

**Industrial Workers, Socialist Industrialisation and
the State in Hungary, 1948-1958**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of
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This thesis examines the interaction between industrial workers, the Stalinist state and the process of socialist industrialisation in post-war Hungary during the immediate post-war period. Industrial workers are examined as a group in order to analyse the interaction between social transformation and state formation under socialist conditions. In contrast to well-worn theories of "totalitarianism" and "atomisation" relations between the state and society are presented as an interactive and multi-faceted process.

The socialist state attempted to create a society based upon productive labour. Work became the basis of socialist citizenship, whilst membership of the collectivity of "working people" (*dolgozó nép*) became the passport to full membership of socialist society. Added to this was the regime objective of integrating the whole of the *dolgozó nép* into socialist labour, which the state came to define as working within the socialist sector. The state implemented a policy of proletarianisation, the integration of the population into the socialist labour force.

The new state sought to realise this programme under specific social and political conditions. The country's "liberation" by the Red Army and the beginnings of the Cold War in 1947 ensured that in Hungary the new state would "build socialism" by importing the Stalinist model of centralised economic planning. Under these conditions the industrialisation drive created an economy characterised by endemic shortages, shortages that were not merely felt in production but in almost every area of social life. The dynamics of shortage, the individualisation of production and the re-composition of the workforce that proletarianisation entailed had created a fragmented workforce with little sense of unity. The competition between workers for work and for favourable treatment had corrosive effects on solidarity at the point of production as individuals or small groups of workers sought to survive by developing informal control over their remuneration.

As a result of their experiences of socialist industrialisation workers developed a generalised hatred of the state. This did not translate, however, into class-based mobilisation from below. The nature of the economy and society created by socialist industrialisation shaped resistance in ways which were far from conducive to solidarity or to the development of an encompassing worker identity. The shop floor environment led to the particularisation of social identities within the factory, whilst the spread of informal economic activity resulted in the growth of social isolation and privatisation.

Preface

This thesis examines industrial workers in post-war Hungary during the years of socialist industrialisation and the creation of the Stalinist state. It examines how industrial workers as a group negotiated and adapted to the changes of those years, the social identities they adopted as a result, and in turn the constraints this imposed on state intervention in industrial production. It consciously avoids referring to industrial workers as the "working class" simply because it considers whether or not workers as a group saw themselves, and acted as a class during the years of Stalinism. It focuses on the interaction between state intervention and workers in the field of productive life, it is therefore not intended to be a "total" history of the lives of Hungarian workers. Other social spheres are only considered in so far as they advance understanding of how industrial workers saw their "work" and reacted to the state and its interventions in the productive realm.

It is based on considerable research using the archive material of the ruling parties of the socialist era at both national and local level, the workers' parties of the popular front period, the national, some regional and branch union organisations, selected enterprise materials, and those of both national and relevant local public administration. This information has been supplemented with that contained in contemporary newspapers and periodicals published at national, local and often factory level. A limited number of my own interviews have been used to supplement material from the collections of interviews with labour movement activists maintained by the former Institute of Party History, the collection of the Budapest Oral History Archive, and the large number of transcripts of interviews with escapees to be found in the research materials of the Hungarian department of Radio Free Europe. All of this material has then been set into context through extensive consultation of legal and statistical sources, and the

enormous secondary literature that exists both in Hungarian and in western languages.

The body of primary sources available for the study of the social history of Hungary, and in the rest of East-Central Europe, largely remain *terra incognita* to historians on both sides of the former Iron Curtain nine years after its fall. I spent the best part of three and a half years between January 1994 and June 1997 conducting my own voyage of discovery in this material. With little prior indication of what I could expect to find, and hampered at various stages by confusing regulations and bureaucratic obstruction, as well as aided by many archivists who went out of their way to help me negotiate the numerous obstacles I found an enormous amount of tremendously revealing material. I was frequently warned that I would find little reliable information on social relations in official Stalinist era documents simply because they would be so overlaid with the ideological categories of the period that any view of reality would be obscured. Certainly documents of this kind exist, yet the vast majority of the official material is rich and working through it was often highly rewarding.

The largest problem that the researcher faces is the volume of material. In order to compare materials from different levels of the apparatus I restricted my research at national level to a consideration of labour policy, whilst at local level I identified four industrial communities to use as case studies. Those four, Dunaújváros, Tatabánya, Újpest and the Zala oil fields, were selected on the basis of multiple criteria based on the availability of sources, the degree of institutional assistance that was forthcoming and the sociological nature of the workforce in the place itself. Although this thesis is not a comparison of four different cases, they were used to check the reliability of national level sources. Indeed the further away one looks from the seat of power, the picture is distorted to a lesser extent by the blinkers of

regime ideology. The party officials, the union officeholders, the managers wrote more in the documents about the local problems faced on a day-to-day basis than the ideological constructs of the Stalinist leadership in Budapest.

Though I conducted a small number of interviews myself in order to compare the picture that the documents gave with the memories of participants I was aided enormously by the decision of Radio Free Europe to transfer its research materials to an archive set up under the auspices of the Open Society Institute and later the Central European University. Their materials contain hundreds of contemporary transcripts of interviews with escapees. In the vast majority of cases I was able to cross-reference the details on wages, working conditions, living conditions and the organisation of production with the official sources. Not only did they corroborate, but they expanded much of the information I got through my limited interviewing thus allowing me to construct a picture of popular attitudes alongside the accounts presented in the official documents.

My own extensive research would have been impossible without the support provided by a research studentship from the Economic and Social Research Council between October 1993 and June 1997. Further financial support was provided in Summer 1993 by the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and Education and the British Council which enabled me to attend the Debrecen Summer School and to begin the task of learning Hungarian. During my initial stay in Hungary the Sociological Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences provided me with a base from which I could make initial contacts and prepare the ground for my research. During my research itself I received considerable help from the following institutions; the Hungarian Oil Industry Museum in Zalaegerszeg (especially Lajos Srágli), Tatabánya City Museum (where Vendel Kiss gave me considerable

help), the Factory History Collection of the Dunaferri and the Intercisa Museum, both in Dunaújváros. The staff of these institutions constantly advised me, introduced me to archivists and librarians and arranged interviews for me. In terms of my institutional affiliation in England the Department of Economic and Social History at the University of Liverpool and all of its staff have provided a supportive environment in which to work.

Historians are closely dependent on the existence of an infrastructure of libraries, archives and other collections for their research. I was reminded constantly of this and am indebted to the staff of the Hungarian National Archives, the Central Archives of the Trade Unions (and especially Éva Sándor), the Archive of the Institute for the History of Politics, the Open Society Archives, the Collection of the Hungarian National Museum, the Budapest Oral History Archive and the Budapest City Archives (particularly Ella Kálmár). In Zalaegerszeg the staff of the Zala County Archives, especially Csaba Káli and Imre Kappiller, consistently made me feel welcome, hunted down obscure materials, and even arranged overnight accommodation for me. In Székesfehérvár at the Fejér County Archives Ferenc Erdős and his staff, particularly János Molnár, worked constantly on my behalf. I would also like to thank the staff of Komárom-Esztergom county archives in Esztergom, and the Tatabánya City Archives for all their help. The staff of the Szechenyi National Library in Budapest gave me considerable assistance when using their almost comprehensive collection of factory newspapers from the Stalinist period, and the librarians in the Library of the Central Statistical Office deserve special mention for helping me identify and order recently de-classified statistical reports which did not then figure on the library card catalogue. In addition librarians at the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Library of the Budapest University of Economics, and the Ervin Szabó City Library in Budapest, the

Zala and Komárom-Esztergom county libraries in Zalaegerszeg and Tatabánya respectively, and the City Library in Dunaújváros were generous with both their time and patience.

I wish also to acknowledge the enormous debts that I owe a number of individuals. My PhD. supervisor, Nigel Swain, has worked tirelessly on my behalf and given me constant encouragement and assistance since August 1992. András Tóth deserves special thanks for assistance beyond the call of duty, friendship and constant discussion. I should thank Robin Okey who taught me Eastern European History as an undergraduate at the University of Warwick and got me hooked, and Bill Lomax who persuaded me that this project was viable. In addition I would like to thank Tibor Andresík for teaching me Hungarian and those people who have doubled as both colleagues and friends during my stay in Hungary, especially Katalin Ambrus, Theresa Anderson, László Bassa, Lynne Haney, Ullin Jodah, Padraic Kenney, Csilla Kollonay, Katalin Kovács, Martha Lampland, Andrea Pető, Darryl Reed, Marley Weiss, and Zsuzsanna Varga. I owe an enormous personal debt to Gyöngyi Hegedűs and her parents, who provided me with friendship, a home and a substitute family during my stay in Hungary. Other people who deserve a special mention for their friendship in Hungary are Vali Kicsi, András Löke, Beata Nacsá, and Éva Pinter. In England I would like to thank both my parents and my sister, Karen and brother, Neil for all their encouragement and support, and my friends Andrew Bell, John Dobson, Mike Powell, Kevin Quigley and Max Tondro.

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Table 1

Workers in industry and construction by sector, 1949-1953

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Introduction: Rethinking Hungary's Stalinist Experience

In the summer of 1958 Ibolya Papp was interviewed by party propagandists compiling an official survey of Hungary's "working class". She did not conform to regime stereotypes of the industrial worker. Papp had grown up as one of four children in a smallholder family in a village in western Hungary. Because her parents' land-holding had not guaranteed the family an income, in January 1955 at the age of 20 she went to work in the four year old clothing factory in the nearby city of Zalaegerszeg ¹. The factory was built as part of the attempts to concentrate workshop based clothing production into larger units. During the first part of the 1950s work intensity increased constantly, as a result "often the women (workers) fainted on the production lines" and the "quality of production went to the wall" ². Papp arrived into this world as a seamstress in one of the machine rooms, interested in nothing except "work and relaxation", and although after 1956 work intensity lessened and her pay increased the structure of her life remained the same. To make the beginning of her six o'clock shift she rose at three in the village, travelled into the town and slept for two hours in the station before the beginning of work. After work she helped her family on the farm and at home; it was clear that this was by no means an easy existence ³.

¹ - Papp was one fairly typical worker interviewed by party propagandists in the Zalaegerszegi Ruhagyár (Zalaegerszeg clothing factory) in the early summer of 1958 as part of a nationally ordered party survey into the situation of Hungary's "working class" in the aftermath of the 1956 Revolution. For the information on Papp see ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.1f.1958/12ö.e.; *A tapasztalatok összefoglalása*, p.9. The whole party survey was nationwide and the political context in which it was carried out is well described in György Földes "A Kádár-rendszer és a munkásság", *Eszmélet*, No. 18-19, pp. 57-62, 1993 and more descriptively in Miklós Habuda "A munkásosztály a konszolidáció időszakában" in Sándor Balogh (ed.) *A felszabadulás utáni történetünkről*, Vol. 2, pp.224-39, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986 and in Andrea Pető *A Munkások Életkörülményei Magyarországon az 1950-es években*, ELTE Bölcsészdoktori disszertáció, pp.54-70, Budapest, 1992

² - This is testimony from Károly Döbrentei, then secretary of the Textile and Clothing Workers Union, see PIL 867f.1/d-50/ Döbrentei Károly, pp.70-1

³ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.1f.1958/12ö.e.; *A tapasztalatok összefoglalása*, p.9

Ibolya Papp's circumstances were the result of social transformation that accompanied the political turmoil during the "decade of hope and despair, exhilaration and fear, change and stagnation, democracy and terror" ⁴ that followed the end of World War Two. One aspect of this process of transformation was the proletarianisation of labour during the period of Stalinist dictatorship. This occurred as a result of the new regime's attempt to create "a country of iron, steel and machines", through an unprecedented expansion of industry and especially heavy industry ⁵. The expansion led to an influx of labour into industry of unprecedented proportions; one that led to a huge change in composition of the industrial labour force. A survey of twenty enterprises in Budapest in 1953 showed that only 62.8% of their manual workers had been workers in 1949, 10.8% were of peasant origin, a further 8.8% had been housewives and 4.2% had either been self-employed or had white collar jobs at that time ⁶.

By the summer of 1958 when Ibolya Papp was interviewed Hungary had retreated from the Stalinism of the early 1950s when the shift of labour to industry occurred. The country had emerged from the trauma of the

⁴ - Charles Gati "From Liberation to Revolution, 1945-1956" in Peter F. Sugar (ed.) *A History of Hungary*, p.368, I.B. Taurus, London and New York, 1990

⁵ - See Iván Pető & Sándor Szakács *A hazai gazdaság négy évtizedének története 1945-1985 I. Az újjáépítés és a tervutasításos irányítás időszaka*, pp.151-167, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1985; Iván T. Berend *A Szocialista Gazdaság fejlődése Magyarországon 1945-1968*, p.76, Kossuth Könyvkiadó & Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1974; Nigel Swain *Hungary: the Rise and Fall of Feasible Socialism*, Chapter 3, Verso, London and New York, 1992. The two classic studies which deal with the conception behind the investments contained in the plan and those which underpinned economic policy during the period are Iván T. Berend *Gazdaságpolitika az első öt éves terv megindulásakor 1948-1950*, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1964 and István Birta "A szocialista iparosítási politika néhány kérdése az első öt éves terv időszakában", *Párttörténeti Közlemények*, No.3, pp.113-151, 1970

⁶ - "A magyar munkásosztály fejlődése", p.14, Unpublished manuscript in the Library of the Central Statistical Office, Budapest, 1954

suppression of the 1956 Revolution and was slowly and reluctantly learning to live with the post-Stalinist government of János Kádár imposed by Soviet troops. As the leaders of the Revolution and its Prime Minister Imre Nagy were being tried and executed, considerable disquiet was expressed within the party apparatus about the long term political consequences of the transformation that defined the daily life of Ibolya Papp and thousands like her. During the process of drawing up the 1958 "working class" survey local functionaries debated the effect of industrialisation on labour. For them it had led to the "dilution" of the "working class". They made a sharp distinction between the urban "highly qualified strata" against the so-called "transitional strata", the "rural commuters", "women", "unskilled workers" and "those on re-training programmes". In their minds they divided the workforce into an urban working class and a rural lumpenproletariat ⁷. This sociological analysis was tied to a more explicitly political one, that the socialist regime could not depend on large parts of the industrial workforce for political support. According to one functionary, among the "politically backward workers", who made up the second group there was a positive appreciation of the "counter revolution" of 1956 ⁸.

