jadwiga Staniszkis calls an "institutional revolution." The state's refusal to enter into any social accord combined with acts of provocation to sow dissension within the Solidarity leadership and of despair among the people. Although self-limitation remained operative until the very end, mounting frustration eroded self-censorship in autumn 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," 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 each another in an ever expanding and 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 that 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 in 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 that 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, particularly Russian, occupation. These are the pegs on 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."<sup>11</sup>

Social scientists, for their part, 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 premises 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 and between white-collar and blue-collar workers provided the basis for Solidarity.<sup>12</sup>

Others pay more attention to the movement itself. For those who view Poland as a form of state capitalism, Solidarity is an example of the revolutionary working-class struggle that inevitably afflicts all capitalist societies. Although shedding 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.<sup>13</sup> Applying his ideas to the development of collective identity and the "self-production" of society, Alain Touraine and his collaborators analyze 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 to urban areas with different cultural traditions, and the illegitimacy of the regime.<sup>14</sup>

Those who focus on the character of Poland's political regime have more adequate explanations for the rise of Solidarity and the form it took. Andrew Arato, for example, analyzes the Polish situation in terms of the opposition of state and civil society.<sup>15</sup> He considers "corporatism" (as opposed to pluralism and totalitarianism) the most appropriate concept for understanding the dynamics of the Polish regime.<sup>16</sup> Yet others, such as Bronislaw Misztal, draw parallels between the rise of social movements in capitalist and state socialist societies due to growing state intervention in social life.<sup>17</sup> 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 compromise.<sup>18</sup> Although 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.

Either these explanations emphasize Poland's unique history, or they 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.<sup>19</sup> Touraine and his coauthors see in the evolution of struggles against the regimes of Eastern Europe a movement of initiative from intellectuals to workers, from divisions within the ruling circles to the unity of a 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?<sup>20</sup>

Rather than treat Solidarity as an oasis of struggle, a model to be upheld or refuted, approved or condemned, my concern is to explore its roots in specific working-class experiences of state socialism. I try to understand in what ways Solidarity typified working-class resistance to state socialism and in what ways it was unique. Why should the first Marxian revolution take place under state socialism rather than under advanced capitalism and why, of all state socialist societies, in Poland? This was the project that took me into Hungarian factories.<sup>21</sup>

Hungary is a particularly apt comparison; 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 Hungary today possesses 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."<sup>22</sup> From being a land of brothers and sisters, overnight Poland became, in Hungarian eyes, a nation

of loafers and hustlers. The Poles' collective mobilization sent shivers down the Hungarian spine.<sup>23</sup> 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.

## II

My itinerary through the Hungarian working class took me from its periphery to its core. I began in fall 1983 at a champagne factory on a state farm, and from there I moved into a textile factory on an agricultural cooperative. The next year I worked for two months as a machine operator in an auto plant, reliving my experiences in a similar plant in South Chicago, where I had worked a decade earlier.<sup>24</sup> During the following three years, I worked at the Lenin Steel Works for as long as my leaves from the University of California would permit: in 1985 for six months, in 1986 for two months, and in 1987 for a further three months.

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 were to be found anywhere, 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 the 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 steelworker? 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 city and industrial center. Its pulse is ruled by the factory siren. Chimneys belch smoke and dust into a polluted atmosphere; at the turn of shifts, buses spread through the city—jammed 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 eager refuge when work, weather, and family permit. The city's character is engraved in the rhythm of its time and the distribution of its 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 3.8 million tons of steel produced in Hungary, the 16,000 workers at the Lenin Steel Works produced around 1.1 million tons.<sup>25</sup> 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 80-ton DEMAG basic oxygen converter, which gradually replaced the eight antiquated Siemens-Martin furnaces. There is also an 80-ton electric arc furnace, which melts scrap steel, which is then further purified in a vacuum degaser. 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, which are somewhat outdated, with the exception of an East German finishing mill.

To get to my workplace, I join the crowds passing through Gate number 1. On top of the gate sits Lenin's head. Like the red star that hovers over the largest blast furnace, he escapes our notice as we flash our passes at the attendants and hurry to our work stations. The Combined Steel Works is a brisk twelve-minute walk along a main thoroughfare. It's a walk into the future 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, 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 scrapyards—mounds of waste steel and rubbish to be deposited in one or another of the furnaces. 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 steelmaker, 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 seventy 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 45 the oldest in the brigade and 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 and take a rest when the furnace was filled and being fired, without interference from 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, cooler, 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 steelmaker's judgment. And none like the nervousness that surrounds the converter. If one of the eight Martin furnaces 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, slowly turns the converter on its horizontal axis. We take up our stations in front of the steel doors separating us from the fiery mouth and the steel bubbling away inside at 1,600 or even 1,700 degrees centigrade. Peering through the windows in the doors or, if the converter is still vertical, examining the flame leaping upwards out of the mouth, the experienced eye of the steelmaker can tell immediately whether the oxygen blow was a failure or not. 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 back and forth 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. Béla, the steel-maker, curses at 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 50 degrees centigrade. Bandi flicks a switch in the control room and the alloys come crashing down the chute from the bunkers overhead into an empty ladle, waiting below the converter for steel to be tapped. Gyuri swings the converter vessel over to the other side so that steel flows out of its underbelly through the taphole in a silver arc into the waiting ladle. Ten minutes later 80 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, some of us will already be preparing for the next heat, taking a sample of the pig iron, beckoning the scrapyard 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 35 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.<sup>26</sup> 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 50 or even 60 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 500 heats, we have to repair the weak patches by spraying special refractory material through a long thin pipe.<sup>27</sup> Sometimes we have to clean the trolley that moves the slag dish backwards and forwards on the lower level. We have to crowbar off the still warm lava that has accumulated all over its base. At the end of every shift, we hose down the podium and bulldoze the rubble below.

