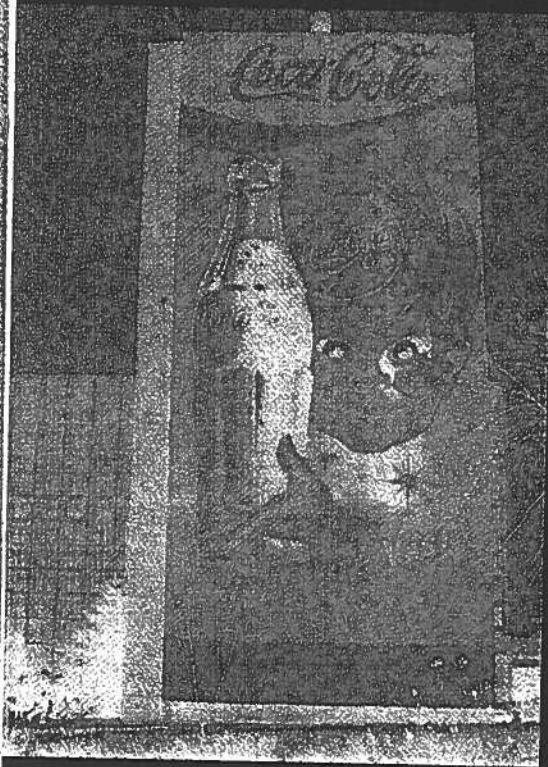


Uncertain Transition



*Ethnographies
of Change
in the
Postsocialist
World*

Edited by Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery

UNCERTAIN TRANSITION

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edited by
MICHAEL BURAWOY
and
KATHERINE VERDERY

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Acknowledgments

This volume began with a conference Vicki Bonnell, director of the Center for Slavic and East European Studies, University of California, Berkeley, invited Michael Burawoy to organize. The conference, “Ethnographies of Transition: The Political and Cultural Dimensions of Emergent Market Economies in Russia and Eastern Europe,” was held in March 1996. We are grateful to four sources of funding that enabled us to hold the conference and that helped pay for production of the present volume: the Center for Slavic and East European Studies (Director Vicki Bonnell) and the Institute of International Studies (Director Michael Watts), University of California, Berkeley; the Social Science Research Council; the Joint Committee on Eastern Europe of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council. The staff of the Berkeley Center—particularly Barbara Voytek and Monique Nowicki—were indispensable in making this event successful; our warm thanks to them. We would also like to thank Dean Birkenkamp for his interest in our project and Scott Horst for his editorship.

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Introduction

Michael Burawoy and Katherine Verdery

The epochal transformations that have swept through the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have prompted stark visions of the future and the past. At one extreme we find the partisans of modernity who claim that the disintegration of communism is the final victory of modernity's great achievements, market economy and liberal democracy. We have arrived at both the end of ideology and the end of history; there will be no more forks in the road. At the other extreme are those who view the end of communism as the twilight of modernity. The collapse of the administered society marks the exhaustion of the enlightenment project to direct and regulate the world we inhabit. Modernity has spiraled out of control into a new, as yet unknown orbit of postmodernity. Between these two grand narratives lie more cautious appraisals that see change in less apocalyptic terms, that see evolution rather than revolution, that see hybrid societies rather than polar extremes.

These cognitive maps of the "Second Great Transformation" focus on macro structures of state and economy. They leave little space for the micro world of day-to-day life, for the cumulative impact of what Ákos Róna-Tas (1997) has called "small transformations." In conventional portraits of the "transition" the micro is determined or is an expression of structures, policies, and ideologies of a macro character, with little theorization of the unintended consequences brought about locally by political and cultural contestation intertwined with economic struggles. To explore these unintended consequences is one aim of our collection of ethnographies.

In so doing, we challenge those analyses that account for the confusions and shortcomings of the transition process as "socialist legacies" or "culture." Repeatedly, we find that what may appear as "restorations"

of patterns familiar from socialism are something quite different: direct responses to the new market initiatives, produced by them, rather than remnants of an older mentality. In other words, we find that what looks familiar has causes that are fairly novel. At the same time, however, we acknowledge that people's responses to a situation may often appear as holdovers precisely because they employ a language and symbols adapted from previous orders. This does not mean their vision of the world has been so "corrupted" by the socialist experience as to make them unfit for other ways of life; it means only that action employs symbols and words that are not created *de novo* but develop using the forms already known, even if with new senses and to new ends.

Our view of the relation between macro structures and everyday practices is that the collapse of party states and administered economies broke down macro structures, thereby creating space for micro worlds to produce autonomous effects that may have unexpected influence over the structures that have been emerging. In the language of Jürgen Habermas (1987), the disintegration of the system world has given freer rein for life-worlds to stamp themselves on the emerging economic and political order. The transformation of party states in the context of changes in the global regime of accumulation has radically shifted the rules of the game, the parameters of action within which actors pursue their daily routines and practices. This presents an opportunity for local improvisations that may press either in novel directions or toward a "return" to socialism, as several of our chapters show. Both innovation and reversion are responses to unstable environments, at least as much as they are evidence of socialism's legacies or its culture. Our insistence on this point distinguishes the present volume from many other writings in "transitology."

It is precisely the sudden importance of the micro processes lodged in moments of transformation that privileges an ethnographic approach. Aggregate statistics and compendia of decrees and laws tell us little without complementary close descriptions of how people—ranging from farmers to factory workers, from traders to bureaucrats, from managers to welfare clients—are responding to the uncertainties they face. From their calculations, improvisations, and decisions will emerge the elements of new structurings. Thus, even an ephemeral moment captured ethnographically will reveal something of the conflicts and alternatives thrown up by the destructuring effects of the end of state socialism. This way of viewing ethnography and the transformation has a corollary related to *time*. Because the postsocialist moment means constant change in the parameters of action, actors tend to strategize within time horizons that are short. New laws keep appearing, taxation policy is continually shifting, inflation makes long-term calculations difficult, and fluctuating interest rates make investment risky. This contraction of time horizons in the af-

termath of 1989 gives unaccustomed validity to ethnographic research, whose temporal constitution now more closely approximates that of the actors whose behavior it reports.

In addition to justifying the special insights of ethnography into the rhythm of change in postsocialist society, we might also indicate the social spaces on which the ethnographic eye might be most fruitfully trained: distribution and consumption, altered production, ideas about property and technology, the rural economy, and welfare institutions. We will justify each of these briefly now, then explore them at greater length as we summarize the chapters.