Whatever the truth of the analysis made by party functionaries of the long term political consequences of industrialisation the two processes illustrated above give an unusual vantage point from which to view Hungary's Stalinist experience ⁹. Firstly, they show Stalinism in Hungary as not merely a political phenomenon but as the initiator of a social process that touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Secondly, they suggest that social processes in early socialist Hungary had unintended and

⁷ - MOL M-KS-288f.21cs. 1958/ 19 ö.e., p.341

⁸ - MOL M-KS-288f.21cs. 1958/ 19 ö.e., p.334

⁹ - This phrase is adapted from George Schöpflin. See his "The Stalinist Experience in Eastern Europe", *Survey*, Vol.30, pp.124-47, 1988

often unwelcome consequences as far as the regime was concerned. These, furthermore, suggested to many of those exercising power that the socialist regime was far from being all encompassing, but seemed at times surprising vulnerable. In sum they suggest that the Stalinist experience cannot be interpreted through an exclusive focus on the realm of politics. Society must therefore be brought into the picture when examining Stalinism in Hungary.

Approaches to Hungarian Stalinism

In the west attempts to interpret Hungarian Stalinism and its origins were already being written as the system was built. These attempts were made against the background of the early years of the Cold War in an ideological climate characterised by widespread anti-Communism. In this climate the Soviet Union and its new satellite states were contrasted at both elite and popular levels with the West, described as "totalitarian" states, defined increasingly by their denial of political freedoms and basic civil rights. Even beyond the pressure exerted by military competition and diplomatic tension the image of Communist states as "totalitarian" gained considerable social currency throughout the 1950s, as it served as a point of comparison with a West characterised by the post-war boom¹⁰. This was fuelled by the accounts of the Hungarian situation brought to the West by waves of *émigrés*. In the aftermath of the Communist seizure of power a

¹⁰ - The best general introduction to the ideological climate of the period is James E. Cronin *The World the Cold War Made: Order, Chaos and the Return of History*, especially Chapter 2, Routledge, New York and London, 1996; the best history of "totalitarianism" as a concept and as an element within popular attitudes in the United States is Abbott Gleason *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1995; for evidence of the way in which "totalitarianism" constructed American popular views of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the 1950s see the personal testimony of the anthropologist Katherine Verdery in her *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next ?*, especially the Introduction, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1996

series of accounts written by anti-Communist public figures stressed the illegitimacy of Communist political tactics. Following the suppression of the 1956 Revolution a new wave of *émigrés* painted vivid pictures of the show trials, the security state and the suppression of intellectual activity during high Stalinism ¹¹.

This climate was to have a decisive influence on western interpretations of Hungarian Stalinism and its origins, which were to be overwhelmingly characterised by a "neo-totalitarian" view of events. This perspective regarded the most important element of the history of the immediate post-war period as the Communists' drive for power. It argued that the Soviet occupying force's toleration of democratic political institutions was an act of bad faith as they were waiting to consolidate their strength before they undertook a full blown "Sovietisation" of Hungary. This perspective underlined the lack of support enjoyed by the party after the war, and saw its power as based on the support given by the Soviet occupation force, the consequent control that the party enjoyed over the police and other semi-official security services and an influx of former Arrow Cross members and careerists eager to preserve their positions in the new

¹¹ - The best analysis of emigration from Hungary to the west in the post-war period is Gyula Borbándi *A magyar emigráció életrajza*, Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1989; for a sample of the accounts of politicians and other public figures who complained of Communist tactics between 1945 and 1948 see Ferenc Nagy *Struggle Behind the Iron Curtain*, translated from Hungarian by Stephen K. Swift, Macmillan, New York, 1948; Vince Nagy *Októbertől októberig*, Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1991; for a sample of a memoir written in 1948 but only published much later see Vilmos Böhm *Másodszor emigrációban*, Progresszió, Budapest, 1990; for the account of another social democratic politician originally published in 1951 but re-published in Hungarian in the mid-1990s see Antal Bán *Magyarország* in Denis Healey ed. *A Független Legördül. Kelet-Európa szocialista pártjainak sorsa*, pp.73-91, Kéthly Anna Alapítvány, Budapest, 1995. From those who left in 1956 there are two striking memoirs of the show-trials which should be mentioned, see George Paloczi-Horváth *The Undeclared*, Eland, London, 1993 and Béla Szász *Volunteers for the Gallows: Anatomy of a Show-Trial*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1971, for an analysis of pre-1956 intellectual life from two participants see Tamás Aczél & Tibor Meray *The Revolt of the Mind: A Case History of Intellectual Resistance behind the Iron Curtain*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1960

political climate. The Communists were able to exploit these strengths and the weakness and disunity of the dominant centre-right Smallholders' Party through the application of "salami tactics" designed to whittle down the strength of the anti-Communist majority¹². The Stalinist era was seen as the logical culmination of Communist and Soviet strategy in the immediate post-war era. Stalinism was therefore characterised by the primacy of ideology, the release of a wave of mass terror beginning with attacks on non-communist opponents, then spreading like a whirlwind through internal party purges and show trials to dominate and define everyday life. As Soviet ideology justified brutal collectivisation, irrational industrialisation, the cult of personality and outward political conformity society was either "atomised" or disappeared completely as an entity separate from the state. According to one advocate of this position Hungary's Stalinist experience led to "the general degradation of public and private morality" as society was "atomised" into "lonely and fearful submissiveness"¹³.

This "neo-totalitarian" perspective begins to lose its internal consistency when it attempts to explain the protracted retreat from Stalinism after 1953. It explains the marginalisation of Rákosi and the Stalinists within

¹² - The phrase "salami tactics" is taken from a speech given the Communist party secretary Mátyás Rákosi, in which he explained his tactics in the immediate post-war period *vis-a-vis* his political opponents. The terminology of Sovietisation is most clearly explained in Charles Gati *The Bloc That Failed: Soviet-East European Relations in Transition*, pp.3-28, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1990. For two classic expositions of this view see Zbigniew K. Brzezinski *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict*, revised and enlarged edition, pp.3-64, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967 and for an account with an exclusively Hungarian focus see Bennett Kovrig *Communism in Hungary: From Kun to Kádár*, pp.153-230, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, California, 1979. This view is also evident with some modifications in George Schöpflin "Hungary" in Martin McCauley ed. *Communist Power in Europe, 1944-1949*, pp.95-110, Macmillan in association with the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, London and Basingstoke, 1977

¹³ - This statement is taken from Kovrig *Communism in Hungary*, p.262; three examples of this analysis are Schöpflin "The Stalinist Experience in Eastern Europe"; Kovrig *Communism in Hungary*, pp. 232-66; Brzezinski *The Soviet Bloc*, pp.67-151

the party leadership as a result of Soviet intervention, and then retreats into narrative when describing the internal political machinations in the years that followed. These were brought to an end by the decisive outbreak of popular revolution in 1956 when society, having been banished from the account up until then, staged a sudden entrance. Many define the events of 1956 as an "anti-totalitarian" revolution, or, stressing Soviet domination, celebrate it as a national revolution against Communism. What remains unexplained is that if Hungarian society was as effectively "atomised" by the Stalinist experience as neo-totalitarians claim, how was it able to assert an alternative set of social and political values during the events of 1956 ¹⁴? This problem is further underlined by the way in which the advocates of this perspective treat the immediate post-revolutionary period. This they regard as a period in which the ideals of the Revolution were ruthlessly repressed, yet they argue that the legacy of 1956 was fundamental to the Kádárist compromise granted to society from the 1960s on ¹⁵.

It has been argued that the major weakness of the traditional "neo-totalitarian" interpretation has been its inability to conceive of society as possessing a degree of autonomy from the socialist state. This can be

¹⁴ - For treatments of de-Stalinisation which follow this scheme see Brzezinski *The Soviet Bloc*, Chapter 10; Kovrig *Communism in Hungary*, Chapter 11; for accounts of the 1956 Revolution, one which subscribes to a left wing version of the anti-totalitarian thesis see Claude Lefort "La première révolution antitotalitaire" in Pierre Kende & Krzysztof Pomian (eds.) *1956 Varsovie-Budapest; La deuxième révolution d'Octobre*, pp.93-9, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1978; for the classic view of the events of 1956 as a national, anti-Communist uprising see Ferenc A. Váli *Rift and Revolt in Hungary. Nationalism versus Communism*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1961, a further standard account is Paul E. Zinner *Revolution in Hungary*, Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1962. For a criticism of the "neo-totalitarian" similar to the one I have made here see the introduction to Padraic Kenney *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists 1945-1950*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1997. The contradiction I wish to point to is perhaps at its clearest in Gati "From Liberation to Revolution, 1945-1956".

¹⁵ - Perhaps the most recent example of this kind of analysis is Rudolf L. Tökes *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution. Economic reform, social change and political succession, 1957-1990*, pp.39-79, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996

illustrated by the attempts of scholars working within the boundaries of this approach to integrate social perspectives and the problems that this has led to. The first attempt was one that aimed to address the social roots of Hungarian Stalinism. Charles Gati during the 1970s aimed to challenge the view that the Communist revolutionary strategy had no support within Hungarian society and began to map public opinion in the country during the immediate post-war years by surveying its attitudes towards "revolutionary" and "evolutionary" strategies of modernisation. He argued that Hungarian society was almost evenly split between advocates of these two strategies, and that within the "revolutionary" camp there was a substantial, though minority, base of support for a Communist strategy of revolutionary, industrial modernisation ¹⁶. In spite of his advocacy of this view that clearly has implications for the study of Hungarian Stalinism and his attempts to rescue the immediate post-war years from the shadow of "salami tactics" and re-present it as a "democratic interlude" his work has failed to escape the constraints of the "neo-totalitarian" perspective. He still regards the Stalinist era as characterised by Soviet domination and terror and his analysis of the 1956 Revolution, that he sees as national and democratic, displays the contradictions of the views of those who continue to advocate a more traditional version of the "neo-totalitarian" approach ¹⁷. This contradiction has also been evident in others' attempts to use the legacy of Stalinist "atomisation" to explain social change post-1956. This was particularly clear in attempts use the "atomisation" and

¹⁶ - See Charles Gati "Hungary: The Dynamics of Revolutionary Transformation" in Charles Gati (ed.) *The Politics of Modernisation in Eastern Europe: Testing the Soviet Model*, pp.51-88, Praeger Publishers, New York, Washington and London, 1974; his argument is also cited in Schöpflin "Hungary", p.97

¹⁷ - The fullest statement of Gati's interpretation of Hungarian history after 1945 is his *Hungary and the Soviet Bloc*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1986; on his attempt to re-evaluate the 1945-1948 as a "democratic interlude" see Charles Gati "Eastern Europe before Cominform: The Democratic Interlude in post-war Hungary", *Survey*, Vol. 28, pp.99-134, 1984, on his view of 1956 and how it fits with his more general view of Stalinism see Gati "From Liberation to Revolution, 1945-1956"

"lumpenproletarianisation of the working class" that occurred in Stalinist Hungary as an explanation for the passivity of industrial workers in the early 1980s in the face of the militancy of their Polish counterparts ¹⁸. Yet this could not explain how an atomised "working class" was able to take to the streets in 1956.

If during the Cold War western attempts to interpret Hungarian Stalinism were infused with the "neo-totalitarian" approach, Hungarian attempts were tied to the official politics of history of the Kádár regime. The task of writing contemporary Hungarian history was explicitly institutionalised at the end of 1948 with the establishment of the Institute for Party History, a body that would unify the archival materials, library facilities and research staff necessary to document the history of the workers movement ¹⁹. Initially an isolated party institute, after 1956 and especially during the 1960s it began to co-operate with other institutions working in the historical discipline and co-ordinated attempts to write the history of the early post-war period ²⁰. Its staff did not have a free hand in interpreting the era however and their work had to closely reflect the post-1956 ideological climate.

This climate was defined by the ruling party's attempts to come to terms with the events of the 1956 Revolution, their causes, and their

¹⁸ - The main example of this argument is Iván Völgyes "Hungary: The Lumpenproletarianisation of the Working Class" in Jan F. Triska & Charles Gati (eds.) *Blue-Collar Workers in Eastern Europe*, pp.224-35, George Allen & Unwin, London, Boston & Sydney, 1981

¹⁹ - On the history of the Institute of Party History (*Párttörténeti Intézet*) see Tibor Erényi "Párttörténeti Intézet" in Henrik Vass (ed.) *Történelmi Múlt-Társadalmi Jelen: Társadalomtudományi kutatóműhelyek Magyarországon*, p.119, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1989

²⁰ - *ibid.*, p.120

implications ²¹. The party emphatically condemned the events of October 1956 as a "counter-revolution" stirred up by the West and by "right-wing opportunists" within the party. Discontent in society had, however, been fuelled by the behaviour of the "Rákosi-Gerő clique" within the party whose "left-wing deviation" had caused them "to break away from the masses" ²². Official writing of Hungary's post-war history subdivided the first fifteen years after the end of World War Two into three sub-periods. The first was characterised by popular revolution, which at the end of the 1960s and the turn of the 1970s would be more explicitly theorised as a period of "people's democratic revolution" ²³. The second was Stalinism, interpreted as the dominance of the Rákosi-Gerő clique. The third covered the period of

²¹ - The ideological debates and political dilemmas of early part of Kádár's rule are best discussed in Földes "A Kádár-rendszer", and the same author's *Hafalom és mozgalom (1956-1989); Társadalmi-politikai erőviszonyok Magyarországon*, pp.49-72, Reform Könyvkiadó-Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1989

²² - The events of 1956 were condemned as a "counterrevolution" very early on by the party leadership at the Central Committee meeting on the 2nd and 3rd December 1956 at which the above ideological line became apparent for the first time; for the discussion see *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Ideiglenes Vezető Testületeinek Jegyzőkönyvei, Vol.1 1956 november 11 - 1957. január 14*, pp.139-226, Intera Rt., Budapest 1993; for the decision refer to *Az MZSMP határozatai és dokumentumai, 1956-1962*, pp.12-23. Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1973. This positions also comes out from the discussion held within the Political Committee on "the events of October in the light of Marxist-Leninism", for the party leadership's discussion of this question see *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Ideiglenes Vezető Testületeinek Jegyzőkönyvei, Vol.3 1957 április 5- 1957. május 17*, pp.60-9, Intera Rt., Budapest 1993. This ideological position became more explicitly public after the June 1957 national conference; for details of the discussion please refer to *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt országos értekezlet jegyzőkönyve, 1957 június 27-29*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1957. Even after the period of post-revolutionary repression and the consolidation of the Kádár regime had passed, this still formed the official ideology, see *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Központi Bizottság Irányelvei - A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Központi Bizottságának határozata a személy kultusz éveiben a munkásmozgalmi emberek ellen indított törvénytörő perek lezárásáról*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1962.