Flexible specialization this may well be, but the restoration of craft control it is certainly not. Here nothing distinguishes state socialism from advanced capitalism. But where the 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?

## III

In fieldwork the meaning of an event depends on what follows and not on what precedes it.<sup>28</sup> *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 that 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. 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 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, to take a walk, to 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; I heard that some delegation would be visiting, but no one cared who, why, or when. It became clear in succeeding days that this was to be no ordinary visit. No less a person than the prime minister himself would be coming. The automatic chute that sends alloys from the bunkers overhead down into the ladle below, broken for many weeks, 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.

The prime minister was to arrive on Tuesday. By the Friday before, production had come to a standstill. Welders were out in force with their tanks of acetylene resting uncomfortably near the converter. New silver doors threaded with water pipes to prevent warping were being erected to fence off the vessel. Hoards of young lads from neighboring cooperatives swarmed around to give the converter and its surroundings a final touch. Preparations were as elaborate as for a satellite launch. Soldiers shoveled the snow away from the entrances below and cleaned 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 Theater, 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 that skims off slag from the pig iron as it passes on its way to the converter. There were not enough paintbrushes 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 "yogurt furnaceman" building socialism.<sup>29</sup> 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."<sup>30</sup>

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 and said, "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. "This is the communist sector," begins the furnaceman's joke, "If there's pig iron, then there's no scrap. If there's scrap, then there's no pig iron. If there happens to be both, then someone must have stolen something." 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 in

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?

#### IV

The growth of a capitalist enterprise depends on its profitability; the 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 destroyed 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 works at Ózd, both much older and in some sectors 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 for its material requirements and is in a much better position than a company that 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, since quality is easier to achieve at Dunaújváros, it is less vulnerable to supply constraints, further heightening its image of greater efficiency. This distinctiveness of products leads 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 all production of steel in Hungary could be located at Dunaújváros. Certainly the capacity and space is available, and indeed such was the proposal of a secret Soviet report. Workers at the Lenin Steel Works are skeptical of Dunaújváros's ability to produce the high-quality steel they specialize in. In any event, the plan came to nothing simply because it is impossible to close steel plants in a state socialist society. Miskolc would be devastated if the Lenin Steel Works closed. A management proposal to reduce employment by just 800 workers was instantly rejected by party authorities.<sup>31</sup> 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 concentrating investment in one enterprise, the state distributes it 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 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 the careers of their managers, depend on garnering resources for expansion.<sup>32</sup> 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 painting socialism, 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, becoming a spontaneous critique of existing society and a potential force for an alternative society.<sup>33</sup>

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, who have to be entertained with these charades. Furnacemen are fond of the joke about the contribution to socialism of three men. "The first receives 5,000 forints a month. He builds socialism. The second receives 15,000 forints a month. He directs the building of socialism. The third receives 50,000 forints a month. For him socialism is built."

Csaba, who is a member of neither the party nor 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 worker collectives (VGMKs) that receive specific lump-sum payments for the completion of specific tasks outside normal working hours.<sup>34</sup> Pay can be three or four times the normal wage, which can 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 we berated Hegedüs, the day foreman, for being concerned more with his VGMK work than with 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. Despite government assistance, the half-million Gypsies, I was forever being told, continue to malingering and steal and to live in a cesspool of poverty because they know no better, thereby heaping disrepute on a nation of honest, decent, and hard-working 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 steelmaker and a party member, during lulls in production, 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 where 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, East Germany was "too political"; you couldn't travel abroad so easily, and to move up you needed 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."<sup>35</sup>

But socialism is all around, even in Hungary, compelling compliance to 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 that everyone sees through but that everyone is compelled to play.<sup>36</sup> 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, our elections—we become more sensitive to and outraged by inefficiency and inequality.

Very different is the capitalist game in 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; rather we 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 become the focal concern of the players in socialist production. The compulsion to participate in the socialist game is potentially explosive—the pretense becomes an alternative turned against reality.<sup>37</sup>

## V

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 self-conscious 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.<sup>38</sup>



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.<sup>39</sup> But Milosz is writing about intellectuals who adapt by constructing an inner sanctuary. The poet, the novelist, the artist, 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.<sup>40</sup>

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 earthy realities of work and its regulation. An alternative vision of the possible originates in the technical imperatives of a shortage economy that calls forth worker self-organization and the class imperatives of state appropriation and redistribution of products, which, in turn, require legitimation.