(1) Because socialism was a system organized around state-controlled redistribution, dismantling those channels produces a relative vacuum of mechanisms for exchange and distribution; therefore finance, trade, and other forms of exchange move to the fore as sites of innovation (Humphrey [chapter 1], Woodruff [chapter 3]). The same is true with marketing techniques and consumption, neglected under socialism and central to market economies (Dunn [chapter 4]). (2) Industrial production was at the heart of socialist systems and (perhaps in consequence) has proven very difficult to change. An uncertain economic environment precludes the long time horizons necessary for transformative investments in production. Especially here, old patterns seem to reproduce themselves despite the introduction of new practices (Ashwin [chapter 4], Dunn [chapter 8]). (3) Socialist systems operated with characteristic, noncapitalist definitions of property and technology. Significant departures from these definitions, as in computerization (Lass [chapter 9]) and the legal redefinition of property rights (Verdery [chapter 2]), have outpaced the necessary changes in social and cultural relations that would sustain the anticipated economic breakthroughs. (4) Under socialism, rural economies underwent perhaps the most dramatic, repressive, and destructive transformations. Rural responses to the challenge of markets have included both an increase in rural "entrepreneurship" and apparent retrenchment to older forms of production, whether the collective farm (Creed [chapter 7]) or peasant subsistence production (Zbierski [chapter 6]). Here as elsewhere, however, these forms are adaptations to the new environment as much as the persistence of old habits. (5) Socialist states had characteristic welfare organizations, as well as characteristic gender regimes that intersected with these organizations. Under the new liberal dispensation, universalistic welfare provisions are being dismantled in favor of targeted and means-tested benefits (Haney [chapter 5]). Clients respond by defending their inherited rights against the new disciplinary apparatuses (and, in Haney's chapter, within a specific history of gender relations).

From this conceptualization of the times, spaces, structures, and "agencies" of the transition from socialism, our chapters will show the

complex relations of socialist and postsocialist life worlds, emphasizing unintended consequences and the way the past enters the present, not as legacy but as novel adaptation. Our approach inclines us to see the anticipated “transition” as much less certain than some observers might have it—hence our title.

Theories of Transition

When we speak of transition,¹ we think of a *process* connecting the past to the future. What we discover, however, are theories of transition often committed to some pre-given future or rooted in an unyielding past. Thus, on the one side we have economists who debate whether a revolutionary break or a negotiated transition is the most effective way of climbing out of the socialist abyss into the promised world of capitalism. As they debate the character of the change, they generally think of only one future: textbook capitalism. On the other side, historians, political scientists, and sociologists debate the impact of the past. Those who understand communist society as a totalitarian system emphasize discontinuity: once collapsed, communism leaves behind only rubble. Those who saw, beyond and within the party state, an autonomous realm of society regard the latter as laying the foundations for a postcommunist order. They see continuity where totalitarian theory sees rupture. Table I.1 schematizes the contours of conventional transitology.

The simplest model of transition is the one proposed by political scientists and historians of the totalitarian school, from Hannah Arendt (1951) to Martin Malia (1994). In this view the political system completely colonized the life world; there was no realm of autonomy. Communism was based on terror and atomism; its disintegration entailed the extinction of the entire order. Communism was totalitarian and therefore collapsed totally, having lost all resources of regeneration and restoration.

Table I.1 Models of Transition

<i>Path Advocated</i>	<i>Point of Orientation</i>	
	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Destination</i>
<i>Revolution</i>	Totalitarian (extinction)	Neoliberal (genesis)
<i>Evolution</i>	Society (legacy)	Institutional (incubation)

For the defenders of totalitarian theory, communism was such an evil order that anything would be better. They are more interested in celebrating the extinction than in organizing genesis, more interested in salivating over the carcass than in wondering what might be served up next. Here, neoliberal economics comes to the rescue by insisting that markets can spontaneously create a new world if the old can first be destroyed. Shock therapy’s package of price liberalization, stabilization, and privatization aims to dissolve the past by the fastest means possible. Not only does the past have no redeeming features, but to slow the reforms would be to court opposition and abort the transition (Lipton and Sachs 1990). It is neoliberalism’s pious hope that destruction is the vehicle for genesis.

How, then, do neoliberals comprehend the recession that has afflicted much of Eastern Europe, particularly the former Soviet Union, with unprecedented economic decline? Some, such as Maxim Boycko, Andrei Schleifer, and Robert Vishny (1995), interpret it as a sign of success, since the more quickly the old Soviet economy reaches the bottom of the valley the sooner it will rise up the other side. Others, such as Jeffrey Sachs (1994), who are less sanguine, blame international agencies, especially the International Monetary Fund (IMF), for failing to come to Russia’s aid in the early months when reform stood a chance. Yet others, such as Anders Åslund (1995), argue that forces of the past, from Stalinist managers to Soviet culture, obstruct the progress of the market economy. The solution should therefore have been even stronger medicine. At least these theorists recognize that with the collapse of the party state not all is destroyed, even if its legacies go unexamined.

Neoliberal orthodoxy and its neoclassical underpinnings do not go uncontested. Harking back to Schumpeter, institutional economists such as Kazimierz Poznansky (1993) and Marshall Goldman (1994), as well as critics of neoclassical economics from within such as János Kornai (1990, 1994) and Joseph Stiglitz (1994), are aghast at what has been accomplished in the name of the market, at the wreckage shock therapy has left behind. Rather than promoting a mission of destruction, they argue for building the new within the framework of the old. A market economy requires an institutional framework within which to incubate. Such theorists hold up China as an exemplary case of evolutionary transition, a market economy nurtured and protected within the womb of the party state.

Institutional theory diverges from its neoclassical competitor in the way it marks out the distinctiveness of capitalism. Neoclassical theory regards the administered socialist economy as allocationally inefficient. Only market economies, so the argument goes, can match supply and demand. Peter Murrell (1991), one of the leading defenders of evolutionary economics, however, claims there is no evidence that Western capitalist

economies are more efficient in distribution. Rather, what distinguishes the market from the administered economy is its dynamic efficiency, its ability to innovate. For this, however, a stable institutional environment is needed that encourages risk taking under competition. If some Eastern European countries have done better than Russia, so the argument goes, it is because they possess a more stable environment, a more consolidated financial infrastructure, lower rates of inflation and interest, more predictable tax collection, more secure property rights, and a more effective rule of law (Murrell 1993). Shock therapy is the wrong medicine not only because of its single-minded concern to destroy but also because it destabilizes the institutional framework of economic decisionmaking. Still, among such evolutionary economists, there is little indication as to how these institutions might take root because there is no study of the micro processes of transition.

As with neoliberal theory, evolutionary economics is oriented to the future and is also prescriptive. It views shock therapy as simply the wrong medicine, undermining the very end it seeks to achieve. Those who pay more attention to the past argue that shock therapy is not only foolhardy but impossible. From Andrew Arato (1981) to Moshe Lewin (1985) and Stephen Cohen (1985), from Iván Szelényi (1988) to Elemér Hankiss (1990), commentators argue that socialist civil society percolated outside (and even within) the formal apparatuses of power, supplying the necessary lubricant for the party state to function even while challenging its monopoly of power. Whether the black market or the second economy, extended kinship ties or private agricultural plots, networks of barter relations or the pushers that promoted them, the collapse of the party state did not eliminate these economic and social forms but caused their greater flowering.