²³ - This concept produced something of a debate among the ideologists in the Marxist-Leninist Departments of the major universities and the labour movement historians. For a party historian's take on the concept see Bálint Szabó *Felszabadulás és Forradalom, Tanulmányok*, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975

externally inspired "counter-revolution" and eventual socialist consolidation
24.

Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s work on the immediate post war period, on the era leading "from liberation to socialist revolution" or of "peoples' democratic revolution", stressed a dimension of politics ignored in much of the western writing. Party historians re-discovered the popular mobilisation that followed the Soviet advance across the country writing about the national committees as organs of popular administration, grassroots factory democracy and worker participation in industrial reconstruction, the democratic nature of land reform, and the growth of new institutions; youth organisations, trade unions and women's organisations
25. Unfortunately in much of this work and in the general literature on

24 - The periodisation with some modifications seems to characterise all of the general histories of Hungary written in the socialist period. For a sample see the contributions to Miklós Laczkó & Bálint Szabó (eds.) *Húsz Év, Tanulmányok a Szocialista Magyarország Történetéből*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1964; the studies in Henrik Vass (ed.) *A Kommunista Párt Szövetségi Politikája*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1966; Dezső Nemes et. al. *A magyar forradalmi munkásmozgalom története*, Vol. 3, 2nd edition, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1970. For two later general histories which interpret the course of post-war Hungary in a similar, though modified vein, see Sándor Balogh et. al. *A magyar népi demokrácia története, 1944-1962*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1978 and Sándor Balogh, Jenő Gergely, Lajos Izsák, Sándor Jakab, Pál Pritz & Ignác Romsics *Magyarország a XX. Században*, 2nd edition, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986

25 - Whilst this kind of writing began in the 1960s it continued almost up until the end of the socialist period, the final major wave of publications was in the mid-1980s as the regime celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the "liberation" of the country. On the national committees see Béla Balázs *Népmozgalom és nemzeti bizottságok, 1945-1946*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1961; Mihály Korom *A Népi Bizottságok és a Közigazgatás Magyarországon, 1944-1945*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986. On factory democracy and worker participation in industrial reconstruction see Sándor Rákosi & Erzsébet Strassenreiter (eds.) *A munkásosztály az újjáépítésért, 1945-1946. Dokumentumok*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1960; Iván T. Berend *Az újjáépítés és a nagytőke elleni harc Magyarországon, 1945-1948*, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1962; Károly Jenei, Béla Rácz, Erzsébet Strassenreiter "Az üzemi bizottságok és a munkásellenőrzés megvalósulása hazánkban (1944-1948)" in Károly Jenei, Béla Rácz & Erzsébet Strassenreiter (eds.) *Az üzemi bizottságok a munkáshatalomért, 1944-1948*, pp. 7-146, Táncsics Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1966 and Ferenc Gáspár "A Magyar Nagyipari Munkásság Harca az Üzemek Megmentéséért Helyreállításáért és a Termelés Megindításáért 1944-1945" in Ferenc Gáspár, Károly Jenei & Gábor Szilágyi (eds.) *A Munkásság az Üzemekért, a Termelésért 1944-1945. Dokumentumgyűjtemény*, pp.5-69,

political change this mobilisation was endowed with the teleology of Marxist-Leninist ideology; it led inevitably to a "socialist revolution" in 1948. In this scheme the task of political history was to show how the political representative of this movement, the Communist party struggled for "working class unity" and was able to defend the "progressive forces" from the machinations of "reaction" ²⁶. This account of events tended to identify the left with popular mobilisation and utterly ignored the anti-democratic behaviour of the Communists, their allies, the state and the Soviet occupiers. Furthermore its treatment of political forces that did not identify with Communist aims was highly pejorative and verged on the propagandistic. A new generation of contemporary historians in the 1970s began to subtly distance themselves from this model by retreating into an explicitly positivist political history of the immediate post-war period. This

Táncsics Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1970. On the democratic nature of land reform see Sándor Szakács *Földosztás és agrárfejlődés a magyar népi demokráciában*, pp.17-85, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1964; Magda M. Somlyai "Az 1945-ös Földreform" in Magda M. Somlyai (ed.) *Földreform 1945, Tanulmány és Dokumentumgyűjtemény*, pp.7-153, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1965; Ferenc Donáth *Demokratikus földreform Magyarországon, 1945-1947*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1969; Sándor Orbán *Két Agrárforradalom Magyarországon; Demokratikus és szocialista agrárátalakulás 1945-1961*, pp.22-45, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1972 and Ferenc Donáth *Reform és Forradalom; A magyar mezőgazdaság strukturális átalakulása*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1977. On the Communist party as a mass party based on the industrial working class see Éva Szabó "A Magyar Kommunista Párt" in Tibor Erényi & Sándor Rákosi (eds.) *Legyőzhetetlen erő. A magyar kommunista mozgalom szervezeti fejlődése 50 éve*, pp.155-90, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1968. On the trade unions see Miklós Habuda *A Magyar Szakszervezetek a Népi Demokratikus Forradalomban, 1944-1948*, revised and expanded 2nd edition, Népszava Kiadó, Budapest, 1986

²⁶ - In this respect the tone of the literature on political change did not change with the revolution of 1956. Many of the works retained a startlingly neo-Stalinist tone right into the 1970s. Historical attention to the immediate post-war era in fact began on the tenth anniversary of the "liberation" of the country in 1955 whilst Rákosi still held the reigns of power; for an example of such early propagandistic history see Kálmán Szakács *Harc a munkásegségért Győr megyében, 1945-1948*, Szikra, Budapest, 1955. Some examples from the 1960s are Bálint Szabó *Forradalmunk sajátosságai 1944-1948*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1962; Dezső Nemes *Magyarország felszabadulása. Magyarország fejlődése a felszabadulás után*, 2nd revised edition, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1960; Agnes Ságvári *Tömegmozgalmak és Politikai Küzdelmek Budapesten, 1945-1947*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1964; Agnes Ságvári "A szövetségi politika kérdései Magyarországon a szocialista forradalom győzelméért vívott harcban (1944-1948)" in Henrik Vass (ed.) *A Kommunista Párt Szövetségi Politikája*, pp. 79-143, Kossuth

trend which remained dominant until the change of system in 1989 both refined and undermined traditional party history by giving a scholarly account of issues such as the role of centre-right parties in Hungarian politics, for example. Rather than attempting to challenge the dominant ideological model it instead tried to ignore and accommodate itself to this tradition ²⁷.

Official accounts tended to stress that 1948 was the "year of change" when Hungary became a socialist society as the bulk of industry was transferred to public ownership. The accounts all stress that the "socialist revolution" was based on an alliance established in the preceding period between the workers, the intelligentsia and the peasantry that almost constituted a form of social contract. Using a populist form of explanation the ills of Stalinism in Hungary were ascribed to the actions of bad leaders. These leaders, the junta of Rákosi, Gerő, Revai and Farkas presided over a "left-wing deviation" which disregarded "socialist legality". The measures necessary to build socialism, industrialisation, proletarianisation and collectivisation, were implemented too quickly and dogmatically. The result was that the leadership became "divided from the masses" as living standards for industrial workers plunged, peasants were driven to near starvation as a result of compulsory deliveries and the intelligentsia was left

Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1966; Agnes Ságvári *Népfront és Koalíció Magyarországon 1936-1948*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1967

²⁷ - For examples of the official historians tum away from labour movement and party history towards institutional and political history see in terms of general political histories Sándor Balogh *Parlament és Pártharcok Magyarországon 1945-1947*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1975; István Vida *Koalíció és pártharcok 1944-1948*, Magvető Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986; Lajos Izsák *A koalíció évei Magyarországon 1944-1948*, Kozmosz Könyvek, Budapest, 1986 and the collection Sándor Balogh & Lajos Izsák *Pártok és Pártprogramok Magyarországon 1944-1948*, Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest, 1979. For their histories of individual political groupings see István Tóth *A Nemzeti Parasztpárt története 1944-1948*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1972; István Vida *A Független Kisgazdapárt Politikája 1944-1947*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1976 and Lajos Izsák *Polgári Ellenzéki Pártok Magyarországon 1944-1949*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1983

generally disoriented ²⁸. This whole inversion of the personality cult of Rákosi assumed that he was individually responsible for the breakdown of the link between the socialist state and its supposed social constituencies. It was as much an explanation of the causes of the "counter revolution" of 1956 that avoided the ideological taboos constraining historical work in Kádárist Hungary. Indeed the events of 1956 were assumed to be an attempt by internal and external enemies to exploit this breach between the party and masses and in so doing to overthrow the socialist system and thus to restore capitalism ²⁹. The painful experience of 1956 then led the party to

²⁸ - The classic statement by a historian of this position is András Zsilák "A magyar társadalom osztályszerkezetének alakulása a szocializmus építésének kezdeti időszakában és a Magyar Dolgozók Pártja szövetségi politikájának főbb vonásai (1949-1956)" in Henrik Vass (ed.) *A Kommunista Párt Szövetségi Politikája, 1936-1962*, pp.144-214, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1966. This article stands out because of its inclusion of a remarkable amount of information about society under high Stalinism. For a traditional and dryer statement of the position from a party historian see Bálint Szabó *Az "ötevenes évek": Elmélet és politika a szocialista építés első időszakában Magyarországon, 1948-1957*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986, which interprets the problems of the decade as occurring as the result of the "sectarian mistakes" of the party leadership. Official history has tended to explore the consequences of the "left wing deviation" for the relationship with various constituencies in the party, for some examples see Sándor Balogh "A magyar értelmiség a felszabadulás után", *Propagandista*, No.2, pp.5-15, 1982; Miklós Habuda "A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja munkáspolitikájának néhány kérdése a Központi Vezetősége 1953. júniusi határozata után", *Párttörténeti Közlemények*, Vol.26, No.1, pp.23-55, 1980; András Rátki "A volt magyar uralkodó osztályok (Egy 1951-es felmérés tanulságai)", *História*, No.3, pp.28-9, 1981; András Zsilák "Az MDP munkáspolitikájáról", *História*, No.3, pp. 13-5, 1981. The focus of official history on the effect of the Rákosi regime on society inspired at the end of the socialist era the best introduction to politics and society in the Stalinist period; György Gyarmati, János Botos, Tibor Zinner & Mihály Korom *Magyar Hétköznapiak Rákosi Mátyás Két Emigrációja Között 1945-1956*, Minerva, Budapest, 1988

²⁹ - As far as the events leading up to the revolution are concerned there are several studies which merit attention are János Berecz "A szocializmus építése során kialakult válság és leküzdésének tapasztalatai, tanulságai, 1953-1956", *Propagandista*, No.1, pp. 109-22, 1984; Bálint Szabó *Az "ötevenes évek"*, pp. 65-326, see also his *Új Szakász az MDP Politikájában, 1953-1954*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1984, his "Az 1953. júniusi politikai fordulat", *Propagandista*, No.4, pp. 118-169, 1986 and his "'Pártegységgel a szocialista demokráciáért" Az MDP Központi Vezetőségének 1956. júliusi határozatáról", *Propagandista*, No. 5, pp. 76-127, 1986; Károly Urbán "Az 1953-as fordulat és a magyar értelmiség", *Párttörténeti Közlemények*, No.4, pp. 30-83, 1981. For a sample of official interpretations of the events of 1956 stressing their "counter revolutionary" nature see János Berecz *Ellenforradalom tollal és fegyverrel, 1956*, 3rd expanded and revised edition, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1981; Ervin Hollós *Kik voltak, mit akartak ?* Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1967; Ervin Hollós & Vera Lajtai *Köztársaság tér 1956*, Kossuth

pursue a "correct" route of management under socialism in the post-revolutionary era ³⁰.

Alongside the attribution of all the blame for the Stalinist experience to a few political leaders without an appreciation of the international context or internal structural constraints within which the system operated, the account attributes to society both a degree of power and at the same time political immaturity. This form of explanation has led to writing about the social consequences of the Stalinist experience that directly mirrors western explanations which stress atomisation. The industrial working class, for example, which in the 1940s was a mainstay of "the peoples' democratic revolution" was by 1960 "diluted" with the influx of "lumpenproletarian" and "petty-bourgeois" elements ³¹. This line of explanation underlines a further problem with official accounts that their categories when describing social

Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1974; János Molnár *Ellenforradalom Magyarországon 1956-ban. A polgári magyarázatok bírálata*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1967 and also his *A Nagybudapesti Központi Munkástanács*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1969

³⁰ - Henrik Vass "A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Szövetségi Politikája 1956 és 1962 között" in Henrik Vass (ed.) *A Kommunista Párt Szövetségi Politikája, 1936-1962*, pp.215-317, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1966.

³¹ - This form of reasoning forms a subtext in an article that stresses the achievements of socialism in expanding the "working class", see Miklós Lázckó "Szerkezeti változások a magyar munkásosztály összetételben" in Miklós Laczkó & Bálint Szabó (eds.) *Húsz Év, Tanulmányok a Szocialista Magyarország Történetéből*, pp.75-100, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1964; János Blaskovits & János Illés "A munkásosztály fogalma" in Tibor Halay (ed.) *Tanulmányok a munkásosztályról*, pp.219-302, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1973 for the clearest exposition of this official view see Tibor Erényi "Munkásosztálytörténet - munkásmozgalomtörténet" in Henrik Vass & Levente Sipos (eds.) *Munkásmozgalomtörténet - Társadalomtudományok. Elméleti és Módszertani Tanulmányok*, pp. 165-193, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1978. This line is much clearer from the relevant sections of the various enterprise, factory and local histories which began to appear from the 1960s onwards; for a small selection see Péter Hanák & Katalin Hanák *A Magyar Pamutipar Története, 1887-1962*, pp. 350-75, A PNYV Magyar Pamutipar 1. sz. Gyáregysége, Budapest, 1964; Tibor Drucker "A felszabadult Csepel" in András Kubinyi et al. *Csepel Története*, pp.460-4, Csepel Vas- és Fémművek Pártbizottsága, Budapest, 1965; Ákos Dömötör "A feszített iparosítás hatása (1949-1956)" in Iván T. Berend (ed.) *Az Ózdi Kohászati Üzemek története*, pp.341-4, Ózdi Kohászati Üzemek, Ózd, 1980; Lajos Gyarmati "Esztergom iparának története" in Antal Brunszkó et al. *Esztergom Ipartörténete*, pp. 207-228, Balassa Bálint Társaság, Esztergom, 1985

phenomena owe a good deal to the "two classes, one stratum" Stalinist model of society, rather than to concepts derived from more critical forms of social explanation.