Let us begin with issues of technical efficiency. 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 that can be done about its sensitivity to the chemical composition of pig iron and scrap or to temperature fluctuations arising from uncontrollable oxidation processes. Furnacemen carry out their routines but take little responsibility for the final result. That resides with the steelmaker, 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—is it 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 a 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 steelmaker 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 plot against his tormenter. It 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 steelmaker came to a tragic end. While helping to clean up debris, 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, he is too young to scream orders at the men in charge of the casting bay, the continuous caster, or the scrap bay or to 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 reputation and careers on this modern capitalist technology, can only interfere and disrupt production or fine workers for purported negligence. The steelmaker 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, 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. He long ago 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 all their dues.<sup>41</sup>

The party and the 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, whom, he says, will have nothing to do with the party and will be stuck in his present job as "operator"—the steelmaker's assistant. But the party is losing its grip as credentialing; seniority and experience and to a lesser extent patronage (*protekció*) have become more important. The new

steelmakers are from the Miskolc Technical University or the Dunaújváros Technical College, and Peter 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 promotion 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-organizational in the face of shortages) and the class imperatives (the concerted hierarchical domination of union, party, and management) governs life in the mill.<sup>42</sup> The tension was the source of a tragedy that occurred at the converter a week before I began in 1987. For each heat, the slag that forms on top of the steel has to be poured out of the vessel 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 steel works. 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; as he jumped away, he tripped, and molten slag splashed over his back. He was rushed to a 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 much 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. They produced a page, photocopied from the handbook of "technical instructions," which set limits on how full the "ladle" should be. Fortunately, Gyuri had a copy of the manual too. He 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 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.<sup>43</sup> 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. Since empty dishes are often a long time in coming, furnacemen overfill them rather than wait. 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 has resigned his chief stewardship. His resignation wasn't accepted, but last I heard (July 1988) he was refusing to sign any documents in his official capacity. 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 becomes harder to discipline and intimidate the workforce.<sup>44</sup> 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, 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 one's life 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 advance under private property only 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, since the central appropriation of surplus engenders a shortage economy, the expansion of the forces of production requires worker self-management. Second, the central appropriation of the surplus is managed directly and visibly by state organs organized 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 cri-

tique because it combines with a lived experience that 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.

## VI

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 take place only 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 1950s and 1960s 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 everyone, not just rights to freedom of worship but rights to free expression and to organize. 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 the church, the KOR, and such newspapers as *Robotnik*. The "social 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. From the perspective of their political implications, we can discern three dimensions of the reforms: the greater autonomy of enterprises in determining what to produce and where to sell it; the growth of market forces in consumer goods; and the development of a

second economy, whether as the direct producer of domestic goods and services or the provider of income from private production.

The relaxation of the central direction of the economy has weakened the role of the party within the enterprise, which, together with the trade union, has been 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 has assumed greater autonomy. This compounds the decline of the party and trade union, since 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.<sup>45</sup>

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 supervisors' reports. Cooperative housing is also distributed through the National Savings Bank. Here *protekció* both inside and outside the enterprise may count, but more critical is the ability to pay. To receive sick benefits, pensions, and maternity payments, it is necessary to be employed but these benefits are not tied to employment in a specific enterprise. Neither management, trade union, nor party has the ability to withdraw such benefits.

As market forces gain ascendancy, 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 last Martin furnaces, seek out "supplementary work," which is the equivalent of overtime. But it is not easy to obtain and depends on management's beneficence. Csaba, recently divorced with heavy alimony, 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 20,000 forints, which took him to Germany, where he bought a music center and 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.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, it is worth making money. Unlike other East European countries, in Hungary you can buy pretty well anything, from specialty foods to computers to 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 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 and over the radio and television as lazy, shiftless, and interested only 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 was Ede Horvat, the Red baron of Raba, acclaimed for the tough discipline he exercised over his workforce and for closing down one of his plants. In 1988 the government was preparing to curtail steel production at the Lenin Steel Works and at Ózd drastically. 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 when wages fall behind inflation by 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 this principle has been 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, which immediately penalized "extra work" whether in the private or the state sector, and second, a value-added tax which, in combination with the withdrawal of price subsidies, led to about a 30 percent price increase 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 and the elderly, for 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, others take to drink. Most of the working class is trapped in huge housing projects such as the Ávas where I used to live. Here 80,000 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 down.

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. Who 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 visibly weak, when an alternative institution such as the Roman Catholic church commands the allegiance of the population, when powerful national sentiments galvanize 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 that became the shunt 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 with 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.

## VII

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 socialist ideology, 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 that 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 so natural to their socialist colleagues. Instead of painting capitalism, they manufacture consent. Far from being unimportant as I had earlier argued, capitalist ideology insinuates itself unnoticed into



micro-structures 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, is what makes it so powerful. It acts without agents, so to speak, behind our backs.<sup>47</sup>

In my analysis of the South Chicago machine shop, I dissolved ideology, 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 that 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.<sup>48</sup> 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 while maneuvering one's way through its labyrinth.

I now realize that the collapse of 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.<sup>49</sup> The so-called new social movements can be understood in a similar way. Here, 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. 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.<sup>50</sup>

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 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 apparatus. 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 anti-capitalist 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 that the track behind the train 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 back and forth 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, 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.<sup>51</sup>

The Russian Revolution of 1917 remains undigested, always ready to take revenge on the body that swallowed it. Unlike the English, French, or U.S. 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 of 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.

## NOTES

1. For his successive class maps, see Eric Olin Wright, *Class, Crisis and the State* (London: Verso, 1978), chap. 2; and idem, *Classes* (London: Verso, 1985).

2. See, e.g., Eric Olin Wright, "Women in the Class Structure," in this issue; and idem, with Carolyn Howe and Donmoon Cho, "Class Structure and Class Formation: A Comparative Analysis of the United States and Sweden," in *Cross National Research in Sociology*, ed. Melvin Kohn (New York: Sage Publications, 1989).