Thus, sociologists have discovered various legacies inherited from the socialist order, legacies variously interpreted as path dependency, cultural persistence, or circulation of elites. More sophisticated theories talk about the reconfiguration of elements from the past, recombinant forms of property (Stark 1996). As things change, so do they remain the same. David Stark and László Bruszt (1998) explore the idea of the reconstitution of inherited networks that take on new institutional forms between state and market. These descriptions come close to the micro foundations of the new economic order, but even they fail to grasp theoretically the specificity of the transition as a process.

A focus on the day-to-day realities of postsocialism reveals a much more ambiguous account of the transformation announced with such fanfare by theories of modernization and of market and democratic transition. Each of these theories has a limited view of the interaction and interpenetration of system and life world, macro and micro, global and

local; we need instead to attend much more to how the unfolding uncertainties of macro institutions affect practices within micro worlds and also to how family, work, and community are refashioning themselves—often in opposition to what governments intend. In the ethnographies that follow, we try to show that the conventional metaphors—extinction, genesis, incubation, and legacy—are limited because they give insufficient integrity to the creative and resistive processes of everyday practice. Indeed, we find time and again that every step forward in the direction of the market produces forces opposed. In reaction to the iron law of market expansion, we discover the iron law of market resistance.

Collapse and Recomposition

For totalitarian theory the collapse of the party state entails the breakdown of the entire order, including the institutions of day-to-day life. To be sure, daily life under postsocialism is beset with uncertainty, but it manages to recompose itself even in countries where the political system had permeated it the most deeply and repressively (for example, in the Soviet Union and Romania) and in spaces where the collapse was felt most intensely (for example, in distributive processes and property rights).

Definitive of the administered economy are the central appropriation and redistribution of goods and services. It is this redistributive process that collapses with the Soviet order, the more dramatically the more reliant that order was on the planning mechanism. In its wake, the redistributive apparatus leaves spaces into which multiple forms of exchange and diverse traders expand. Not surprisingly, it is in this sphere of exchange that we find the most innovation and turmoil. Caroline Humphrey describes the proliferation of Russian traders, from the managers of new private conglomerates and their “brokers” to resellers, shuttlers, entrepreneurs, and retailers. This is no return to pre-Soviet trading patterns but an entirely novel configuration of disorder, whose contours form around the disintegration of the vertical pyramid that had attached regions to the center. Regional autonomies are magnified, creating both the reality and the consciousness of uneven development, exacerbated and dramatized by traders who exploit such unevenness.

Long viewed as parasites on the real producers of goods, traders are now held responsible for regional poverty, for the inflow of trash and the outflow of valuables. A visible source of popular anxiety, traders provoke political reactions. Regional governments introduce residence requirements, licensing laws, restrictions on mobility, or what Humphrey calls new citizenship regimes in attempts to restrict and regulate these outsid-

ers in the interests of local inhabitants. This leads to defensive reactions, the formation of exclusive kin networks playing on pan-ethnic or diasporic loyalties to form cross-border patterns of trust and protection.

Just as attenuation of redistributive channels creates spaces for multiple (dis)orders of trade in post-Soviet Russia, so Katherine Verdery shows how the liquidation of collective farms in Transylvania ushers in the re-composition of rural property relations. Romania's Law 18 of 1991 calls for decollectivization and decrees that the land be returned to its previous owners, who must cultivate it or lose it. Nonresidents and those who lack the means of cultivation can loan their land back to the village "association," which will work it on their behalf for a percentage of the crop. The association effectively replaces the collective, often managed by the same staff and drawing on the old members as farm laborers while landowners become shareholders. But from then on, associations face the dilemma of any capitalist firm—how much revenue to reinvest and how much to return as dividends. They have to keep their members from withdrawing their land while continuing to be economically viable. With the level of trust thin, time horizons diminish, and the association finds itself eating away at its future.

New property rights are at work within old relations to produce new social dynamics and a new field of action for villagers. Verdery's description of the struggles over ownership of a granary highlights the new forces that can be mobilized. Ionescu, a recent immigrant to the village, is barred from buying the granary by the district judge (an old-timer), who rules the granary to be a public good unavailable for purchase. The judge appeals to substantive rather than procedural law. The entire village is swept up in the controversy, largely in opposition to Ionescu. The villagers do not want their granary, which they built with their own volunteer labor, to fall into the hands of an outsider who, as a renter capitalist, would charge them for its use. Thus, they find themselves opposing individual private ownership and favoring collective forms, despite Ionescu's argument that his ownership would bring greater benefits to the village than does the elite-dominated association. Clearly, from the point of view of the villagers, markets have their own distinctive irrationality.

In both Buryatia (Russia) and Transylvania, the new order cultivates entrepreneurs and traders who threaten the integrity of local or regional communities, offering old elites the opportunity to mobilize the support of the population. The breakdown of Soviet structures—the redistributive plan or the collective farm—causes old interests to congeal around new hybrid institutions. Disintegration begets innovation, which in turn stimulates reaction.

Market Therapy and Economic Retreat

If totalitarian theory is misguided in predicting total collapse, and if rolling back the party state can stimulate both defensive and innovative moves from local communities, then how should we understand the consequences of shock therapy, whose premise is that civil society is not resilient but weak? Neoliberal theory accounts for the failure of its shock therapy programs by appealing to exogenous factors over which it has no control—foot dragging by international agencies, for instance, or obdurate legacies of the past.

David Woodruff's study of three regional economies in Russia suggests, by contrast, that shock therapy is not obstructed by exogenous factors but creates its own barriers. He shows how the spread of barter relations is not a legacy of the past but follows from the monetization of the economy. Price liberalization and privatization were succeeded in 1993 by the third prong of shock therapy—namely, stabilization—increasing interest rates, reducing cheap loans, and raising taxes. Enterprises now find their bank accounts frozen so that funds flowing into those accounts are immediately and forcibly siphoned off to pay taxation and utility bills. Managers therefore take their enterprises out of the monetary circuit and turn to barter relations. Whereas in the previous system the expansion of barter signified affluence and surplus products, it now signifies bankruptcy. It is a product of shock therapy rather than the legacy of a paternalistic Soviet state.

Even more clearly than Humphrey and Verdery, Woodruff shows that the expansion of barter relations intensifies regional autarky, encouraging local elites to forge a united front against the center. Governments orchestrate relations among enterprises so that regional debt is concentrated in those companies that have the greatest bargaining power with the center. These prove to be the power companies, whose bankruptcy threatens to devastate the local economy. This prospect can be translated into a compelling claim for subsidies, loans, and bailouts.