During the Cold War period an alternative line of interpretation was to develop; it saw popular mobilisation as central to Hungary's post-war experience yet was distinctly anti-Communist. Left-wing libertarian in its tone it regarded the Stalinist centralised state as the betrayal of post-war radicalism and the catalyst of class exploitation and resistance. It grew from the experience of the 1956 Revolution; firstly from the experiences of left-wing foreign journalists who experienced the events of October and November and saw the Soviet intervention as a betrayal of their ideas, secondly from the observations of formerly committed Communists who were disgusted both with the Stalinist experience and Kádár's suppression of the revolution and lastly from some of the participants in the grass-roots organs that sprang up in response to the turmoil³². Under the influence of such accounts left-wing libertarians were to proclaim the events of 1956 as

³² - For accounts by left-wing foreign observers see Basil Davidson *What Really Happened in Hungary ? A Personal Record*, Union of Democratic Control Publishers, London, 1957; Peter Fryer *Hungarian Tragedy*, Dobson, London, 1956; Dora Scarlett *Window onto Hungary*, Broadacre Books, Bradford, 1959; Bill Lomax (ed.) *Eyewitness in Hungary: The Soviet Invasion of 1956*, Spokesman Press, Nottingham, 1980 is an invaluable collection of these kinds of account. For the reflections of anti-Stalinist Hungarian Communists the classic piece is Sándor Fekete *Hungaricus. Az 1956-os felkelés okairól és tanulságairól. Fekete Sándor illegálisan terjesztett irásának első hiteles magyar nyelvű kiadása mai magyarázatokkal*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1989 and Ferenc Donáth is also very important in this regard; he was an agricultural historian, Communist party functionary and member of Imre Nagy's inner circle, his writings on 1956 are published in Judit Szabó & Tibor Valuch (eds.) *Donáth Ferenc. A Márciusi Fronttól Monorig.; Tanulmányok, Vázlatok, Emlékezések*, pp.79-146, Századvég Kiadó, Budapest, 1993. A good statement in English of Donáth's view on the history of Hungary in the early years of socialism is Ferenc Donáth "István Bibó and the Fundamental Issue of Hungarian Democracy" in Ralph Miliband & John Saville (eds.) *The Socialist Register 1981*, pp.221-46, Merlin Press, London, 1981. For the views of participants who subscribed to left-wing, anti-Communist positions during the Revolution see the collection from the journal of the Brussels based Imre Nagy Institute of Political Science, Gyula Kozák (ed.) *Szemle. Válogatás a brüsszeli Nagy Imre Intézet folyóiratából*, Századvég Kiadó - 1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1992

a popular revolution against class inequality and a centralised state as well as being a movement for grassroots democracy ³³.

This alternative line of interpretation is represented by the work of Bill Lomax ³⁴. Lomax argues that the 1956 Revolution was directed against the Communist state, but was not against ideas of socialism, and represented the aspirations of the population for a greater degree of democracy in everyday life. He considers the establishment of revolutionary organs to exert control over the production, the workers' councils, as the most novel aspect of the events of 1956, and the institutions that gave the revolution its significance. It is when he seeks to explain the causes of the revolution in the events of the preceding ten years that he expounds an alternative interpretation of Hungary's Stalinist experience. He argues that the Stalinist state through its industrialisation policy combined with its repressive nature led to an expansion of the "working class" and circumstances in which militancy and opposition to the state grew enormously. The factories acted as schools for the development of "working class" consciousness as new proletarians were integrated into the workforce alongside older skilled workers who brought their memories of the popular mobilisation of the late 1940s to bear on the shop floor ³⁵. By 1953 Hungary was struck by a major wave of worker unrest, according to Lomax, which began to build up into

³³ - For an example of this kind of political appropriation of the events of 1956 see Andy Anderson *Hungary '56*, Solidarity, London, 1964

³⁴ - This work is Bill Lomax *Hungary 1956*, Allison & Busby, London, 1976; Lomax (ed.) *Eye-witness in Hungary*; Bill Lomax "The Working Class in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956", *Critique*, Vol. 13, pp.27-54, 1981; Bill Lomax "The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Origins of the Kádár regime", *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. 18, pp.87-113, 1985; Bill Lomax & István Kemény (eds.) *Magyar munkástanácsok 1956-ban*, Magyar Füzetek, Paris, 1986; Bill Lomax (ed.) *Worker's Councils in 1956*, translated by Bill Lomax & Julian Schöpflin, Columbia University Press, New York 1990; Bill Lomax "The Rise and Fall of the Hungarian Working Class", *Journal of Communist Studies*, Vol.6, pp.47-60, 1990

³⁵ - Lomax "The Rise and Fall of the Hungarian Working Class", p.50

growing revolutionary feeling ³⁶. Thus a strong state led to a strong society, and this became a fundamental cause of the revolution.

It is when Lomax turns to an explanation of what he sees as the sharply different behaviour of society in the Kádár era that problems begin to appear. The defeat of the 1956 Revolution began a process of what he terms "de-proletarianisation" in which workers of peasant origin replace skilled workers and the gradual opening up of the "second economy" leads to growing social privatisation. This, for Lomax, provides the social basis for the reasonable legitimacy enjoyed by Kádár and his compromise with society in the decades following 1956 ³⁷. The problem is that the two phenomena that he argues led to "de-proletarianisation" were in evidence before the Revolution; the influx of former poor peasants into the industrial workforce began in 1949, and not after 1956 ³⁸ whilst informal economic activity was in evidence during the Stalinist period ³⁹. If this is the case and it accurately explains the phenomenon of "de-proletarianisation" in Kádár's Hungary, then social change brought about by the Stalinist state cannot explain the 1956 Revolution. Whilst, therefore, Lomax's recognition of the existence of society that reacted in unexpected ways to the Stalinist regime is welcome, it is far from clear that society reacted in the way he describes, and that this reaction actually led to the Revolution.

³⁶ - Lomax "The Working Class", pp.27-32; Lomax *Hungary 1956*, Chapter 1

³⁷ - Lomax "The Rise and Fall of the Hungarian Working Class", pp.52-4; Bill Lomax "Hungary -the Quest for Legitimacy" in Paul G. Lewis (ed.) *Eastern Europe: Political Crisis and Legitimation*, pp.68-107, Croom Helm, London and Sydney, 1984

³⁸ - In addition to the evidence I have presented above see Lomax "The Rise and Fall of the Hungarian Working Class", pp.49-50 and István Kemény *Ouvriers hongrois, 1956-1985* pp. 117-57, Éditions L'Harmattan, Paris, 1985

³⁹ - This phenomenon in rural Hungary is described by István Rév "The Advantages of Being Atomized: How Hungarian Peasants Coped with Collectivisation", *Dissent*, pp. 335-350, Summer 1987

In Hungary at the end of the 1960s' intellectuals were also beginning a critical dialogue on the nature of the socialist system, and one that would have implications for interpretations of the country's Stalinist experience ⁴⁰. Hungary was a very different country to the one that existed at the end of the 1950s, living standards were much higher, and the regime was stable ⁴¹. Furthermore the regime, to the concern of some, had ditched its workerist ideology and was making overtures to the intellectuals through a strong emphasis on technocratic modernisation ⁴².

This critical discourse began with the activities of the so-called Budapest School in the fields of Marxist philosophy and sociology. In philosophy György Márkus made an impassioned call for Marxist pluralism whilst in sociology András Hegedüs warned against the dangers of socialism becoming a managerial technocracy devoid of democratic content. His call was for a constant process of social "self-criticism" through sociology that would be directed towards guiding social organisations to create the environment for democratic control of this technocracy ⁴³. In the

⁴⁰ - For information on this see the initial chapters of Ervin Csizmadia *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék, 1968-1988. Első kötet. Monográfia*, T-Twins Kiadó, Budapest, 1995; George Schöpflin "Opposition and Para-Opposition: Critical Currents in Hungary, 1968-1978" in Rudolf L. Tökes (ed.) *Opposition in Eastern Europe*, pp.142-86, Macmillan, London, 1979; Rudolf L. Tökes *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution*, pp.179-81

⁴¹ - For information on Kádár's Hungary at the end of the 1960s see Rudolf L. Tökes, op.cit. and William F. Robinson *The Pattern of Reform in Hungary: An Economic, Political and Cultural Analysis*, pp.70-273, Praeger Publishers, New York, Washington & London, 1973; for information on increasing living standards see Iván Pető & Sándor Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, pp.668-707 and the information contained in János Boldoczki et al. *Az életszínvonal alakulása Magyarországon, 1950-1975*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1978

⁴² - This change in emphasis in the ideological sphere was clearly noted by Tibor Kuczi "Szociológia, Ideológia, Közbeszéd" in Tibor Kuczi & Attila Becskeházi *Valóság '70*, pp.25-38, Scientia Humana, Budapest, 1992; for a general introduction to the economic reforms of 1968 see Iván T. Berend "Contemporary Hungary, 1956-1984" in Peter F. Sugar ed. *A History of Hungary*, pp.392-4, I.B. Taurus, London, 1990 who places the reforms within the context of post-revolutionary Hungarian history; the best introduction in English to the reforms themselves is Swain *Hungary*, Chapter 4

early 1970s the group that identified with this programme was to be pushed to the margins of intellectual life as the party moved to restore order in the cultural field during the early 1970s. As the decade progressed they were to produce from varying standpoints critical evaluations of socialist society. Their contribution was original in that it sought to firstly to argue that the system in place in their country negated socialist ideals, and began to integrate with their analysis a sense of the specificities of their society and its course of development in between the models of liberal western Europe and the autocratic East that was to prove highly influential in opposition circles as the decade progressed ⁴⁴.

Outside of the circles of the Budapest school work deeply subversive of the socialist regime was being produced in the fields of sociology and sociography. Left-wing activist Miklós Haraszti's bleak sociography of the dehumanising effects of the piece-rate wage system on industrial workers in a Budapest factory prompted the authorities to try him ⁴⁵. Far more serious was the theoretical challenge of two sociologists, György Konrád and Iván Szelényi, who had used sociological surveys to make highly critical statements about regime settlement policy. When they wrote a manuscript arguing that in Kádár's Hungary the intelligentsia were using "rational redistribution" to secure their class power they quickly attracted the attention

⁴³ - For the initial attack in philosophy see György Márkus "Viták és irányzatok a marxista filozófiában", *Kortárs*, No.7, pp.1109-28, 1968. For a selection of András Hegedüs's critical sociology see András Hegedüs *Socialism and Bureaucracy*, Allison & Busby, London, 1976 and András Hegedüs *The Structure of Socialist Society*, Constable, London, 1977

⁴⁴ - Among these are the contribution of Markus's pupils János Kis & György Bencze who jointly writing under the pseudonym of Marc Rakovski produced *Towards an East European Marxism*, Allison & Busby, London, 1978; see the work of another philosopher of the same school Mihály Vajda *The State and Socialism. Political Essays*, Allison & Busby, Budapest, 1981. For an analysis produced from the vantage point of exile in Australia see Ferenc Fehér, Agnes Heller & György Márkus *Dictatorship over Needs*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983

⁴⁵ - The work is Miklós Haraszti *A Worker in a Worker's State*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1977

of the state ⁴⁶. In spite of the various challenges which sociologists were to make to state power during the course of the 1970s, sociology succeeded in creating spheres for at least quasi-autonomous intellectual discourse about Hungarian society.

The dominant ideology of modernisation hid a society in the 1970s characterised by full employment and rising living standards, but one that was underdeveloped compared to its western neighbours, where a substantial proportion of the population continued to live in poverty, where housing conditions still remained poor and where welfare services were riddled with petty corruption. Completely hidden from view was Hungary's steadily accumulating indebtedness to the West ⁴⁷. Sociology and the more popular sociography were able to articulate a tolerated counter discourse to this dominant ideology, by articulating social concern about the costs,

⁴⁶ - For their statements on settlement policy see György Konrád & Iván Szelényi "Social Conflicts of Underurbanisation" in Alan A. Brown, Joseph A. Licari & Egon Neuberger eds. *Urban and Social Economics in Market and Planned Economies. Policy, Planning and Development*, Vol. 1, pp.206-226, Praeger Publishers in association with the University of Wisconsin Press, New York and London, 1974; Iván Szelényi *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1982. Their theoretical statement was published as György Konrád & Iván Szelényi *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, Harvester Press, Brighton, 1979

⁴⁷ - For a sociological account which interprets Hungarian society using the dominant model of modernisation see Kálmán Kulcsár *A mai magyar társadalom*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1980. On poverty in Hungary see the account of István Kemény who suffered official harassment for suggesting the existence of a poverty problem and who eventually emigrated to France in 1977; István Kemény "Poverty in Hungary", *Social Science Information*, Vol. 18, pp.247-67, 1979; on housing and settlement see the studies in note 46 above as well as György Berkovits *Világváros Határában*, Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1976 and József Hegedűs & Iván Tosics "Housing classes and housing policy: some changes in the Budapest housing market", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 7, pp.467-93, 1983; on petty corruption particularly within health services see György Ádám *Az orvosi hálapénz Magyarországon*, Magvető Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986, aspects of the problem are also discussed in István Kemény "The Unregistered Economy in Hungary", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 34, pp. 249-66, 1982. On the problem of corruption in Kádár's Hungary more generally see Péter Galasi & Gábor Kertesi "The Spread of Bribery in a Centrally Planned Economy", *Acta Oeconomica*, Vol.38, pp. 371-389, 1987. The best account of the then secret economic situation is György Földes *Az eladósodás politikatörténete, 1957-1986*, pp.77-142, Maecenás Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1995

nature and side effects of the "modernisation" of Hungarian society in the post-war period ⁴⁸.