3. See Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and idem and John Sprague, *Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). I examine these works in "Marxism Without Microfoundations," *Socialist Review* 103 (Summer 1989).

4. Of course, Przeworski is not alone in this tendency, which was inspired by Edward Thompson. Although Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963) did pay attention to the material conditions of exploitation, his overriding focus was on the language of class as an independent force. Others such as William Sewell in his *Work and Revolution in France* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Gareth Stedman Jones in his *Languages of Class* (Cambridge University Press, 1983) have taken Thompson's cultural analysis even further from the realm of material production. What distinguishes Przeworski's work from this now-fashionable industry of discourse is its theoretical self-consciousness.

5. Also reacting against the teleology of class in itself to class for itself but nevertheless wishing to retain some connection between the two, Ira Katznelson introduces two levels of analysis between "structure" and "collective action": "ways of life" and "dispositions." However, by multiplying the range of mediating institutions and allowing lived experience and conscious to vary independently of each other, Katznelson makes the link between class structure and class formation so contingent that it becomes virtually nonexistent. See Ira Katznelson, "Working Class Formation: Constructing Cases and Comparisons," in *Working Class Formation*, ed. idem and Aristide Zolberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986): 3-44.

6. See Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); and idem, *The Politics of Production* (London: Verso, 1985). I have also learned a great deal from several Berkeley students who have worked along similar lines. Jeffrey Haydu's *Between Craft and Class: Skilled Workers and Factory Politics in the United States and Britain, 1890-1922* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) shows how factory regimes shaped the different patterns of mobilization among metalworkers in England and the United States before World War I. Richard Biernacki's study of the textile industries in England and Germany shows how different cultural definitions of the commodity labor come to be inscribed in different factory regimes, leading to different forms of protest and, by extension, to different national labor movements ("The Cultural Construction of Labor: A Comparison of Textile Mills in England and Germany," Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1988). Soon Kyoung Cho shows how despotic factory regimes in the electronics industry in South Korea tend to mobilize women workers into a collective force, whereas the hegemonic regimes of the Silicon Valley fragment and atomize the workforce ("The Labor Process and Capital Mobility: The Limits of the New International Division of Labor," *Politics & Society* 14, no. 2 [1985]: 185-222). Linda Fuller has shown how factory regimes can change within state socialism, allowing greater autonomy from the central directing apparatuses and greater participation for workers ("The Politics of Workers' Control in Cuba, 1959-1983: The Work Center and the National Arena," Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1985).

7. Jadwiga Staniszkis is one of the few analysts sensitive to the different interests of intellectuals and workers. Rather than arguing that self-limitation emerged spontaneously from the working class, she suggests that Solidarity's "expert" advisers, acting as conduits for governmental restraint, were responsible for retaining "the leading role of the party" in the preamble to the first agreement. More generally they engineered the "shift from radical anti-bureaucratic and anti-hierarchical semantics . .

toward liberal semantics underlining human rights problems, but relatively less radical in relation to the political framework existing in Poland"; see Jadwiga Staniszkis's *Poland's Self-limiting Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 49. She concludes that Solidarity, rather than forging an alliance with oppositional intellectuals or the Roman Catholic church, should have joined forces with the burgeoning anti-bureaucratic forces within the party, including the so-called "horizontalist" movement. This was never seriously entertained because of Solidarity's "fundamentalist" hostility to the party.

8. These themes are emphasized in most accounts of Solidarity. They come across forcibly in the recollections of worker activists and observers from the Baltic Coast region. A number of these reports appeared in English in *Sisyphus* 3 (1982): 252–309. They highlight the importance of religious symbolism and above all religious rituals, such as the mass, which maintained the confidence and faith of the workers through the difficult first two weeks of the strikes. Since the language of class had been appropriated by the dominant class and the party apparatus, the workers drew on their common historical culture, particularly on the language of religion, to cement their solidarity. In addition, the reports describe the subjection of party secretaries and trade union officers to public humiliation, whereas, at the same time, rank-and-file party members were often leading activists in Solidarity. Workers also expressed a suspicion of intellectuals, even members of KOR, the Committee in Defense of Workers. Not just critical of hierarchy and bureaucracy, workers also set up the basis of democratic representation and participation, often taking them to obsessive lengths.

9. See, e.g., Stanislaw Stanski, *Class Struggle in Classless Poland* (Boston: South End Press, 1982), 167–245. The socialist project comes out most clearly in the program adopted by the delegates to Solidarity's national congress at the beginning of October 1981. Although it makes no reference to socialism and although its cultural platform was stridently nationalist rather than internationalist, the program nevertheless included the defense of working-class interests both as producers and consumers, a commitment to social policies that would ensure minimum standards of living and above all equality, and economic reforms that combined planning, self-management, and the market. The overall objective was a self-governing republic based on institutions of self-management as well as of liberal democracy. See *Labor Focus* 5, nos. 1–2 (Spring 1982): 3–14.

10. Gramsci insisted that the occupation and transformation of trade unions, church, party, school, press—that is, the institutions of civil society—was a necessary part of socialist strategy in twentieth-century capitalist societies. But he never abandoned the idea that the conquest of civil society would have to be followed by the seizure of state power for any revolutionary transformation to be successful. Given Poland's geopolitical situation, Solidarity leaders attempted to avoid this last phase at all costs, always insisting that they were not a party. See, e.g., "Not to Lure the Wolves out of the Woods: An Interview with Jacek Kuron," *Telos* 47 (Spring 1981): 93–97.

11. Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985): 4. For a lucid attempt to read back Solidarity into Polish history, see Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). Undoubtedly Polish oppositional intellectuals, such as Adam Michnik, publicly drew lessons from the Polish collective memory in their political speeches. But the question remains, How is it that the Poles have been able to sustain and deepen their collective national consciousness, whereas in other countries such as Hungary with similar histories, the national consciousness is less prominent and has failed to galvanize social movements?

12. For economic deprivation, see Ian Shapiro, "Fiscal Crisis of the Polish State: Genesis of the 1980 Strikes," *Theory and Society* 10, no. 4 (1981): 469–502. For resource mobilization, see Elisabeth Crighton, "Resource Mobilization and Solidarity: Comparing Social Movements Across Regimes," in *Poland After Solidarity: Social Movements Versus the State*, ed. Bronislaw Misztal (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1985): 113–32.

13. Colin Barker, *Festival of the Oppressed: Solidarity, Reform and Revolution in Poland, 1980–81* (London: Bookmarks, 1986). The same is true of the "state collectivist" view. Michael Szkolny, for example, argues that the regime has "conceptually embezzled" the essential ideological weapon that could be used by the working class to threaten the social order—socialism and Marxism. Although the church has provided the basis for constructing solidarity in the face of a totalitarian power, it has not created the language for overcoming conceptual embezzlement. So how does Szkolny

account for the rise of such a powerful working-class movement in a "state collectivist" society? Here he substitutes historical narrative for sociological explanation. See Michael Szkolny, "Revolution in Poland," *Monthly Review* 33, no. 2 (June 1981): 1-21.

14. Alain Touraine et al., *Solidarity: Poland, 1980-81* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1983). See also Grzegorz Bakuniak and Krzysztof Nowak, "The Creation of a Collective Identity in a Social Movement: The Case of 'Solidarnosc' in Poland," *Theory and Society* 16, no. 3 (May 1987): 401-29.

15. Andrew Arato, "Civil Society vs. the State," *Telos* 47 (Spring 1981): 23-47; and "Empire vs. Civil Society," *Telos* 50 (Winter 1981-1982): 19-48.

16. For a slightly different use of the concept of corporatism, see Staniszkis, *Poland's Self-limiting Revolution*, chaps. 1 and 2.

17. Bronislaw Misztal, "Social Movements Against the State: Theoretical Legacy of the Welfare State," in *Poland After Solidarity: Social Movements Versus the State*, ed. idem (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1985): 143-64.

18. Staniszkis, *Poland's Self-limiting Revolution*, chap. 1.

19. Adam Michnik, "A New Evolutionism," in *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985): 135-48. See also Ivan Svitak, "Comparisons," *Telos* 47 (Spring 1981): 110-12.

20. Two of the most influential accounts of the class character of state socialism deny the possibility of an independent workers' movement. In *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* (London: Verso, 1978), Rudolf Bahro goes so far as to dismiss the very concept of the working class: "The concept of the working class has no longer any definable object in our social system, and, what is far more important, it has no object that can appear as a unity in practical action. . . . [O]ur society is no longer characterized by a 'horizontal' class division, but rather by a 'vertical' stratification. . . . Deprived of these associations which are adapted to their immediate interests, the workers are automatically atomized vis-à-vis the regime. They are in any case no longer a 'class for itself,' and not at all so in a political sense" (pp. 183-84, 190).

In *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979), George Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi, although far from denying the existence of a working class, regard class consciousness as unattainable without the aid of intellectuals: "Not only do they [intellectuals] refuse to foster the culture of other classes; their monopoly is even stricter than that, for they appropriate and absorb the culture of other classes and strata or, failing that, disparage them. In this way they prevent the working class (for example) from becoming conscious of its own identity in its present structural position" (p. 249). In his most recent book, *Socialist Entrepreneurs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), Szelenyi introduces what he calls a "praxis-centered" notion of class in which class struggles refer to the ubiquitous everyday struggles for survival. Intellectuals are no longer central to fostering class struggle but at the cost of a concept too general to be of any analytical use.

21. I originally wanted to work in Poland. When martial law put pay to those hopes, Ivan Szelenyi invited me to join him and his wife in Hungary. That was in summer 1982, and since then I've never looked back, except when learning Hungarian. My exploits have usually aroused a mixture of amusement and bewilderment, particularly in Hungary, where the industrial sociologist is expected to rely on a few interviews with managers. After all, everyone knows everything there is to know about the working class. So why did I bother to become a worker? In a "worker's state" workers don't speak, they are spoken for—by journalists, poets, academics, politicians, bureaucrats, by the apologists for state socialism as well as by its dissidents. Each group embraces the interests of workers as its own, while workers themselves go without an independent public voice. Workers give expression to their interests through their deeds: in the day-to-day skirmishes at work and in the community which occasionally flare up in unanticipated revolts against the "authorities." To penetrate the refractory and highly politicized debate and to hear workers themselves, it is necessary, therefore, to participate in their lives. Necessary but not sufficient.