Shock therapy at first makes great strides toward marketization but then creates its own barriers in the regions, which are strengthened by the demise of the administered economy. By restructuring interests, innovative policies from the center produce their own undoing. The same applies to forces operating within enterprises. Elizabeth Dunn describes how the Western marketing strategies introduced into a Polish fruit-processing plant lead to a backlash among workers and salespeople. The marketers take command of the company, seeking out new consumer niches for their product by appealing to youthful, "with it," antisocialist sentiment. They deploy the same ideology against workers by associating

them with socialism and its rigid bureaucracy. Workers, for their part, claim it was their flexibility and ingenuity that had made the company such a socialist success; their resourcefulness could as well be turned to the advantage of capitalist flexibility. Salespeople face different dilemmas. They aspire to Western market principles but find themselves trapped between retailers who demand the same old rewards and marketers who deny them those inducements.

Once more, then, market initiatives are stymied by the real interests they engender. These interests are organized within the firm but are couched in the language of socialism and capitalism, maneuvering between constructions of past and future. Even in postcommunist Poland, site of “successful” shock therapy where the conditions for market growth were often the most propitious in the region, the same is true. Here as elsewhere, although the shocks applied to the “body economic” may have produced positive results at first, they often gave way to deeper pathologies resulting from rational reactions to the treatment itself.

New Institutions and Historical Memory

Evolutionary economists condemn the destructiveness of neoliberal therapy and the expectation that a sufficiently large dose should do the trick. Instead, they argue, markets will produce economic growth only under the protective influence of a broad range of stabilizing institutions. Even when such institutions are introduced, however, they do not always have the intended effects: they, too, court resistance based on meanings and expectations drawn from the past. No less than policies, institutions too are disrupted by a restive and resistive society.

Lynne Haney explores the consequences of attempts to establish a liberal welfare regime in Hungary targeted at the poor and needy, one that aims to discipline its clients for the market. Her study compares welfare regimes in terms of their publicly enunciated policies, the actual practices of their welfare apparatuses (the organization of caseworkers and their work), and the strategies of female clients to advance their interests as mothers, wives, and workers. Based on interviews, archives, and participant observations, Haney discovers three welfare regimes since the inception of socialism: the 1950s established a *familial* regime that relied on existing institutions (family and enterprise) to deal with social security; the 1970s established a *maternalist* regime based on mothers as object and recipient of welfare; the 1990s consolidate a *liberal* regime to disperse welfare on the basis of calculated material needs.

The maternalist regime was a response to demographic and economic problems; it was designed to reduce the costs of Hungary’s welfare state

and to absorb the social consequences of the late 1960s economic reforms (and feminists might object to its “naturalizing” women’s maternal role toward these ends). In part continuous with the goals of the maternalist regime, the liberal regime was the handmaiden of neoliberal economic policies of the late 1980s. Female welfare clients, however, experienced this democratic and market transition as a contraction of the space within which they could pursue their interests. Under the maternalist regime they could negotiate an expanded identity from mother to wife and defend their interests against wayward husbands and fathers, whereas the liberal regime confined them to a bureaucratic accounting of needs. Outraged by this diminution of rights and narrowing of claims, women appealed back to the prior maternalist regime in the name of the identity it had promoted—the identity of mother. This appeal to the past is more than a strategic maneuver to defend interests in the present: the past frames the present, imbuing it with distinctive meaning.

Similarly, Slawomira Zbierski-Salameh shows the way Polish peasants orient themselves to market opportunities based on their experience with the post-Solidarity reforms of the socialist 1980s. She asks why peasants retreat from the market toward “closed-cycle” subsistence production instead of exploring new market possibilities. This is especially puzzling given that the peasantry, especially in the area Zbierski studied, was already endowed with that great asset—private property.

Her answer comes in two parts. First, shock therapy, far from destroying the administered economy, actually strengthened the monopolistic position of the state procurement centers that regulate the peasantry’s entry into the market, dictate prices, and control quality. Banks extended credit under terms that made investment impossible. It was not just maladapted institutions, however, but also their meanings that impeded entrepreneurship and risk taking. Under martial law, agrarian reforms had encouraged peasants to expand production into new areas; inputs were subsidized, and consumer markets were accessible. With liberalization, the price of inputs spiraled out of control as consumer prices were held down by cheap imports from Western Europe. Peasants, caught in a price scissors, retreated from the market—just as Woodruff’s Russian enterprises turned to barter (chapter 3).

To interpret this unexpected behavior, Zbierski draws on Adam Przeworski’s theory of impediments to the transition from capitalism to socialism. Because they were doing relatively well under the protected market of socialism, peasants were less than enthusiastic about tightening their belts in the hope of eventual economic improvement. Feeling trapped rather than empowered by the new market forces, they shortened their time horizons and turned inward toward subsistence production

while organizing collective protest against the post-1989 Solidarity government.

Both Zbierski's peasants and Haney's welfare workers find themselves surrounded by new institutions designed to promote a new capitalist economy. Both appeal to the "good old days" to defend themselves against these institutions. Just as neoliberal policies generate retreat away from the market, capitalist institutions provoke their own forms of resistance, recalling the radiant past.

Legacy and Restoration

We turn finally to the argument that the party state's collapse entails strengthening the civil society inherited from the old order. We have already seen that civil society, whether flourishing trade, the return to barter, or protests against welfare and shock therapy, is not some cultural lag—an inherited legacy—but is refashioned out of the old as a response to exigencies of the present. The final three chapters make this especially clear in the way they link economic change to political restoration.

Gerald Creed asks whether rural support for the Bulgarian Socialist Party is a legacy of the past—resistant socialism—or something created under pressures of transition—socialist resistance. Bulgarian villagers, he argues, respond to the transition by trying to preserve institutions that have both symbolic and material importance for them, specifically the cooperative. The anticommunist party (Union of Democratic Forces, or UDF) looked on the cooperative as a quintessential symbol of communism, one that sheltered communist elites who were dragooning villagers into supporting the socialists. The UDF therefore sought to liquidate the cooperatives and return land to the previous owners, thinking this would win the support of the rural population. The exact opposite occurred. As in Verdery's Transylvania, the rural population regrouped around its erstwhile communist elites. Rural people condemned those who laid waste to the countryside and destroyed the buildings they had erected with their own hands; they resisted liquidation of the cooperatives that had given them a new identity as multioccupational villagers rather than simple peasants, seeing themselves now as threatened with repeasantization. Without the cooperative and access to its equipment and materials, they knew their farming would be impoverished. Therefore, they sabotaged government plans by squabbling over the redistribution of land and the reconstitution of cooperatives and by voting socialist.

Whereas Polish villagers embraced the peasant identity nurtured and protected under socialism, even marching on the government in its name, Bulgarian villagers voted socialist for fear of losing their collective farms

and having to become mere peasants. In both cases resistance to market transformation occurs, but it takes diametrically opposed forms because of the different institutions in which the rural population had been organized under socialism.