Intellectual discourse in the 1970s was to produce a consciousness of the specific nature of Hungarian development, and saw a revival of ideas that stressed the schizophrenic nature of Hungarian, and by implication Central European society trapped between two different kinds of social development ⁴⁹. This interest was tied to a concept that linked Hungary's particular path of development to its spatial position in the central historical region of Europe, held from joining the "advanced" west by a "backward" east. This re-casting saw the "advanced" west as being characterised by an institutionalised split between civil society and the state with space for private property, and the "backward" east as being characterised by the domination of the state over society ⁵⁰. This interest in social analyses of Hungary's past suggested an implied intellectual analysis of the Hungarian socialist regime. As sociology turned its attention towards the existence of

⁴⁸ - This argument is Tibor Kuczi's. See his "Szociológia, Ideológia, Közbeszéd", pp.39-48; this argument is also repeated in English in Tibor Kuczi "The Split Sociological Mind in East-European Societies. Comments on György Lengyel's article" in Miklós Hadas & Miklós Vörös (eds.) *Colonisation or Partnership. Eastern Europe and Western Social Sciences*, pp. 53-7, Replika, Budapest, 1996

⁴⁹ - The notion of Hungary as a "dual society" in social thought is discussed in György Lengyel "Economic Sociology in East-Central Europe: Trends and Challenges" in Miklós Hadas & Miklós Vörös (eds.) *Colonisation or Partnership. Eastern Europe and Western Social Sciences*, pp. 35-52, Replika, Budapest, 1996; the revival of growing intellectual concern with the specific path of Hungarian development was shown with the publication of Ferenc Erdei's essay on the quasi-feudal, quasi-bourgeois nature of inter-war Hungarian society in the mid-1970s; see Ferenc Erdei "A magyar társadalom a két világháború között" in Ferenc Erdei *A magyar társadalomról*, pp.292-346, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980; published in English as "Hungarian Society between the Two World Wars" in Tibor Huzsár (ed.) *Ferenc Erdei. Selected Writings*, translated by Pál Félix & Sándor Eszényi, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1988. It can also be seen in the renewed interest at the end of the 1970s in the work of political philosopher and democratic left-wing politician István Bibó, for a sample of his work see the collection *Demokratikus Magyarország. Válogatás Bibó István tanulmányaiból*, Magvető Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1994

⁵⁰ - This position was most explicitly put by the historian Jenő Szűcs. See his "Three Historical Regions of Europe" in John Keane (ed.) *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives*, pp.291-332, Verso, London and New York, 1988

private "socialist entrepreneurship" as well as the parallel, or "second economy" consisting of semi-legal autonomous economic activity outside the formal sphere of state owned enterprises the "dual" society model began to be applied explicitly to state socialism in the 1980s ⁵¹. In much of the theoretical synthesis which stemmed from these developments independent economic activities could be conceptualised as anything from forces of "embourgeoisement", to those of a "second society" existing alongside and antagonistic to the official society under the tutelage of the socialist state ⁵².

As the end of state socialist rule approached intellectuals were using this framework to re-cast the history of state socialism. The sets of assumptions that underpinned it have achieved a hegemonic status within the Hungarian academy in the years since the change of system in 1990. Frequently associating liberal political systems with the hegemony of the bourgeoisie as a social group and private property in the economic sphere they began to re-interpret the social history of the country under socialism as that of a changing balance of forces between bourgeois elements, or those of civil society, and the socialist state. Within this framework reform came to be synonymous with the granting of space to bourgeois forces or the "second society". Stalinism came to be interpreted as the negation of

⁵¹ - For aspects of the political history of the investigation of informal activity by sociologists in Hungary during the late 1970s and early 1980s neither of which are explored here, see Anna Seleny "Constructing the Discourse of Transformation in Hungary, 1979-1982", *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol.8, pp.439-66, 1994 and Földes *Hatalom és mozgalom*, pp.127-40. The literature on the so-called "second economy" is vast, for a seminal collection of studies from the group that coined the term see Péter Galasi & György Szirácski (eds.) *Labour Market and Second Economy in Hungary*, Campus, Frankfurt & New York, 1985.

⁵² - The best developed sociological analysis which follows this line of argument is Iván Szelényi et al. *Socialist Entrepreneurs: Embourgeoisement in Rural Hungary*, Polity Press, Oxford and New York, 1988; a highly influential though more philosophical account is Elemér Hankiss "The "Second Society": Is There an Alternative Social Model Emerging in Contemporary Hungary ?" in Ferenc Fehér & Andrew Arató (eds.) *Crisis and Reform in Eastern Europe*, pp. 303-34, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1991

bourgeois society and of those parts of Hungary's heritage that were western European ⁵³.

Rather than being eliminated, society in this interpretation of Stalinism was simply put to sleep, bourgeois social groups spent the Rákosi years occupying various "parking orbits" ⁵⁴, whilst as soon as the system softened these groups reassumed their trajectory of "interrupted embourgeoisement". In other interpretations the elimination of representative, democratic institutions in 1948 represented the "demobilisation" or "atomisation" of society ⁵⁵, yet in this version Hungarian society could be revived almost as soon as reform and liberalisation set in. The two most striking things about this interpretation are firstly its implication that sociability stems almost automatically from representative political institutions through the manner in which their removal is inferred to lead to disorientation, withdrawal and alienation on the part of the citizenry. The second is the extraordinary conservatism of their analysis of society; social attributes can be transferred like genes from generation to generation without reference to the political and social environment, people possess innate characteristics that can be temporarily suppressed but are almost immune to long term social change ⁵⁶. These combine to produce an

⁵³ - For a highly effective criticism of these assumptions and their political implications see C.M. Hann "Second Economy and Civil Society in Hungary", *Journal of Communist Studies*, Vol. 6, No.2, pp.21-44, 1990; for some statements of variants of this view see Szelényi et al. *Socialist Entrepreneurs*; Hankiss "The "Second Society""; Elemér Hankiss *East European Alternatives*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990; Elemér Hankiss "Demobilization, Self-Mobilization and Quasi-Mobilization in Hungary, 1948-87", *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol.3, pp. 13-42, 1988 and András Gerő *Modern Hungarian Society in the Making: The Unfinished Experience*, Chapter 1, Central European University Press, Budapest, London & New York, 1995

⁵⁴ - This term is from Szelényi et al. *Socialist Entrepreneurs*, Chapter 3

⁵⁵ - See Hankiss *East European Alternatives*, Chapter 1; Hankiss "Demobilization"; Rév "The Advantages of Being Atomized", especially p.341

extraordinary theoretical contradiction; society does not die in these accounts, it needs to express itself, but rather than being endowed with agency of its own, it needs the state to liberalise to act with independence as a society.

Popular Front in the Shadow of Soviet Power: The Realities of Politics in Post-War Hungary

For a working definition of Stalinism capable of integrating society one must base it on Stalinism's operation in its Soviet context. "Stalinism" must be defined to mean more than simply the actions of Stalin the dictator if it is to have any real validity. It is understood here to mean a specific form of governance through which the Soviet state was able to bring to bear its power upon society ⁵⁷. Its essence lay in its combination of extreme state power that it used to bring about social revolution from above. This revolution combined Bolshevik utopianism, the extreme personalisation of power and through its ideology of social relations the creation of an impression of all-pervasive conspiracy ⁵⁸. This was not a "totalitarian" system in the sense of an all powerful state presiding over a manipulated society, it was a means of firstly initiating social change and re-constituting state authority in a new, personalised form over the particular state socialist

⁵⁶ - This is particularly marked in the arguments which related to "interrupted embourgeoisement"; see Szélényi et. al. *Socialist Entrepreneurs*

⁵⁷ - In my attempt to separate Stalinism as a phenomenon from the dictator Stalin I am following Henry Reichman, see his "Reconsidering "Stalinism"", *Theory and Society*, Vol.17, pp.57-89, 1988; in terms of the definition of Stalinism advanced here I am close to Ronald Grigor Suny, see his "Stalin and his Stalinism: power and authority in the Soviet Union, 1930-1953" in Ian Kershaw & Moshe Lewin (eds.) *Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison*, pp.26-52, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1997.

⁵⁸ - I have taken this argument from the work of Gábor T. Rittersporn, see his "From Working Class to Urban Labouring Mass: On Politics and Social Categories in the Formative Years of the Soviet System" in Lewis H. Siegelbaum & Ronald Grigor Suny (eds.) *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class and Identity*, pp.262-3, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1994

form of industrialised society that had emerged from that process. One of the most important conclusions to be drawn from any discussion of Stalinism, must be the way in which it was a response to post-revolutionary Soviet realities and social circumstances, and one that generated responses from society to which, in turn, the system responded. Its transfer to Hungary must be seen in this light.

For western and an increasing number of historians in post-1989 Hungary the story of the first post war years is the story of the Communist assumption of power. According to this argument Stalin's Soviet Union intended at the very moment of "liberation" to create a Soviet dictatorship in the country. It built up a client party that assumed power by taking a series of clearly defined steps. Firstly the Communists assumed power as part of a broad anti-fascist coalition, shifting to a fake, manipulated coalition and concluding in Soviet-type dictatorship⁵⁹.

The major problem with this interpretation is that there is substantial evidence to suggest that the Soviet Union in the winter of 1944-5 had very little intention of establishing Soviet-style dictatorship in the country. The Soviet Union had faced huge population losses and enormous economic strains as a result of fighting World War Two. It also faced after 1945 the world's first nuclear power, the United States in the West, which gives strength to the impression of relative Soviet powerlessness *vis-a-vis* its new superpower rival. Furthermore it showed little sign of following a uniform policy towards the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. In Yugoslavia and Albania Communist power had been achieved as the result of domestic revolution, in Poland and Romania pro-Soviet popular fronts were supported

⁵⁹ - This periodisation is adapted from Hugh Seton-Watson, see his "The Hungarian Tragedy" in Hugh Seton-Watson *Nationalism and Communism. Essays, 1946-1963*, especially pp.143-53, Methuen & Co., London, 1964

yet no move was immediately made to transform these countries into one-party states. In Hungary and Czechoslovakia the Communists simply participated in broad coalitions in a non-aggressive manner. Indeed local Communists in these countries made no attempts to Sovietize society. Instead they projected a programme of anti-fascist social reform that would enable them to win rural and middle class voters. Everything therefore suggests that the Soviets sought to maintain a friendly government in Hungary, in which the Communists would have a share of power, but one that would remain a kind of multi-party democracy⁶⁰.

In spite of these intentions moves were taken across the region from 1947 onwards to eliminate the popular front coalitions across the region, as well as in Hungary. The expulsion of Communist partners from the governments of France and Italy in mid-1947, and the consolidation of bourgeois political forces across western Europe combined with the offer of Marshall Aid was seen by Stalin as a threat. The ending of the popular front strategy by Moscow was very much a defensive measure in which the Soviet Union aimed to ensure that its East-Central European neighbours remained friendly and did not join a rival block⁶¹. It was this international moment that defined the period of post-war popular front coalition, albeit one in which the government had "to share power with the Soviet occupying forces and with the Communist controlled political police"⁶².

⁶⁰ - On the effect of World War Two on Soviet society see John Barber & Mark Harrison *The Soviet Home Front, 1941-1945; A social and economic history of the USSR in World War II*, pp.57-119, Longman, London and New York, 1991; on the balance of forces in the immediate post-war world see Cronin *The World the Cold War Made*, pp.34-40 and Ronald Grigor Suny "Second-guessing Stalin: International Communism and the Origins of the Cold War", *Radical History Review*, Vol.37, pp.101-115, 1987. For a view of developments in East-Central Europe which closely follows the one advanced here see Geoffrey Swain & Nigel Swain *Eastern Europe since 1945*, pp.33-4, Macmillan, Basingstoke and London, 1993

⁶¹ - See Suny "Second-Guessing Stalin", pp.112-3; Cronin *The World the Cold War Made*, pp.41-5

The social and political environment in which the new Hungarian state had to operate was not merely the product of its international context. The history of the country from its occupation by the Germans in March 1944 until its full liberation by the Soviets in April 1945 was national catastrophe of enormous proportions that profoundly discredited pre-war political elites and left economic devastation in its wake ⁶³. As the Red Army advanced across Hungary traditional elites and the local middle classes fled westwards leaving a power vacuum, according to one observer, "the notaries went from the villages, the lords, the officials and the stewards went from the estates .. the lawyers, the bank managers, the head teachers and the tax inspectors from the towns" as the east of the country fell into Soviet hands" ⁶⁴. The vacuum was to some extent filled by a popular movement; the precursors of this were the small groups of partisans made of

⁶² - Gati "From Liberation to Revolution", p.370

⁶³ - For the best treatment of the political history of the liberation of the country see Mihály Korom *Magyarország Ideiglenes Nemzeti Kormánya és a Fegyverszünet, 1944-1945*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1981; on the military process of Soviet "liberation" see Miklós M. Szabó *A Magyarországi Felszabadító Hadműveletek, 1944-1945*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1985, also useful is Béla Esti (ed.) *Dokumentumok a Magyarország Felszabadulásáról, 1944-1945*, Corvina Kiadó, Budapest, 1975. The casualties were enormous, one estimate has put the total losses of population from the territory of Hungary at 500,000 of which about half were Jews murdered in the Holocaust. Of the military actions some 28,000 are thought to have been killed in siege of Budapest alone (Szabó *A Magyarországi Felszabadító Hadműveletek*, p.172). Hungary ended World War Two in economic ruin, and damage to industry had been considerable. Estimates of war damage to national property were enormous; by the end of 1944 the value of industrial property was something like 54.2% of its 1938 level (Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, p.18). Damage to residential property in Budapest was substantial; from the capitals' 39,640 buildings, only 14% remained untouched, 64% were only slightly damaged, 17% were seriously damaged and 5% were totally damaged (Zoltán Baksay *A Munkaerőhelyzet Alakulása és a Munkanelküliség Felszámolása Magyarországon, 1945-1949*, p.16, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1983). In Summer 1945 the industrial employers association GYOSZ estimated that war losses to industrial buildings amounted to some 16.22% of their 1938 value, the damage to raw materials some 11.21% and that to completed products some 23.79%, though similar estimates by the Central Statistical Office were slightly more optimistic ("Magyarország Ipara 1945 nyarán" in Sándor Tonelli (ed.) *Ipari Ujjáépítésünk*, p.17, Forum Hungaricum Kiadás, Budapest, 1948)

⁶⁴ - See István Márkus "Urak Futása", originally written in August 1945 but reprinted in his *Az Ismeretlen Főszereplő. Tanulmányok*, p.87, Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1991

Communist sympathisers from industrial areas who supported the Red Army through minor acts of small scale sabotage ⁶⁵. As towns were "liberated" this broadened to become a mass movement; in industry radical activists among the workforce took over the management of enterprises that had been deserted by their managements', new "national committees" took over local public administration, and the land hungry poor peasants on the Great Plain began by seizing land to pressure for the break-up of the large estates. To a certain extent this popular movement found itself supported by the "liberating" Red Army, which provided considerable assistance to some factories re-starting production ⁶⁶.