Hungarian dissident Miklós Haraszti was a mill operator at Red Star Tractor Factory between 1971 and 1972. His imaginative sociography, *A Worker in a Worker's State* (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1977), always an inspiration to my own studies, paints his fellow operators as shadowy figures, atomized, alienated, and powerless. In his portrait, workers neither speak nor resist, except through unconscious utopian fantasies. Shunned as an intellectual, he overlooks the ongoing working-class discourse that springs from the social relations of production. I was more fortunate. Because I came from the United States and spoke a very strange Hungarian, my identity as an intellectual played second fiddle to my nationality. I was rapidly incorporated into working-class life, both on the shop floor and in the community, as a curiosity, a diversion, a resource, a fellow furnaceman, and even as a friend from a distant, exotic land.

22. Ironically, in July 1980, the inhabitants of Warsaw joked: "Those who do not strike do not eat meat" (Daniel Singer, *The Road to Gdansk* [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981], 212). At this point the regime was handing out wage increases to all who struck, fueling the militancy of the workers.

23. Oppositional intellectuals were more supportive of Solidarity; see "Hungarian Perspectives," *Telos* 47 (Spring 1981): 142–52.

24. For a comparison of my experiences at the Hungarian and U.S. plants, see Michael Burawoy, "Piece Rates, Hungarian Style," *Socialist Review* 79 (1985): 43–69; and idem and János Lukács, "Mythologies of Work: A Comparison of Firms in State Socialism and Advanced Capitalism," *American Sociological Review* 50, no. 6 (1985): 723–37.

25. The average number of hours worked per ton of finished steel in Hungary has remained relatively constant at about 25; the comparable numbers for other countries in 1978 were United States 8.6, Japan 9.8, West Germany 11.8, United Kingdom 23.2, and France 14.2 (*Technology and Steel Industry Competitiveness* [Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Technology Assessment, 1980]: 138). Since then, figures have fallen even further; in the United Kingdom the figure was 7.1 in 1984–85 (*Report and Accounts, 1984–85* [London: British Steel Corporation, 1985]: 6). The labor costs per ton, however, look very different since the hourly compensation of a U.S. steelworker is thirty to forty times that of a Hungarian steelworker at official exchange rates.

26. In fall 1986, the last Martins were shut down and all the pig iron from the blast furnaces was directed to the Combined Steel Works. This led to more heats per shift, and we were averaging between nine and twelve in the summer of 1987. In 1988 the closure of one or another of the three blast furnaces, the shortage of iron ore and scrap, and the falling demand for steel led to a decline in the number of heats per shift.

27. In 1987 under pressure to reduce hard currency expenditures (the bricks came from Austria), a few experiments were done to try to extend the life of the lining. By following what is standard practice in other plants—that is, by adding magnesium oxide to the fluxing agents—it was possible to protect the wall. The number of heats per lining rose from 600–700 to 1,200–1,300.

28. Paul Rabinow, *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 6.

29. My mates referred to me as a *kefir olvasztár* because I would consume carton after carton of diluted yogurt between heats. I simply couldn't face, and my stomach couldn't digest, the rancid lumps of pork fat that everyone else carved up for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. They would look on in amusement as I lapped up my "catfood." Naturally, my diet also explained why I was so much more feeble than the rest, why I suffered from muscular underdevelopment, why I was, as Gyuri would joke, only a 50 percent furnaceman.

30. I didn't realize that I was following in the footsteps of the steelworkers of Huta Warszawa who defied martial law by painting the red star above their gate black (Ash, *Polish Revolution*, 304).

31. The situation has changed quite dramatically since 1985. When I first worked at the Lenin Steel Works, Hungary was still being touted as the economic miracle of Eastern Europe. Now its economic situation is viewed more as a disaster, saddled as it is with an international debt said to be over \$15 billion. In 1988 the dramatic turnover of personnel in the Central Committee and Politburo,

the replacement of Kádár by Grósz as first party secretary, and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union have launched a new phase of economic reform in Hungary, which further elevates market forces within the state sector. There are now plans to cut production at Ózd drastically and consolidate it with the Lenin Steel Works. At the time of this writing, the most widely rumored plan would cost 6,000 workers their jobs at Ózd with little hope of gaining new employment there or elsewhere. In the words of an official from the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce, this would create "unprecedented social tensions."

32. I am here borrowing from János Komai's *The Economics of Shortage* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1980). Komai argues against equilibrium theory in which supply balances demand. Instead he distinguishes hierarchical economies, in which demand exceeds supply, and market economies, where supply exceeds demand. In the former, which he calls the "shortage economy," enterprises confront not stringent or "hard" budget constraints but "soft" budget constraints. The state adopts a paternalistic policy toward enterprises, protecting them against bankruptcy. In the surplus or market economies, however, enterprises face hard budget constraints and their survival depends on their profitability, defined by prices.