We see the same pattern at work in the Siberian coal mines studied by Sarah Ashwin. In 1989 and again in 1991, these mines were the scene of the most militant opposition to the communist regime, with miners demanding radical democratic reforms. It was on the backs of those miners that Boris Yeltsin first came to power in Russia. The nucleus of such working-class radicalism lay in the work collective, especially in the distinctive forms of solidarity constructed in the immediate work group. With economic reform, however, workers gave up their attachment to the work collective, which was no longer capable of dispensing rewards, and shifted their loyalties to family and family-based survival strategies on the one hand and toward a larger collective on the other. Rather than mobilize their work groups for effective reform, they preferred to change their leadership, supporting authoritarian managers and—beyond these—politicians capable of delivering resources in times of increased scarcity. As in Creed's analysis, so in Ashwin's: a challenge to the locus of group identity is met with an appeal to leaders who have the interest and the resources to defend the collectivity in question. Those leaders are often former communists. Stripped of their ideology, they remain the most powerful and effective rulers, still able to mobilize support from "alienated" collectivities.

Andrew Lass describes similar patterns of "restoration" around the computerization of the Czech and Slovak library systems. Whereas importing a self-contained, standardized business like McDonalds works fairly smoothly, the transfer of an on-line catalog that would make the contents of all major libraries easily accessible comes up against preexisting layers of competitive social relations that resist unification around the new technology and the old library cultures of manuscript preservation. With this argument we come full circle. We began by showing how dismantling the party state led to the reconfiguration of everyday worlds, how market-promoting policies caused a retreat from markets, how building new institutions generated new resistances; finally, we show how the decline of the old order brought pressures to resurrect the very features and personnel that had initially been rejected.

Lass goes further, however, in trying to illuminate just how these seeming continuities arise—and how complex a matter this is. Why is it that CASLIN (Czech and Slovak Library Information Network) does not function more like similar electronic arrangements in, say, the United States? More broadly, wherein lie the resistances to Western blueprints for transformation? Our other authors have answered this broader ques-

tion (explicitly or implicitly) in terms of new configurations of interest, systemic constraints on action, or attachments to certain identities. Transitionologists often answer it by invoking “culture,” that amorphous, omnibus concept so readily employed as an explanatory variable when all else fails. Inspired by phenomenology and the sociology of Bourdieu (sources rather different from those of our other authors), Lass explores the question in a very nuanced way. He writes of *habitus*, of structured dispositions and horizons of sense, of patterned feelings and discourses, of webs of connection—what he calls *worlds*. All of these phenomena enter into a micropolitics of daily existence that infuses externally imposed projects with intentions and directionalities divergent from those that were planned. If, as we argued earlier, the transformation of socialism entails the weakening of broader structures and a consequent opportunity for daily practices to influence disproportionately the restructuring that ensues, then Lass has helped us to identify what we should attend to in those daily practices. Hence, once again, ethnography.

Market and Countermarket

In addition to these insights concerning how new life worlds and new structures are constituted from below, what further lessons do the chapters in this volume suggest? We point to four.

The first lesson is that we cannot separate the economic from the political and the cultural. In the imagination of policymakers, the economic is a series of purely economic interventions—privatization, price liberalizations or levers controlling inflation, interest rates, budget deficits, and the like. When these interventions meet everyday life, however, the resistance they encounter is not just economic but cultural and political as well. The economy is always thoroughly embedded in a variety of noneconomic practices. There can be no pure economy, only a political and cultural economy. This lesson is important both for scholars who seek to understand the transformations of postsocialism and also for the policymakers who produce them.

The second lesson is that we cannot conceive of the transition as either rooted in the past or tied to an imagined future. Transition is a process suspended between the two. Policies emanate from the center and encounter resistance, which reverberates back as unintended consequences demanding correction. Policy and reaction enter into a continual interaction that makes up the process of the transition. This process is therefore not a unilinear one of moving from one stage to the next, as projected in neoliberal plans, but a combined and uneven one having multiple trajectories. (It is for this reason that we tend to prefer the term *transforma-*

tion, which has fewer teleological resonances than *transition*.) That is, policies combine with preexisting circumstances in different ways to produce different outcomes and reactions. This combination means the process is also uneven, affecting different regions and, within regions, different sectors at different rates.

The third lesson of these chapters is that we should be wary of reducing the transition to a debate between revolutionary and evolutionary perspectives, both of which presume progressive development. On the contrary, our case studies show that in the present world context the shift to a market economy brings with it “regressive” and “progressive” dynamics simultaneously. We can usefully develop the concept of involution, adopted by Zbierski, to capture the economic changes taking place in postcommunist countries—such as the dominance of exchange over production, with the former expanding at the expense of the latter and forcing populations into primitive *disaccumulation* with a retreat into subsistence. In the extreme case—Russia—the successive stages of shock therapy have pushed the country more and more toward a Third World economy: plundered for its natural resources, opened to cheap foreign commodities, increasingly run by an emergent parasitic financial oligarchy.

The final lesson follows from the third, namely, that we should be explicit about the comparisons we draw between postcommunist and other countries. In comparing the former with ideal-typical conceptions of the West—textbook notions of the free market and liberal democracy—one sees transition societies only in terms of deficits and misses their specificity, their distinctive dynamics. We might better compare those countries with each other than with the Western models they supposedly emulate. Why does the Russian economy continue to decline year in, year out, while the Chinese economy continues to grow? Why has the Polish economy done better in some respects than the much acclaimed Hungarian and Czech models? The answers to these questions will be found not just in how macro policies—privatization, stabilization, liberalization, and so on—are crafted but in the micro responses to them, in the ways people and their communities absorb, manipulate, or reject the new market parameters of action.

Just as Karl Polanyi analyzed communal resistance to the market expansion of the mid-nineteenth century, so at the end of the twentieth century we witness similar communal reactions to the market in postcommunist societies—selective appropriation, evasive improvisation, explicit resistance, and the emergence of new terrains of struggle. In both cases the context is a burgeoning capitalist economy of ever-more-global scope that is drawing countries into vast exchange networks of many forms, from barter to trade to global finance. As Polanyi showed,

whereas incorporation into these networks brings affluence for some, for many it brings poverty, marginality, and exclusion from modern means of existence. Our ethnographies illuminate the micro processes through which this second transformation takes place.

Notes

1. Some students of the postsocialist world question the use of this term (for example, Nelson, Tilly, and Walker 1998; Stark and Bruszt 1998). Because the word is so often used in policy circles with the presumption that a kind of ideal-typical free-market capitalism and liberal democracy will result from the collapse of socialism, anyone who entertains some skepticism about the end point might better use another word, such as *transformation*. The skepticism might be over whether the result will be capitalism or over what *form* of capitalism may result. Because our title already indicates this skepticism, we proceed with the word *transition*, suitably humbled.

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19. See Rabinbach's (1992) excellent study of the competing trends in the science of work and the arrival of scientific management in Europe.