It would be wrong to see the new Hungarian state as being solely the product of a "liberating" popular movement which unified society. Since the system change historians have come to increasingly underline the degree to which the "liberation" was a traumatic and divisive experience for Hungarian society, drawing upon the popular memory of hardship and of abuses by the new Red Army "occupiers". Substantial numbers of civilians were rounded up by the military authorities and deported to the Soviet Union as political prisoners, or forced labourers leading to fear and ill-feeling among local populations ⁶⁷, to which Red Army soldiers frequently contributed ⁶⁸.

⁶⁵ - The partisan movement was small and uncoordinated, inspite of this it deserves mention. For literature which covers examples of early partisans activity in the eastern Hungary please refer to the following. The activities of the so-called MOKAN partisans around Miskolc attracted particular attention, for Communist leader Emő Gerő's estimation of them see "Gerő Emő levél Rákosi Mátyásnak, 1945 január 7." in Lajos Izsák & Miklós Kun (eds.) *Moszkvának Jelentjük Titkos dokumentumok, 1944-1948*, pp.28-9, Századvég Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1994; for the memoirs of Sándor Kopácsi, Budapest chief of police in 1956, who was a MOKAN partisan see his *"In the Name of the Working Class"*, translated by Daniel & Judy Stoffman with a foreword by George Jonas, pp.39-42, Fontana Paperbacks, London, 1989. For the patisans activity around Sálgotárján see the post-war memoirs of one of its leaders; Sándor Nográdi *Új történet kezdődött*, pp.5-23, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1966

⁶⁶ - For on outline introduction to this popular movement please refer to the sources in note 25 above, see also Swain *Hungary*, p.35

Hungarian society by no means universally supported the popular movements that accompanied "liberation"; it seems much more accurate to characterise society as "battered physically and mentally" in which the middle classes, disorientated by their loss of social position, were deeply suspicious and fearful⁶⁹. This deep social tension was to have a profound

⁶⁷ - There is little hard statistical information on the numbers deported, the major post-1989 study of infringements of human rights abuses in the immediate post-war period (Mária Ormos et al. *Törvénytelen Szocializmus. A Tényfeltáró Bizottság Jelentése*, Zrínyi Kiadó - Új Magyarország, Budapest, 1991) glosses over the issue; though we do know that there were some 550,000 to 570,000 Hungarian military prisoners of war in the Soviet Union (see Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság...*, p.17). The topic been one in which local historians and journalists have added greatly to our knowledge. For a general collection of interviews with those deported see Ilona Szebeni *Haza fogunk menni. Kényszermunka a Szovjetunióban, 1944-1949*, Mozgáskorlátozottak PIREMON Kisvállalata, Debrecen, 1993 and her *Merve van a magyar hazám ?....., Kényszermunka a Szovjetunióban, 1944-1949*, Széphalom Könyvműhely, Budapest, 1992. For a general history of the phenomenon and its various aspects see Miklós Füzes *Modern rabszolgaság: "Malenkij robot". Magyar állampolgárok a Szovjetunió munkatáboráiban 1945-1949*, Fomativ, Budapest, 1990; György Zielbauer "Magyar polgári lakosok deportálása és hadifogsága (1945-1948)", *Történelmi Szemle*, Nos. 3-4, pp.270-91, 1992. For some local studies of the issue see Sándor Adorján *Halál árménykában. Magyar rabszolgák Szibériában*, privately published, Pápa, 1993 and Tamás Kakuk "Tábori történetek. Tatabányaiak a szovjet munkatáborokban", *Komárom-Esztergom Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei*, No.4, pp.139-48, 1991. For an unusual example of how deportation fuelled post-war anti-Semitism in one eastern Hungarian town see Zoltán Völgyesi ""Majd meglátják a zsidók, hogy mi lesz velük, ha az oroszok kimennek""(A Forradalom Alatti Zavargások Előzményei Hajdúnánáson)" in Tibor Valuch (ed.) *Hatalom és Társadalom a XX. Századi Magyar Történelemben*, pp. 303-13, 1956-os Intézet - Osiris Kiadó, Budapest, 1995.

⁶⁸ - Whilst there have been no real academic studies of the relationship between the occupying Red Army and the local Hungarian populations in late 1944 and early 1945 the popular novelist Sándor Márai has documented it for the village in Pest county in which he took refuge during the siege of Budapest in late 1944 and early 1945, see Sándor Márai *Memoir of Hungary, 1944-1948*, translated with an introduction and notes by Albert Tezla, especially pp.24-113, Corvina in association with Central University Press, Budapest, 1996. In many communities the experience of having Russian soldiers billeted locally has impressed itself onto popular memory, for an example of how from a village in south-eastern Hungary at the end of the 1970s see C.M. Hann *Tázlár: a village in Hungary*, p.159, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1980; for similar memories from a village in central Hungary see Martha Lampland *The Object of Labor; Commodification in Socialist Hungary*, p. 113, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1995

⁶⁹ - The phrase of "the physically and mentally battered society" is taken from Gyarmati et al. *Magyar Hétköznapiak*, p.13, on the declining influence of the middle classes in society and their attitudes see *ibid.*, p.24. For more specific examinations of the problem see József N. Szabó *Értelmiség és rendszerváltás, 1944 ősz - 1946 ősz*, Stúdium Könyvek, Debrecen, 1993; for a somewhat dated, but nevertheless revealing account of political attitudes among traditional professional groups see Miklós Jakab *Társadalmi Változás és a Magyar Értelmiség, 1944-1948*, especially pp.5-48, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1979.

effect on the relationship between society and the new state built in early 1945.

Recent research in the Soviet archives suggests the Soviet Union felt it had a substantial strategic interest in securing the direction of Hungary's future, but that in 1945 it sought the creation of a multi-party, anti-fascist government on Hungarian soil⁷⁰. The provisional government established in Debrecen was a coalition government between the various anti-fascist parties, including a refounded Communist party. The government was, however, established in close consultation with the Soviets who were directly involved in drawing up the new cabinet and its policies⁷¹.

The government set out by acceding to the demands of the popular movement in the countryside and introducing the social revolution of land reform. This destroyed the great estates re-distributing the land in a way that especially benefited the poorest among the agricultural population. This created the social base for a "smallholders' democracy" in the post-war

Unfortunately attempts to more accurately sketch political attitudes within society come up against the general problem of a lack of social history within the literature.

⁷⁰ - For this research and a sample of accompanying documents see István Vida "Orosz levéltári források az 1944 őszén moszkvai kormányalakítási tárgyalásokról, az Ideiglenes Nemzetgyűlés összehívásáról és az Ideiglenes Nemzeti Kormány megválasztásáról" in István Feitl (ed.) *Az Ideiglenes Nemzetgyűlés és az Ideiglenes Nemzeti Kormány, 1944-1945*, pp.52-107, Politikatörténeti Alapítvány, Budapest, 1995

⁷¹ - There is quite an extensive literature on the various discussion which led to the formation of the provisional government. In English the most important account is Gati "The Democratic Interlude", especially pp.107-23. In Hungarian there is an extensive literature; for two of the most notable discussions see Korom *A Magyarország Ideiglenes Nemzeti Kormány*, which is an outstanding monograph devoted to the formation of the government; Sándor Balogh *Magyarország külpolitikája, 1945-1950*, pp.5-25, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1988; general discussions are provided by Sándor Balogh "Az Ideiglenes Nemzetgyűlés és az Ideiglenes Nemzeti Kormány a magyar történelemben" in István Feitl (ed.) *Az Ideiglenes Nemzetgyűlés és az Ideiglenes Nemzeti Kormány, 1944-1945*, pp.21-8, Politikatörténeti Alapítvány, Budapest, 1995; Mihály Korom "Az Ideiglenes Nemzetgyűlés és az Ideiglenes Nemzeti Kormány létrejöttének nemzetközi és házi körülményei" in *ibid.*, pp.29-51; note 94 above and György Gyarmati "A parlamentarizmus korlátai és annak következményei az Ideiglenes Nemzetgyűlés tevékenységére" in *ibid.*, pp. 152-70

period ⁷². The reign of the provisional government was to see the creation of a significant constraint on the emergence of genuine democracy, that of a parallel security state, closely allied to the Communist Party and the Soviet occupiers. The police were re-organised and so-called "fascist" elements were purged and replaced with members of the left-wing parties. The new police force contained a disproportionate number of Communist party members; by early 1946 some 40% of the police were Communist members, whilst of the other left-wing parties Social Democrats made up some 40.8% and the smaller National Peasants Party some 1.2% ⁷³. More sinister were the beginnings of a political police force, permitted by the Interior Minister, Ferenc Erdei under the control of Communists, András Tömpe and Gábor Péter advised by the Soviet NKVD. In the first year of the new state it was extraordinarily active; by March 1946 it had detained some 35,000 people, among them 18,918 former members of the fascist Arrow Cross ⁷⁴. This was to have important implications in the following years.

The provisional government was brought to an end by free elections at the end of 1945, in September municipal elections were held in Greater Budapest and in November parliamentary elections occurred ⁷⁵. These confirmed the most conservative of the anti-fascist parties, the Smallholder's party as the country's largest political force; indeed in November they won

⁷² - On the land reform see Hann *Tázlár*, pp. 33-4; Lampland *The Object of Labor*, pp.114-31; Nigel Swain *Collective Farms which work ?*, p.3, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1985; Szakács *Földosztás és agrárfejlődés*, pp.17-85; Somlyai "Az 1945-ös Földreform"; Donáth *Demokratikus földreform Magyarországon*; Orbán *Két Agrárforradalom Magyarországon*, pp.22-45; Donáth *Reform és Forradalom*

⁷³ - Gyarmati et al. *Magyar Hétköznapiak*, p.85; Ormos et al. *Törvénytelen szocializmus*, p.21

⁷⁴ - Ormos et al. *Törvénytelen szocializmus*, pp.15-8

⁷⁵ - The best study of the 1945 elections is Sándor Balogh *Választások Magyarországon, 1945: A fővárosi törvényhatósági és nemzetgyűlési választások*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1984

57.03%, compared with 17.41% for the Social Democrats, 16.95% for the Communists, 6.87% for the left-wing National Peasants Party and 1.62% for the liberal Bourgeois Democratic Party ⁷⁶.

The size of the Smallholder's victory concealed their many weaknesses, namely, their lack of control over the security apparatus, their poor organisation and the fragile social coalition of forces which had delivered them victory. Analysis of the geographical breakdown of the 1945 election results suggests that the party picked up anti-Communist middle class votes ⁷⁷. This, however, is insufficient as an explanation for the party's victory; it had traditionally represented the ideal of a "smallholders democracy" underpinned by a society dominated by land holding peasants, and as a result large numbers of these, including beneficiaries of radical land reform, voted for the party ⁷⁸. The fragility of the party's electoral coalition was reflected in its internal divisions; István Vida has identified three tendencies, an intellectual left-wing around Zoltán Tildy, the first post election Prime Minister and later the President, a propertied peasant based centre around Tildy's eventual successor as Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy and a bourgeois right wing representing the old middle classes ⁷⁹.

In spite of their poor electoral performance the Communist party, by virtue of its support from the Soviet occupying forces, its ideological consistency and political skill, was to form the other pole of politics in the

⁷⁶ - See Balogh *Választások Magyarországon*, p.147 for the full national results of the parliamentary elections.

⁷⁷ - Balogh *Választások Magyarországon*, pp.147-61; Vida *A Független Kisgazdapárt*, pp.113-7

⁷⁸ - This point is well made by Vida *A Független Kisgazdapárt*, pp.117-8

⁷⁹ - The internal state of the party immediately following the November 1945 election is described by Vida *A Független Kisgazdapárt*, pp.118-20

limited post-war democracy. In contrast to western views of the party, the Communists were able to participate within post-war Hungarian politics on the basis that society saw them as representing the popular movement that had accompanied liberation. In spite of this the popular movement was more radical and had elements whose attitudes contrasted profoundly with the more moderate intentions of the party leadership and the Soviets. The social base of the party in early 1945 consisted of left-wing activists, many veterans of the Soviet Republic of 1919, who created the first organs of factory democracy in the belief that these would take a role in a "revolution from below" which would accompany the Red Army advance ⁸⁰. As more of the country was "liberated" the membership of the party grew enormously as it benefited from its image as the most radically anti-fascist of all the parties, its support for the land reform and its aggressive advocacy of social change; by June 1945 its membership stood at 226,577 rising to 508,801 in October ⁸¹. It attracted an overwhelmingly plebeian membership as the poorest and most radical social groups rallied behind it ⁸².