33. Mine is not a conventional understanding of the effects of ritual. In the Durkheimian tradition, rituals are viewed as building solidarity, inculcating the norms of society. See, e.g., Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969). More recently, following Foucault, anthropologists have focused on ritual as the exercise of power. From this viewpoint, E. M. Simmonds-Duke undertakes a fascinating analysis of the Romanian bicentennial celebrations of a peasant uprising in Transylvania. The bicentennial became the occasion for a public debate ostensibly about the uprising itself but more profoundly over competing definitions of national identity and socialism. As in the painting of socialism, the elaborate festivities were orchestrated by local officials for their own instrumental interests, and not imposed from above. But in Simmonds-Duke's account, the regime elicits willing and enthusiastic participation at all levels of society. This makes the public ceremony more effective as a display of power in a weak state. By embodying a hierarchy of levels of participation in the debates, the ritual inculcates the experience of subordination. In Foucault's analysis, however, as in painting socialism, such ritual affirmation could and actually did become the occasion for collective resistance to the sovereign's power. This suggests that the ideological effects of ritual depend on the contexts in which they are enacted. Although people may consent to the monopoly of intellectuals and party ideologues over pronouncements on the interpretation of history, the inspection of the steelworks by the prime minister elicited only dissent. In Hungary's more open and permissive political atmosphere, such public rituals excite greater resistance than in a country where repression is both more intensive and extensive. The manifest message of the ritual itself might also be important. This was after all a nationalist celebration of a local hero rather than a proclamation of the virtues of socialism. See E. M. Simmonds-Duke, "Was the Peasant Uprising a Revolution? The Meanings of a Struggle over the Past," *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 1, no. 2 (1987): 187-224.

34. See the fascinating work of David Stark on the VGMKs. He sees them as the counterpart to internal labor markets in the capitalist firm, as forms of market adaptation to the exigencies of state socialist production. See David Stark, "Rethinking Internal Labor Markets: New Insights from a Comparative Perspective," *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 4 (1986): 492-504; and idem, "Organizational Innovation in Hungary's Emerging Mixed Economy," in *Remaking the Economic Institutions of Socialism*, ed. David Stark and Victor Nee (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

35. This was in 1986. In 1987 he was promoted to operator, but early in 1988 he left with his wife for East Germany to seek work there. Notwithstanding the relatively high pay he received, he couldn't find any reasonable accommodation in Miskolc and didn't think he had much future in the steel mill.

36. One is reminded of Václav Havel's wonderful essay "The Power of the Powerless," where he asks why a greengrocer would place in his shop window the slogan "Workers of the World Unite!" See *The Power of the Powerless*, ed. Václav Havel (London: Hutchinson, 1985), 23-96. He describes

the greengrocer's act as a token of subordination, a lie in which each has to participate but whose participation makes it possible for the lie to go on. Everyone is simultaneously victim and supporter of the system. As an expression of ideology within a system of power, the ritual allows individuals a minimal dignity. Ideology becomes the dictatorship of the ritual. The world of appearances tries to pass for reality but in the process disengages itself from reality. This very imposition of ideology establishes the ground for an alternative, and the lie produces the truth: "Living the truth is thus woven directly into the texture of living a lie. It is the repressed alternative, the authentic aim to which living a lie is an inauthentic response. Only against this background does living a lie make any sense: it exists *because of that background*" (p. 41). Havel's "truth" is an intellectual's. It is revealed in the dissident's refusal to accept the tissue of lies, in upholding the law and cracking its facade, and in the second culture. The life aims of workers, in contrast, tend toward an alternative vision of truth, equality, self-organization, and liberation from work.

37. After the strikes of 1976, the Polish government sought to elicit loyalty to itself and condemnation of strikers and their supporters by organizing mass rallies. These public rituals effectively consolidated the negative class consciousness of workers, laying the foundation for the positive class consciousness that developed during 1980 and 1981. See Bakuniak and Nowak, "Creation," 410.

38. In the United States there is also the juxtaposition of what Brian Powers calls "rituals" and "routines." In his analysis of a working-class high school, he shows how students cling to the ideology of success, celebrated in such rituals as the graduation ceremony, while knowing that their chances of upward mobility are bleak. He shows how, even after they leave, they continue to cling to the possibility of making it, even as they fail. See Brian Powers, "Second Class Finish: The Effects of Rituals and Routines in a Working Class High School" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1987). I am reminded of Czeslaw Milosz's account of how Polish intellectuals after World War II were prepared to embrace the "Soviet" road to socialism, to participate in the painting of socialism even as they recognized its denial in reality. Thus, it is significant that the early opposition movements, led by intellectuals, always sought to work through the party. It was only in 1968 with the repression of students and intellectuals in Poland and the invasion of Czechoslovakia that many intellectuals finally lost faith in the revisionist route. Workers, in contrast, with very different class experiences from the very beginning of state socialism, must have always found it much more difficult to bridge the chasm between what is and what was supposed to be, between their ideological status as "ruling class" and their real status as "subordinate class." For them, painting socialism is a much more profound lie than is the ideology of success for working-class kids in the United States.

39. Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1985), 79-82.

40. Milosz claims that the experiences of intellectuals can be generalized to the entire population: "Since the fate of millions is often most apparent in those who by profession note changes in themselves and in others, i.e. writers, a few portraits of typical Eastern European writers may serve as concrete examples of what is happening within the Imperium" (*ibid.*, 82). Similarly, Kenneth Jowitt's analysis of adaptive responses generated by and subversive of Soviet regimes does not distinguish between classes. He stresses the development of instrumental, calculative, and often dissimulative approaches to the official sphere of life, undermining the values of equality, democracy, methodical economic action based on scientific planning, etc. It is clear that such individualistic responses are by no means universal and that the responses of intellectuals can be very different from those of workers. See Kenneth Jowitt, "An Organizational Approach to the Study of Political Culture in Marxist-Leninist Systems," *American Political Science Review* 68, no. 3 (Sept. 1974): 1171-91; and *idem*, "Soviet Neotraditionalism: The Political Corruption of a Leninist Regime," *Soviet Studies* 35, no. 3 (July 1983): 275-97.