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10

Afterword

Michael Burawoy

As ethnographers, we focus our research on the rituals and routines of daily life. We immerse ourselves in the spatial and temporal rhythms of the people we study. We train our ethnographic microscopes on the experience and self-understanding of our subjects. But we always bring our own theoretical lenses, which we continually shape and polish in the light of what we observe and whom we eventually want to persuade. These portable lenses not only give us access to the world of our subjects and not only demarcate the visible from the invisible; they also enable us to locate the field in its wider historical and geographical context. Living in villages or towns, working in factories or fields, hobnobbing with teachers or priests, passing the time of day in bars or kitchens, we deploy our theories to reach upward and outward to the movement of society as a whole, to the convulsions and continuity of national political regimes and economic systems, and, beyond these, to global transformations. Only through theoretical work can we connect microworlds to their macrodeterminations. I close our book with some ruminations on the theories we import to make this last leap outward.

All of us have spent many years in the countries we study. We do not migrate with international consultants and advisers from one country to the next as fashion and demand dictate. We are regional specialists who have made the study of the Soviet and post-Soviet world a lifetime engagement. Nevertheless, we are also deeply rooted in the Anglo-American academy. Since our guiding interpretations draw on Western social theories, it is reasonable to ask how well such theories travel eastward first to Eastern Europe and then to Russia.

I should acknowledge immediately that the flow of theory is never one-way. Both the practice and the ideology of “communism” profoundly shaped the real and imaginary worlds of Western social science. The Sturm und Drang of the 1930s Depression era, whether for or against so-

cialism, was played out against the background of the Bolshevik Revolution. Whether it was Schumpeter's thesis of the self-transformation of capitalism, Hayek's road to serfdom, Burnham's managerial revolution, Lange's market socialism, or Popper's enemies of the open society, the Soviet Union was deeply embedded in their collective consciousness. In the Cold War era, much Anglo-American social theory was driven by the "totalitarian" Soviet Union as liberal democracy's repudiated Other.

Although the Soviet Union cast a shadow on Western scholarship, the communist world was only rarely the object of theoretically innovative empirical studies, especially in sociology and anthropology. Typical in this regard is Barrington Moore, one of the great Soviet specialists of the period, who is remembered not for his disquisitions on Russia but for his analysis of the historical origins of democracy and dictatorship. Although profoundly shaped by his engagement with Soviet history, he omitted Russia from his six-country analysis. The specter of communism haunted Western social science but without delivering classics that live on in our imagination.

The specter has evaporated, and we must now ask whether the collapse of communism will remain as a broad shadow, informing what we do and how we think rather than invigorating social theory with new innovative studies. Certainly, the collapse of the Soviet order created an ideological vacuum that sucked in Western visions celebrating markets and democracy. But once the first rush died down, more critical social theory gained ground. As the initial euphoria evaporates, the transition falters, and postsocialism enters a dull normality or erupts in violent conflagration, a second generation of theorizing probes more deeply into the fabric of society. Ten years after the collapse of the Berlin Wall we can begin to contemplate how successive waves of Western theory have fared in these new surroundings and whether they are sketching out new cognitive maps.

The first theories to fly across the Atlantic, in jets hired by the IMF and the World Bank, were the economic theories of neoliberalism. Shock therapy aimed to jolt Eastern economies out of their socialist rigidity and degeneration; it would miraculously rectify the inherited pathologies of planning. Shock therapy was to be the "big bang" that would eclipse the old order and set in motion an irreversible expansion of a market economy. As virtually all of the chapters in this book confirm, although markets can be created overnight, their character and consequences cannot be controlled. Markets can generate a retreat to barter relations or criminalized trade, as well as to monetized exchange; markets can lead to involution rather than revolution or evolution; markets can be the engine of primitive disaccumulation rather than advanced accumulation. To a lesser or greater extent, we can observe such alternative scenarios all

across Eastern Europe, not just in Russia and the other former Soviet republics.

Those economists who recognize the failure of neoliberal practice have turned to institutional theories of the economy that advocate evolutionary transformation: instead of destroying the old in the pious hope that the new will spring forth like a *deus ex machina*, they propose constructing the new within the framework of the old. The IMF and, especially, the World Bank find themselves rallying against their own neoliberalism, against unrestrained privatization, against privatized pensions, against extravagant promises of what the market miracle will deliver. The more successful economies of Eastern Europe—Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary—have been wary of shock therapy and have pursued a more cautious road that recognizes the signal role of the state in creating and nurturing modern capitalism.

Of course, there is nothing new here from the standpoint of classical social theory. Sad to say, we have still to relearn the lessons of Weber, Durkheim, and Marx. In moving social theory forward, therefore, we would do well to begin by interrogating their insights into earlier transitions to capitalism. Max Weber is an obvious point of departure. Throughout his life he wrestled with the Janus-faced character of modernity, what Horkheimer and Adorno later called the dialectic of enlightenment. Weber's pessimism is well suited to the uncertain transitions studied in this book, which also provide fertile soil for reexamining his account of the sources of modern bourgeois capitalism—the fecund mixture of rule of law, the organization of formally free labor, elaborate systems of budgeting and accounting, and that uniquely occidental ingredient, the "spirit of capitalism."

Today's postsocialism, however, looks very different from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. One searches in vain for that originating class of capitalist entrepreneurs. Rerunning Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Gil Eyal (1998), for example, uncovers the sources of elective affinity not between Calvinists and bourgeoisie but between dissidents and technocrats in the making of a Czech managerial capitalism. Eyal, Iván Szelényi, and Eleanor Townsley (1998) extend the argument across Central Europe. Adding Bourdieu to Weber, they describe a dynamic social space of strategic actors possessing different forms of potentially convertible capital—economic, social, and cultural. Postcommunist capitalism, they claim, is being made not by an economic bourgeoisie or by the old political elite but by a cultural bourgeoisie, an intelligentsia formed under communism.

This making of "capitalism without capitalists" is a forward-looking scenario. It suggests an entirely novel form of corporate capitalism manufactured from the ruins of socialism. By contrast, a backward-looking

scenario, also from Weber, maps the gestation of a capitalism that *pre-dated* Western bourgeois capitalism—merchant, adventure, speculative, or even booty capitalism in which profit is sought in the realm of trade and exchange rather than production. Certainly, as Caroline Humphrey shows (chapter 1), Russia exhibits features of a latter-day merchant capitalism, a capitalism based on the export of raw materials, the import of cheap foreign consumer goods, and regulation by high finance. Instead of Weber's ascetic, sober, autonomous bourgeoisie we discover the formation of a class of oligarchs embedded in global capitalism who have expropriated the state for their own ends, who in the style of new classes are impressed by their own conspicuous consumption, and who surround themselves with an elaborate security apparatus that separates them from outsiders clamoring to join them. One is reminded less of Max Weber's occidental bourgeoisie than of Frantz Fanon's African national bourgeoisie—an appendix of multinational capital, a parasite on its own popular classes, mimicking the West rather than seeking its own innovative road.