The radicalism of this base of support was to prove a constant embarrassment to the party leaders. They attempted to bring their own militant supporters into line almost immediately in early 1945 and indeed the secret police arrested Pál Demény, the leader of the one of the more radical groups of left wing Communists ⁸³. The base of Communist support was a

⁸⁰ - On the links between the early Communist party and the popular movement see Kovrig *Communism in Hungary*, pp.161-9; on the role of revolutionary aspiration in the creation of some factory committees see Jenei et al. "Az Üzemi Bizottságok...", p.13; for an example of such a kind of factory committee see Hanák & Hanák *A Magyar Pamutipar*, p.278

⁸¹ - Quoted in Szabó "A Magyar Kommunista Párt", p.169

⁸² - *ibid.*, p.175

⁸³ - On the problems of the Communist party with its more radical supporters see Kovrig *Communism in Hungary*, pp.166-9; Donáth "István Bibó and the Fundamental Issue...", pp.237-40; the official decision of the first national conference of the Communists in May 1945 revealed the leaderships disquiet with the militancy of its followers, see the decision

broad anti-fascist constituency made up of previously subordinate groups in Hungarian society, shocked at the national disaster of World War Two, who demanded the expulsion of fascists and the former ruling classes from positions of influence, the rebuilding of the country and a more egalitarian society. This constituency included the industrial workers who, according to the British historian Hugh Seton-Watson, visiting Hungary in 1946, "performed miracles of endurance" in the service of reconstruction accepting "heavy sacrifices in the national interest" ⁸⁴ motivated, according to a Hungarian social scientist undertaking a shop floor study in late 1945, by a desire to avoid the poverty of the depression years and make "the new democracy" a success ⁸⁵.

reprinted in *A Magyar Kommunista Párt és a Szociáldemokrata Párt határozatai, 1944-1948*, second edition, p.85, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1979, this disquiet was also revealed by Mátyás Rákosi, the party secretary's address to the conference in which he complained of the "indiscipline" of many of the new membership, see Mátyás Rákosi *Válogatott Beszédok és Cikkek*, pp.79-80, Szikra, Budapest, 1950. On the treatment of Communist dissidents like Demény at the hands of the secret police see Ormos et al. *Törvénytelen szocializmus*, pp.18-23; Demény himself, before his death in 1990, produced several volumes of memoirs both of his years in the illegal Communist movement and in both fascist and Communist prisons, the most useful are the series of interviews he gave to József Kiss in the late 1980s, see József Kiss (ed.) *"A Párt Foglya Voltam" Demény Pál élete*, Medvetánc, Budapest, 1988; on the fate of another group of dissident Communist militants see Béla Gadanez & Éva Gadanez "A weisshausisták tevékenysége és üldöztetése 1945 után", *Múltunk*, Vol. XL., No.3, pp. 3-72, 1995

⁸⁴ - Hugh Seton-Watson "The Danube States in 1946" reprinted in his *Nationalism and Communism*, p.108

⁸⁵ - For this see the interviews conducted with workers in late 1945 and early 1946 by Erzsébet Severini. One with the subject she coded D-11 was typical; an engine fitter in the MÁVAG. At the time a Social Democrat, he would by the time she finished her research have joined the Communist Party, because of the predominance of ethnic Germans in the Social Democrats. He had poor memories of the Horthy years during which he had been an apprentice, living in unhealthy lodgings and working in a wet, cold workshop. His memories of those years were undoubtedly colouring his enthusiasm for labour competition on the one hand, yet also fuelling his suspicion for middle management, the Social Democrats and the conciliatory policies of the unions. Working on railway engines he had distinguished himself, by using a simple technique to improve his individual productivity and boost production. "I work just like a machine", he told Severini. When asked why, his reply betrayed a mixture of cautious optimism and scepticism about the political situation "in the most part, it is to see what will become of the democracy, I'm a social democrat ... What is important is that there is a record fulfilment of the production target, if the person wants, everything goes, there aren't any impossibilities" in Erzsébet Severini *Munkaverseny és a*

The essential problem for the Communists in attempting to speak for this constituency was that it was not the only political force that sought to represent it. In the November elections the Social Democrats had polled more votes than the Communists, and with some justice could claim to be a more authentic socialist party. The major problem for the party was that among key groups of workers their moderate behaviour in the pre-war years had discredited them, many of their more pre-war radical activists had joined the Communists whilst their leadership and organisation had been decimated by the German occupation. Furthermore the party was deeply split between an ascendant left wing that favoured co-operation with the Communists and a right wing that looked towards Anglo-Saxon social democracy ⁸⁶. In the countryside they faced the National Peasants Party that was the authentic representative of "populism", a kind of agrarian socialism based on a specific Hungarian "third way" that had been advanced in the 1930s by some writers and large sections of the provincial intelligentsia. Though largely made up of intellectuals, it enjoyed some success in winning support among poorer peasants ⁸⁷.

Magyar Munkás Lelkisége (MÁVAG és a Csepeli WM Művek), Munkalélektani Tanulmány Műhelyben a Termelésről, p.75, Atheaneum, Budapest, 1946

⁸⁶ - There is unfortunately no general history of the Social Democratic Party in the 1945-1948 period even though it has been extensively studied by Erzsébet Strassenreiter. For a sample of her arguments see Erzsébet Strassenreiter "A munkásegység néhány kérdése, 1945-1948", *Élméleti és Módszertani Közlemények*, Vol.28, pp. 16-34, 1985; her "A Szociáldemokrata Párt az ország politikai életében (1944-1948)", *Múltunk*, No.3, pp.114-28, 1990 and her "(A szociáldemokraták) A hatalom részeként, 1945-1948", *Társadalmi Szemle*, No.2, pp.20-33, 1991. For the role of the party in the pre-war and wartime period see Péter Sipos *Legális és Illegális Munkásmozgalom (1919-1944)*, Gondolat, Budapest, 1988 which is the best general history of the socialist labour movement in the period, and for a more specialised study see István Pintér *A Szociáldemokrata Párt Története, 1933-1944*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1980

⁸⁷ - A basic history of the party is Tóth *A Nemzeti Parasztpárt*; the best history of the so-called "populist" movement is Gyula Borbándi *A magyar népi mozgalom*, Püski, Budapest, 1989; on Ferenc Erdei's secret membership of the Communist Party see "Gerő Ernő levél Rákosi Mátyásnak, 1944. december 28." in Izsák & Kun (eds.) *Moszkvának jelentjük...*, p.13; for an excellent study of the party at local level which is very revealing about the

The second problem was that much of this constituency was potentially antagonistic to some aspects of the Communist party. It was a broad movement for national renewal, and as such large sections of the constituency had supported the radical right. This was noted by the Communist writer, András Sándor, who explained the switch in affiliations by poor peasants in a small western Hungarian village from the Arrow Cross to the left by recognising that to such voters "the far right represented a revolutionary promise" ⁸⁸. This also often meant that anti-capitalism was interpreted through some of the categories of Hungarian popular nationalism; in a survey of one Budapest factory the switch of a worker from the Social Democrats to the Communists was reported to be due to the belief that the former party was dominated by ethnic Germans and that at least the Communists were "a Hungarian party". Often powerful left-wing anti-capitalism was expressed through anti-Semitism, this enabled one textile worker in the capital to claim in late 1945 that "the Red Army only liberated the Jews". This reflected opinion among András Sándor's smallholders who stated that "the Jews are reactionaries, who squeeze the poor" ⁸⁹.

The third problem was that the constituency for change was often more radical than all its political representatives and was frustrated and

nature of and limits to its popular support in rural Hungary throughout the period see Gábor Szirtes *A "gatyás kommunisták ?" A Nemzeti Parasztpárt Baranyában 1945-1949*, Baránya Megyei Könyvtár, Pécs, 1993

⁸⁸ - See András Sándor *Övök a föld*, p.55, Szikra, Budapest, 1948

⁸⁹ - On the factory workers political defection and the reasons for it see Severini *Munkaverseny és a Magyar Munkás Lelkisége*, p.75; for the textile workers statement see SZKL SzT./ 107d./1945; *Textilipari nagygyűlések szept. 19 és 20 an. Hangulat jelentés*, p.1, and for poor peasants comments see Sándor *Övök a föld*, p.57; for an excellent but highly controversial analysis of the relationship between the Communist Party and popular anti-Semitism see Róbert Szabó *A Kommunista Párt és a Zsidóság Magyarországon (1945-1956)*, pp. 104-24, Windsor Kiadó, Budapest, 1995

dismayed by the policy of "popular front" conciliation. Inflation sharpened this frustration acting as "combustible matter to the glowing embers of hatred"; in August 1945 workers' real wages stood at a mere 54% of their 1939 level, by December they stood at only 13.8% of that level ⁹⁰. As hyper-inflation continued to spiral in 1946, the black market exploded, peasants began to bring produce at high prices to market and the section of the population that lived from wages was reduced to penury ⁹¹. Even by Summer 1945 falling living standards and growing impatience with the political parties were fuelling rank-and-file militancy that undermined the authority of the Communist leadership; strikes were reported in the machine tool workshops of the Manfred Weiss and in the mines in both Tata and Pécs. Throughout 1946 this militancy coincided with attacks on "speculators". This combined with anti-Semitism to produce demonstrations against "Jewish speculators", as attacks on Jewish owned businesses culminated in violence in Kunmadaras and Miskolc ⁹².

⁹⁰ - The quote is from Márai *Memoir of Hungary*, p.192; for the information on real wages see Baksay *A Munkaerőhelyzet Alakulása.*, p.26

⁹¹ - On living standards during the period of hyper-inflation see Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, pp.60-2; for evidence of the abject penury of the urban population see Márai *Memoir of Hungary*, pp. 190-7; on its effect of industrial workers see the account which described Budapest factories in late 1945 and early 1946 as being full of "sickly, thin people" see Severini *Munkaverseny és a Magyar Munkás Lelkisége*, p.65

⁹² - On the early strikes see *Pártmunka*, 15th August 1945; for evidence based on the recollections of peasant women who went into Budapest to sell produce at the time see Erzsébet Órszigethy *Asszonyok Férfisorban*, p.121, Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986. On the anti-Semitic agitation and violence of 1946 overviews are provided in Szabó *A Kommunista Párt és a Zsidóság*, pp. 124-52; Éva Ständeiszky "Antiszemita megmozdulások Magyarországon a koalíciós időszakában", *Századok*, No.2, pp.284-308, 1992 and László Varga "'Zsidókérdés' 1945-1956", *Világosság*, No.1, pp.62-7, 1992. On the Kunmadaras events see László Ötvös "A madarasi antiszemita megmozdulás", *Jászkunság*, No.1, pp.81-93, 1990. On the Miskolc events see Éva Ständeiszky "A miskolci pogrom ahogyan Rákosiék látták (Részletek a Magyar Kommunista Párt Központi Vezetőségének 1946. augusztus 2-i ülésén készült korabeli jegyzőkönyvéből)", *Társadalmi Szemle*, No.11, pp. 78-86, 1990; Tamás Kende "Lincselés előtt és után. Antiszemitizmus és közvélemény Miskolcon 1946-ban", *Dimenziók*, Nos.1-2, pp.74-83, 1993

The election defeat for the left in November 1945 was greeted with despair and fury by its constituency. They turned their attack on the conciliatory attitudes of the left wing parties towards private business and the Smallholder's Party sharply rejecting the "popular front" approach ⁹³. The election results also increased the confidence of the right; the scale of the Smallholder victory had changed the centre of gravity within the party, reducing the influence of the intellectual left around Tildy ⁹⁴. Despite this they were forced, largely against their will, into a continued anti-fascist coalition by the Red Army who also ensured they conceded control of the crucial security ministries to Communist appointees ⁹⁵. Throughout the first part of 1946 politics was ill-tempered with Smallholders complaining about the Communist domination of the security forces, whilst the left grew increasingly anxious about the open conservatism of many Smallholder deputies, moving to strengthen its opposition to the "restoration of reaction" through founding a Left Block within the coalition. Left wing militancy was mirrored by right wing militancy that occasionally erupted into violence; the murder of two Soviet soldiers and the discovery of links between anti-Soviet activity and a Catholic youth organisation were to lead to heavy handed police tactics ⁹⁶.

The combination of high inflation and extremism on both the left and the right created an ugly situation during 1946 that underlined the problems that the Soviets faced in creating a genuine "popular front" government. Despite their weak position within the government the Communists were able to rely on the Red Army, the Soviets and their control of the parallel

⁹³ - See the documents in SZKL Vasas 7/77/ 1946

⁹⁴ - *Vida A Független Kisgazdapárt*, p.120

⁹⁵ - Balogh *Parlamenti és Pártharcok*, pp.122-6; *Vida Koalíció és pártharcok*, pp.150-7

⁹⁶ - See Gyarmati et al. *Magyar Hétköznapiak*, pp.157-64

security state to continue with radical anti-fascist measures ⁹⁷. This was combined in the political sphere with the employment of the now notorious "salami tactics" by the Communists against right-wing politicians within the Smallholder's Party. The radicalism of the left's constituency was mobilised to demand a continuance of anti-fascist administrative measures. The security forces were used to root out "conspiracy" among right-wing politicians and the Communist secretary, Mátyás Rákosi, with consummate political skill and Soviet support was able to bully the Smallholders into accepting new ultimatums. "Salami tactics" were to ruthlessly destroy the political coalition that the 1945 Smallholders' Party represented by initially forcing the leadership to expel its right-wing and then attack the centre in 1947. This was done through the so-called "conspiracy against the republic", in which Smallholder plans to create a distinctly right of centre government excluding the Communists after the conclusion of a peace treaty and Red Army withdrawal, were represented as a threat to democracy. The Soviets arrested the Smallholder secretary-general, Béla Kovács, and forced Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy into exile ⁹⁸.

The collapse of the Smallholder's political coalition necessitated new elections that were held in August 1947. Marred by accusations of extensive fraud, the official election results produced a clear majority for left wing parties including the rump of the Smallholder's Party. The Communists secured their goal of dominance in the coalition taking 22.3% of the poll; their allies the Smallholder's took 15.4%, the Social Democrats 14.9%, the

⁹⁷ - Whilst there is now an endless amount of literature on all these factors the best summary is still Gyarmati et al. *Magyar Hétköznapiak*, pp.81-146

⁹⁸ - For a non-orthodox view of "salami tactics" in Hungary in English see Swain *Hungary*, pp.43-9; for the more orthodox views see Kovrig *Communism in Hungary*, pp.203-10; Gati "From Liberation to Revolution", pp.370-2; for the classic accounts in Hungarian see Balogh *Parlamenti és Pártharcok*, pp.295-399; Izsák *A Koalíció Évei*, pp.136-49 and Vida *Koalíció és Pártharcok*, pp.206-43. For the effect of "salami tactics" on the Smallholder's Party see Vida *A Független Kisgazdapárt*, pp.241-78

National Peasants Party 8.3% and two smaller allies who won less than 2% between them ⁹⁹. The Communists therefore had succeeded in their goal of establishing a stable popular front coalition, albeit through less than democratic means. Right-wing voters had not gone away and the collapse of the Smallholder's 1945 coalition produced a space which right wing and confessional parties had been able to fill; the Democratic Peoples' Party, the Hungarian Independence Party, the Independent Hungarian Democratic Party and the Christian Women's Camp all entered the political scene ¹⁰⁰. Though the elections gave the left hegemony within the state, they emphatically did not reflect hegemony within society. It has been widely recognised that the elections were marred by serious fraud and the evidence suggests that a true picture of opinion would have shown society evenly divided between the popular front coalition and the conservative opposition ¹⁰¹.