41. Again in 1988 union and management agreed to introduce an automatic check-off system whereby union dues were deducted directly from a person's pay. Now the union is even less responsive to the rank and file, since shop stewards no longer have to cajole and persuade their members to make their monthly contribution. This dovetails well with the renewed offensive against labor.



42. A more detailed analysis of these tensions can be found in a paper I wrote with János Lukács, "What Is Socialist about Socialist Production: Autonomy and Control in a Hungarian Steel Mill," in *Transformation of Work?*, ed. Stephen Wood (London: Hutchinson, 1989), forthcoming.

43. I don't want to suggest that management was unconcerned about accidents. Quite the contrary. A fatal accident was a major blemish on a manager's record and could eat away his bonus, a major part of his income. But given the pressures and the conditions of work, accidents are inevitable. Just as I applied to work at the Lenin Steel Works, there was another fatal accident. The general director sent a letter to the head of the Institute of Sociology demanding to know who I was, what I wanted, and whether the institute was prepared to pay someone to be with me at all times while I was in the steel mill. Fears died down, and I entered like any other worker. But clearly the director was not enthusiastic about the prospect of an American sociologist killed in his mill.

44. Management's attitude is captured by a slogan plastered on the wall in the plant superintendent's office: "At work—dictatorship; in public life—democracy."

45. Very different from the Hungarian is the Chinese factory regime. In a fascinating account of "communist neo-traditionalism," Andrew Walder draws attention to enterprise control over the distribution of scarce resources, from housing to bicycles, food rations, clothing, and even sewing machines. This "organizational dependence" gives rise to two patterns of association: "principled particularism," in which party activists exchange political loyalty for preferential access to resources and careers; and "nonprincipled particularism," in which workers obtain needed goods and services through bribery and manipulation of personal ties. In delivering support for management through mobilization and surveillance, the activists inevitably arouse the hostility of fellow workers. By contrast, in Hungary industrial paternalism lost its force with the expansion of consumer markets and state allocation of goods and services independent of the enterprise. The cash nexus rather than political credentials governs access to scarce commodities. Hungarian managers do not control the resources to establish "patron-client" relations with party members or "instrumental-personal" ties with others. Party members are as likely to lead dissent against management as campaign on its behalf. Rather than being divided against other workers, party members often form their most class-conscious element. Whereas in China political rituals and campaigns generate hostility toward the activists, in Hungary they serve to unite workers in opposition to the system, to its inequalities and injustices, and to the corruption of the Red barons.

In Poland party members have often played a leading role in the local struggles against management. During 1980–81 there was a mass exodus from the party, and many party members joined Solidarity. Virtually all rank-and-file party members joined in Solidarity strikes, in defiance of instructions from party leaders. Although workers in Poland, as in Hungary, may be hostile to the party, they are not necessarily hostile to its rank and file, the majority of whom join not out of opportunism or careerism but out of commitment to the enterprise, to the community, or to abstract principles of justice and equality. I, therefore, see no evidence for Walder's claim that "communist" societies are all evolving toward a "new system of institutionalized clientelism: a neo-traditional pattern of authority based on citizen dependence on social institutions and their leaders." See Andrew Walder, *Communist Neo-traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 8.

46. In 1988 he was finding it much more difficult to make a lot of money. Buying damaged piglets and raising them was no longer so remunerative. Feed had become more expensive, and there was more competition as more and more people entered all lines of business. On top of that, he now has to pay taxes on any profit he makes. In 1988 he again went on his triennial trip to Western Europe. He brought back with him today's status symbol, a video cassette player. Since, after customs duties, the price difference between goods bought abroad and those bought at home is much less than it was even three years ago, there is not much profit to be gained from reselling articles purchased in Germany. Competition has created a new class of entrepreneurs who increasingly dominate the private sector, and workers find it more and more difficult to make money on the side. As Ivan Szelenyi has argued in the case of housing, opening up the market initially operates to the advantage of workers,

countering the inequalities of administrative allocation, but subsequently the distributional inequalities of state and market tend to reinforce each other. See Ivan Szelenyi, *Urban Social Inequalities Under State Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

47. Some might argue that the rituals of the Japanese factory constitute a painting of capitalism. This would excite an imminent critique of Japanese capitalism for not being sufficiently capitalist. It would counteract any tendencies, always weak in capitalism, for the lived experience of work to generate an interest in socialism.

48. I have borrowed this formulation from Martha Lampland, "Working Through History: Ideologies of Work and Agricultural Production in a Hungarian Village, 1918-1983" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1987), chap. 3.

49. Here I have been very influenced by the work of Paul Johnston. See his "Politics of Public Work" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1988).

50. See my "Should We Give up on Socialism? Reflections on Bowles and Gintis' Democracy and Capitalism," *Socialist Review* 101 (Winter 1989).

51. That jokes are such a pervasive form of communication is itself testimony to the gulf between appearances and reality. Jokes are the most effective way of capturing the double existence of workers: the opposition between ideological and real experiences. In capitalism, since ideology is more diffuse and enjoined to reality more smoothly, jokes are not so central to the discourse of daily life. See, e.g., the preponderance of jokes about socialism in Steven Lukes and Itzhak Galnoor, *No Laughing Matter* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

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