To turn from Weber's specification of Western bourgeois capitalism to its cultural and political *preconditions*, not surprisingly, generates a catalog of deficits—from entrepreneurial culture and the rule of law to the modern nation-state with its monopoly of legitimate violence. Countless commentaries, such as that of Stephen Holmes (1997), show the Russian state as having failed in every area of endeavor—human, economic, political, and social rights. Once again the Russian state has failed to meet Western norms, and if the blame was earlier laid at the feet of totalitarianism, now the problem is the opposite: state weakness and incapacity. Deficit models that cast Russia in darkness not only stigmatize but also fail to deliver any insight into the character and dynamics of contemporary Russian society.

To compare, differentiate, homogenize, and hierarchize countries according to their deviation from a single Western norm raises the question of exclusion, of whether some countries fall outside the standard, lie beyond the pale. Can Russia be put under the same microscope as its erstwhile satellites? Do the heavy weight of Russia's past—its imperial role, its repeated failure to catch up with the West, and the longevity of its communist period—and its enormous size put it in a category of its own when we consider transitions beyond socialism?

In her comparative study of the fortunes of liberal democracy in Eastern Europe, Ellen Comisso (1997) significantly omits Russia. Yet even within Eastern Europe, Western theories of liberal democracy travel better to some countries than to others. Comisso utilizes the Weberian distinction between formal democracy and substantive democracy. In terms of formal democracy broad and remarkable success has occurred, but in terms of substantive democracy—that is, what democracy is supposed to

deliver—the picture is bleaker. Comisso considers three substantive dimensions: egalitarian, national, and liberal. In each instance postsocialism is found wanting: equality has suffered, national rights have been weakened, and the protection of property rights has been inadequate. Her model does not end up as a catalog of deficits, however, but attempts to make sense of government policies as reflecting particular constellations of national, egalitarian, and liberal interests.

Still, what shall we do with Russia? Is the Russian political order *sui generis*, a product of its own *Geist*, unreceptive to Western institutions (McDaniel 1996)? Is the Russian state conjuring up ghosts from the past? Would we more appropriately see in it the antecedent and antithesis of Weber's bureaucratic order? Does it make sense to talk of the Russian state as an “industrial patrimonialism” (Garcelon 1997) or a feudal state in its parcelized sovereignty (Humphrey 1991; Verdery 1996)? Are historical analogies relevant to its double existence—formal public institutions with a legislature, judiciary, and executive coexisting with a shadow “private” state that also exercises violence, collects taxes, and enforces economic transaction? Inseparable and interpenetrated, do these two sides generate something altogether new? Is the Russian state, rather, a member of the family of predatory states that include Mexico, Zaire (now Congo), and Indonesia? Again, if the communist legacy is so important, perhaps we should compare Russia to an equally complex and enormous society such as China, even though its history, its stage of industrialization, and even its experience with communism are so different.

These questions have no definite answer. By themselves, comparisons are neither appropriate nor inappropriate; they depend on the questions behind them. If one is interested in the conditions under which market reforms can stimulate economic growth, then indeed it might make sense to compare Russia's descent with China's soaring economy. Comparisons that seem senseless at first sight can be made inviting when correctly framed. Who, for example, would think a comparison of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union could bear fruit? Veljko Vujacic (1996), however, trains his Weberian lens on Serbian and Russian nationalisms. Given that constitutionally and structurally Serbia's relationship to the other nations of the former Yugoslavia was parallel to Russia's relationship to the former republics of the Soviet Union, why should the former break up violently and the latter relatively peacefully? Our theories would suggest, if anything, the opposite outcome. The methodological point is simple: comparisons are constituted by theories and the empirical puzzles they stimulate rather than by some “intrinsic” difference or similarity.

Through the Weberian lens we see a thick smog settling over Russia, spreading unevenly across its former satellites. But then, Weber's account of Western rationalism, emanating from the tortured Prussian road to

modernity, cast a suffocating pallor everywhere. For a more optimistic picture, one reflecting France's cleaner break with its feudal past, we might turn to Emile Durkheim. How do the uncertain transitions appear through his lens? Is there a parallel to the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity? Hannah Arendt's conception of totalitarianism as a terrorized and atomized mass, fused together by an iron band, can be likened to a society of mechanical solidarity. The transition to democracy and markets simulates the rise of organic solidarity, but as in Durkheim it is an unsure transition, likely to produce abnormal forms. Durkheim would find plenty of those in the former communist world and would argue that making them "normal" rests on a moral regeneration. As Hans Joas (1996) argues, Durkheim is the theorist par excellence of "new values" and institutional creativity. Aside, however, from such visionary leaders-cum-intellectuals as Václav Havel and Adam Michnik, few regenerative visions are found in the field of post-Soviet studies. Among Western scholars Ken Jowitt (1992) comes close when he talks of the Leninist extinction and the genesis of a new order emerging from the ashes of the old. But this new order proves more dangerous and fractious than benign and solidary, and its Leninist legacies repeatedly thwart a regenerative beginning.

Katherine Verdery (1999) maps out new beginnings more suggestively. She transports us from the Weberian politics of disenchantment to a politics of enchantment. Like Ellen Comisso she delves beneath the formal democracy of voting, parties, legislatures, the monopoly of violence, and so forth to a transfigured moral order mapped by traveling dead bodies, by the organization of national rituals around death and rebirth. In memorializing the dead, nations resignify space and time, create and consolidate new identities, and sacralize new authorities. Verdery reminds us less of Durkheim, however, than of Gramsci. Recomposition of the moral order takes place not through a spontaneous collective effervescence but through continual social conflict. The practices of taking Lenin from Red Square or using reburials to mark the boundaries of Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia are vigorously and often violently contested. Like Weber, Gramsci travels East more easily than Durkheim—intellectuals reconfiguring past traditions, building a political order from below as well as imposing it from above, forge a new political hegemony.

Politics, then, is not confined to the official or the formal; power is not the monopoly of the state but extends throughout society. This is the Foucauldian move in social theory, matching dissident perspectives on antipolitics in which withdrawal behind the barricades of the private sphere was as political as engagement in the official realm. Not all Western theory that emphasizes the microphysics of power, however, has met with a warm reception in the East. Neither has feminism, with its mantra

of the personal as the political, which also conveys the Foucauldian expansion of politics. There are at least two reasons for this cool response. At the level of *discourse* socialism had already contaminated the universalism espoused by Western feminists. At the level of *practice* the family, the veritable fountain of patriarchy, was the last defense against the rapacious socialist state. The result was what Joanna Goven (1993), referring to Hungary, calls the antipolitics of antifeminism. As Lynne Haney argues in chapter 5, by defending the family against the state women played into the hands of the new postsocialist conservatism that would confine them to the domestic sphere.

In trying to comprehend the reception of theories, one has to understand the conditions of their birth as well as the places to which they travel. If Western feminism was born with the illusion of the state liberating women from private patriarchy, in the East the opposite illusion was more popular—that of the family as a bulwark *against* the state. Western feminism may have received a cool reception as it traveled East, but that was nothing compared to the frosty reception of Western Marxism, at least in the twilight years of socialism. The reasons are perhaps obvious: whereas in the one regime Marxism poses as a critique of the market economy, in the other it acts as legitimating ideology of an oppressive order. Yet, some of the most imaginative critiques from within state socialism have been Marxist, from Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*, Djilas's *The New Class*, Kolakowski's *Towards a Marxist Humanism*, and Bahro's *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* to Fehér, Heller, and Márkus's *Dictatorship over Needs*. Marxism is itself a complex and contradictory terrain of struggle.

At the same time, one is hard-pressed to discover such powerful Marxist treatments of postsocialism. This phenomenon is especially paradoxical since the concrete effects of neoliberal economic policy confirm the most dire Marxist anticipations—concentration of capital, polarization between rich and poor, the ebb and flow of economic crisis, and the commodification of needs. Russia and Eastern Europe offer resounding corroborations of Marxist theories of global capitalism, whether they draw inspiration from Manuel Castells's ideas about the information society, David Harvey's on flexible accumulation, or even Hilferding's classic analysis of finance capital.

There is a Marxist answer to the paradox of Marxism's demise, an answer that interweaves the content of theory with the class position and class interests of intellectuals. George Konrád and Iván Szélenyi (1979) argued that intellectuals were on the road to power in Eastern Europe, a trajectory that bifurcated them into two groups: an elite of "rational redistributors" who embraced Marxism as ideology and a marginalized group of dissidents who initially tried to use critical Marxism against the

elite but after 1968 abandoned Marxism as irredeemably tainted by oppression. The collapse of state socialism brought with it the collapse of Marxism among both the included and the excluded. In the West, however, the trajectory of Marxism was always different because intellectuals were never on the road to class power but instead occupied their own contradictory class location. Daniel Bell and Alvin Gouldner were only half right—intellectuals formed an incipient new class not in the West but in the East. It is ironic that only with the fall of communism have intellectuals flooded ministries and parliaments—not at the apogee of socialism but at its moment of disintegration. Ill suited for the rough and tumble of real politics, oppositional intellectuals have slowly retreated or been transmogrified. One wonders how long it will be before disillusionment will lead back to Marxism's critique of markets and liberal democracy.

So far I have traced separate strands of classical theory forward, but they can also be woven together into new fabrics. Széleányi's theory of intellectuals is a case in point, embedded as it is in an analysis of political economy that draws together Marx, Weber, and Durkheim. From Marx he took the centrality of *class* defined by property relations that divide socialism from capitalism, from Weber different modes of *legitimation* called for by redistributive as opposed to private appropriation, and from Durkheim the *functionalist interdependence* of state and economy. Armed with this theoretical apparatus, he extended Karl Polanyi's argument that state intervention corrects for market failures whereas the state redistributive economy calls forth the market as a subordinate, balancing mechanism (Széleányi 1991). David Stark has called such inverted combinations of types "mirrored comparisons." He showed how Hungarian enterprises spawned marketlike institutions—systems of inside contracting—as adaptations to the state-induced shortage economy, whereas in the United States enterprises bureaucratize labor allocation to alleviate the pressures of market competition (Stark 1986). Markets compensate for hierarchies in state socialism, whereas hierarchies compensate for markets in advanced capitalism. Like the chapters in this book, Stark and László Bruszt (1998) pursue this understanding of the diversity and complexity of socialism toward "postsocialist pathways" that reorder, reconstitute, reconfigure, and recombine institutions—such as property relations—inherited from the past.

Although they come to similar conclusions, Stark's *recomposition* within a Bourdieu-type *field* is very different from János Kornai's (1992) analysis of *transition*, which theorizes *systems* and the difficulty of moving from one to another. Capitalism is an economic system based on private property and constrained by demand, whereas the socialist system is based on public ownership and constrained by supply. In contrast to the indeterminacy-within-continuity implied by the *field* metaphor, *system*

conveys a distinct dynamics and rationality. It demands that we interpret any empirical phenomenon, from practices on the shop floor to those in the home, against the specific rationality of the wider system within which it is embedded. Or to use Habermas's framework, life world and system come in pairs, and we should not cross-match them, thus criticizing the socialist factory from the standpoint of the functional imperatives of the capitalist system—or, for that matter, projecting an emancipatory workplace for the United States that ignores the imperatives of capitalism. The insistence that socialism is a system with its own logic means that miracles cannot be expected from shock therapy and that change must be gradual and negotiated. Perhaps because he is resistant to the idea of "mixed types," Kornai is deeply cautious about expecting ready transitions from one system to the other.

The methodological and theoretical moral of this discussion is simple. Whether we operate with the concept of field or of system, two ideal types are better than one. They can purchase fruitful comparisons between widely differing countries. On the one hand, they avoid the deficit models of single ideal types; on the other, they can capture rich specificities through their combination. Such strategies of comparison, which theorize divergence as well as convergence and particularity within a common and general framework, do away with those teleologies and counterteleologies that underpin the use of singular Western models as a yardstick of postsocialist development. In keeping with poststructuralist opposition to the grand narratives of progress or decline, this methodological-cum-theoretical move leaves trajectories of transition more open and indeterminate.

Postsocialist theorizing still relies on socialism as a negation or a comparison—as a celebration of capitalist supremacy or, more rarely, a source of capitalist critique. As socialism retreats into the past, the danger is that we will become ever more enthralled with a single model—an ideal typification of liberal capitalism—against which to compare reality, inevitably making of the post-Soviet world a black hole. We will lose sight of alternatives, whether alternative capitalisms, alternative socialisms, or other utopias that offer novel lenses through which to interpret the present and the past, as well as the future. We must maintain a hold on a critical consciousness, what Edward Said (1983: 247) has called the "unstoppable predilection for alternatives."

From where might such alternative visions emerge? One might imagine that the intellectuals of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, reacting to their national marginalization, will once more divide into two camps—Westernizers and nativists. Disillusioned with the promise of Western liberal theory, a new generation of dissidents would abandon the optimism and teleology of so-called transitology and turn to something

more akin to postcolonial theory. After all, anticolonial struggles, like those against communism, embraced Western ideas of economic development and national independence only to discover that they promoted backwardness and oppression in a new guise. So in postsocialism, when humanitarian aid expires and underdevelopment deepens, markets and democracy will evoke skepticism. What indigenous theorizing will arise to supplant or reconfigure Western imports, settling accounts with twentieth-century trajectories through socialism? What will be the contours of postsocialist theory in the twenty-first century, and how will that theory flow back to the West?

Note

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