By September 1947 "popular front" Hungary had also been established in the economic and social spheres. In August 1946 hyperinflation had been brought to a halt by the introduction of a new currency, the Forint. The country had a mixed economy characterised by state control of the banks, mining and heavy industry governed by the Three Year Plan, which aimed to complete the process of post-war reconstruction and

⁹⁹ - For the 1947 election results see Károly Szerencsés *A Kékcédulás Hadművelet (Választások Magyarországon 1947)*, p.73, IKVA, Budapest, 1993; see also Károly Szerencsés "Predesztinált választások, 1947" in László Hubai & László Tombor (eds.) *A magyar parlament 1944-1949. Tanulmányok*, pp.128-30, Gulliver Lap- és Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1991

¹⁰⁰ - The classic study of the conservative opposition parties which refused to join the Hungarian Independence Front is Izsák *Polgári Ellenzéki Pártok Magyarországon*; for their role in the 1947 elections see pp.182-203

¹⁰¹ - See Szerencsés *A Kékcédulás Hadművelet*, pp.58-73 for his discussion of electoral fraud on the day of polling and pp.77-8 for his suggestion as to the true state of opinion in the country; see also Szerencsés "Predesztinált választások, 1947", p.129 for a similar analysis.

increase living standards. This was by no means a Soviet system, much of industry and commerce remained in private hands, and relations between the state and private industry were often characterised by conflict over the issues of planning and state intervention; something particularly characteristic of relations between the state and foreign owned companies 102.

Society was more pacified than during the social revolution of 1945 and the inflation of 1946. The "smallholder" society had successfully consolidated itself, the social democratic order in the factories seemed safe, despite occasional wildcat strikes and displays of managerial authoritarianism, as real wages rose rapidly and the building blocks of a welfare state were put in place by the post-war state 103. Social divisions,

102 - The best overview of Hungary's economic system in English is Swain *Hungary*, pp.34-8; see also Iván T. Berend & György Ránki *The Hungarian Economy in the Twentieth Century*, pp.182-97, Croom Helm, London & Sydney, 1985; Gábor Révész *Perestroika in Eastern Europe; Hungary's Economic Transformation, 1945-1988* with a foreword by Paul Marer, pp. 24-6, Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco & London, 1990; Nicolas Spulber *The Economics of Communist Eastern Europe*, see especially pp.70-6 for nationalisation, pp.121-2 for bank nationalisation, pp.234-51 on agriculture, pp.296-303 on economic planning, The Technology Press of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology & John Wiley & Sons, Inc., with Chapman & Hall Ltd., New York & London, 1957; for a sympathetic account of pre-Stalinist economic planning in Hungary in English see Doreen Wariner *Revolution in Eastern Europe*, pp.97-100, Turnstile Press, London, 1950. For the accounts in Hungarian see Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, pp.58-89; Berend *A Szocialista Gazdaság*, pp.17-69; specific economic histories of this period are Berend *Az ujjáépítés és a nagytőke elleni harc*; Gyula Erdmann & Iván Pető *A magyar szénbányászat a felszabadulástól a három éves terv végéig*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1977; György Ránki *Magyarország gazdasága az első három éves terv időszakában 1947-1949*, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1963 and Szakács *Földosztás és agrárfejlődés*; the best case study of tense relations between private industry and the state is in Lajos Srágli's work on MAORT, see Lajos Srágli "A Dunántúli Olajbányászat Hároméves Terve (Adatok a MAORT történetéhez, 1947-1949)", *Zalai Gyűtemény*, Vol. 25, pp. 295-307, 1986

103 - On the consolidation of the small scale peasant brilliant contemporary evidence is supplied by András Sándor, see his *Övék a föld*, a kind of report on the state of the peasantry in Fejér county on the eve of the onset of mass collectivisation. For a historical study see Szakács *Földosztás és agrárfejlődés*, pp.129-47. On the state of play in the factories see Habuda *A magyar szakszervezetek*, pp.197-213 and Jenei et al. "Az üzemi bizottságok...", pp.129-46. In terms of social policy the classic study is Zsuzsa Ferge *Fejezetek a magyar szegénypolitika történetéből*, pp.149-56, Magvető Kiadó, Budapest,

however, were increasing; for experienced farmers who had benefited from land reform the late 1940s were good years, yet in many rural communities there was a marked social polarisation as poorer and less experienced recipients of land found it increasingly difficult to keep up. This was not to mention those who had missed out on the land reform altogether either because of a shortage of land, because they had been prisoners of war, or because of their ethnicity. Unemployment, both industrial and agricultural, was extremely high and those affected were restive throughout 1947¹⁰⁴. Furthermore though the building blocks of a welfare state had been laid progress beyond this had not been made, and services were primitive. In many towns on the Great Plain the living standards of many poor peasants, workers and even teachers remained miserable whilst the only welfare services that existed were "the poor house and the soup-kitchens"¹⁰⁵.

1986; for a descriptive account of the contribution of immediate post-war legislation to the welfare system which functioned in the mid-1960s see László Gál et al. *Szociálpolitikánk Két Évtizede*, Kossuth Könyvkiadó - Táncsics Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1969

¹⁰⁴ - On peasant embourgeoisement the semi-reliable 1950s sociography of a Fejér county village is very good, see András Sándor *Hiradás a Pusztáról, 1945-1950*, pp.44-73, Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1951. On the growing inequalities between peasants see Lampland *The Object of Labor*, pp. 129-31. On those left out of the land reform in the countryside see Donáth *Demokratikus Földreform Magyarországon*, pp.390-3 and also his excellent "Ki Jogosult a Földre ? Szegényparasztok Vitái 1945-ben a Föld Felosztása Körül", *Agrártörténelmi Szemle*, Vol.7, No.1, pp.60-81, 1965; on the question of the Roma see Ferge *Fejezetek a magyar szegénypolitika*, pp.150-1; Lampland *The Object of Labor*, pp. 122-3; Sándor Geskó *A cigányság helye a Magyarországi Munkaerőpiacon*, p.16, unpublished manuscript, Budapest, 1986 and Michael Stewart "Gypsies, the Work Ethic and Hungarian Socialism" in C.M. Hann (ed.) *Socialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Local Practice*, p.199n., Routledge, London & New York, 1993. On unemployment see Baksay *A Munkaerőhelyzet Alakulása*, pp.58-201; Gyula Belényi *Az Alföldi Városok és a Településpolitikája (1945-1963)*, pp.57-71, Csongrád Megyei Levéltár, Szeged, 1996; Ferenc Tóth *Munkanélküliség negyvenes, ötvenes évek*, unpublished manuscript, Budapest, 1993; for pejorative reporting of demonstrations by the unemployed refer to *Szabad Nép*, 18th April 1947.

¹⁰⁵ - These examples are taken from Belényi *Az Alföldi Városok és a Településpolitikája*, p.71; see also Ferge *Fejezetek a magyar szegénypolitika*, pp.154-6 who underlines these conclusions; for an excellent study of social policy provision in one large Hungarian city see László Zoltán Major "Debrecen Város Szociálpolitikája az 1945-1950 közötti időszakban", *A Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Levéltár Évkönyve*, Vol. XVII, pp. 111-23, 1990.

By 1947 consolidated "popular front" Hungary was stable. The gentry capitalism of the inter-war years had been replaced by a mixed economy, and a society of "smallholders", workers and the urban intellectuals. Society was not, however free from profound inequalities and it was far from being "socialist" in any meaningful sense. It was underpinned by, at best, a pseudo-democratic political system, a multi-party state in which the Communist Party was *primus inter pares*. Whether or not many Hungarians saw this, as Sándor Márai did, as a "temporary situation" ¹⁰⁶, it seems that had changes in the international situation not altered Soviet intentions towards Hungary, the "popular front" system would have continued for far longer than it did, and would have had a greater role in determining Hungarian social development.

Stalinism and the Making of Socialist Hungary

The first wave of the process of Stalinisation; the abandonment of "popular front" politics and the building of a socialist state began in late 1947. The end of the international environment in which such a politics had been possible was signalled at the founding meeting of the Cominform in September. It quickly became clear that this also meant an end to the politics of class collaboration internally ¹⁰⁷.

The first plank of this new policy was the move towards the "fusion" of the Communists with the Social Democrats, a policy strongly advocated by the Soviets and left-wing Social Democrats with as much, if not more,

¹⁰⁶ - Márai *Memoir of Hungary*, p.122

¹⁰⁷ - On Hungary and the foundation of the Cominform see Gati "The Democratic Interlude", pp.123-3; for one party functionaries memories of the changing signals coming out of Moscow in late 1947 see András Hegedüs *Élet egy eszme árnyékában*, pp.91-2, Bethlen Gábor Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1989

enthusiasm than Communist leaders, which led to the foundation of the Hungarian Workers' Party in June 1948. In reality this was more of a take-over than a "fusion"; the Social Democrats were racked by a terminal crisis from the 1947 elections onwards as left-wing members defected *en masse* to the Communists, and right-wingers resigned in disgust at their faction's inability to challenge the left-wing leadership ¹⁰⁸. In the economy the state set out to decisively transform property relations and move rapidly to socialism. In February the bauxite mines were nationalised followed by the extension of public ownership to all enterprises employing over a hundred workers ¹⁰⁹. In agriculture the regime considerably modified the earlier unqualified support for individual land holding; in August Rákosi spoke in Kecskemét about the necessity of the collectivisation of agriculture ¹¹⁰. As the year wore on the new regime became more radical, foreign owned companies were effectively confiscated as their managers were arrested and tried for "sabotage" ¹¹¹. In December Cardinal Mindszenty, Catholic primate of Hungary and a consistent conservative critic of the regime was detained ¹¹². Furthermore the state began to implement a radical policy of class war in the countryside, introducing the term "kulak" from the Soviet

¹⁰⁸ - On the relative lack of enthusiasm of Communist leaders for "fusion" of the two parties see Árpád Püskösti *Rákosi a Csúcson, 1948-1953*, pp.13-8, Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1996; for the background to the "fusion" and the internal crisis within the Social Democrats see Strassenreiter "A munkásegység néhány kérdése"; Strassenreiter "A Szociáldemokrata Párt az ország politikai életében" and Strassenreiter "(A szociáldemokraták) A hatalom részeként"

¹⁰⁹ - On nationalisation see Swain *Hungary*, pp. 38-9; Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, p.113

¹¹⁰ - The best account of the policy change towards collectivisation in Hungary in 1947-8 is Péter Simon *A Magyar Parasztság Sorsfordulója, 1946-1949*, pp.76-109, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1984; for more general accounts of the policy shift see Donáth *Reform és Forradalom*, pp.131-4; Orbán *Két Agrárforradalom Magyarországon*, pp.65-87

¹¹¹ - On the various "economic show trials" see Swain *Hungary*, pp. 38-39; Lajos Srágli "A MAORT-per és háttere", *Üzemtörténeti Értesítő*, pp.23-38,1990; unfortunately there has been little academic analysis of such trials, despite this the weekly economics magazine *Héti Világgazdaság* ran a series of articles on the trials in April 1990.

Union into everyday political discourse to signify the wealthier peasants that it sought to isolate ¹¹³.

The second wave of this process of Stalinisation was similarly brought about by changing international circumstances, but these were largely internal to the international Communist movement. At the heart of this lay strong ideological disagreement between Stalin and Tito's Yugoslavia, where the Communists had come to power as a result of partisan victory in World War Two. The Yugoslavs favoured a militant policy of "popular front from below" which involved the aggressive prosecution of a militant policy of Communist partisan activity. Disagreement between Tito and Stalin over support for the Greek partisans led to a split within the Cominform and the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Soviet sphere of influence ¹¹⁴. Whilst the break between Tito and Stalin was to initiate a wave of purges across the region, it was to make the Hungarian Workers Party particularly vulnerable. As the Soviet leaders moved to brand the Yugoslav leadership as "Trotskyists" there was considerable concern over what they had felt to be a "Tito cult" within the Hungarian party. Such concerns though exaggerated were not without foundation; the Communist

¹¹² - Pü nkösti *Rákosi a Csúcson*, pp.73-106 for an overview of the Mindszenty affair.

¹¹³ - On this aspect of the change see Lampland *The Object of Labor*, p.136; Pál Závada *Kulákprés: Család- és Falutörténeti Szociográfia. Tótkomlós 1945-1956*, pp.85-91, Szépirodalmi-Széphalom Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1991; for the use of class war rhetoric in an agrarian community where there were no "kulaks" see Gábor Vági *Mezőhegyes* with photographs by Sándor Kardos, pp.104-7, Századvég Kiadó, Budapest, 1994; on the various measures taken against "kulaks" in 1948 see the relevant documents in Bálint Magyar (ed.) *Dunaapáti 1944-1958. Dokumentumszociográfia. Első kötet 1944-1950*, pp.157-220, Művelődés kutató Intézet és Szövetkezeti Kutató Intézet, Budapest, 1986. For histories which analyse the state instituted discrimination against "kulaks" see Klára Kávási *Kulák Lista*, Agora, Budapest, 1991 is a useful thematic history based on Interior Ministry documents; for an excellent study of the tax discrimination against "kulaks" see Gyula Erdmann *Begyűjtés, Beszolgáltatás Magyarországon 1945-1956*, pp.93-8, Tevan Kiadó, Békescsaba, 1993

¹¹⁴ - My account draws extremely closely on Geoffrey Swain "The Cominform: Tito's International?", *The Historical Journal*, Vol.35, No.3, pp.641-63, 1992

party in the "popular front" period had enjoyed close links with the Yugoslavs; Anton Rob, president of the South Slav Democratic Alliance within Hungary, a body with close links to the Yugoslavs had been elected to parliament as a Communist in 1947 ¹¹⁵.

The result of this was that Hungary became the focus of a ruthless purge process inspired by advisors from the Soviet NKVD in 1949. This began with the liquidation of those Communists who were considered least likely to accept the supremacy of the Soviet Union. The focus of the process was the wave of show trials which accompanied the purge, that centred on the trial of László Rajk. Rajk was the most prominent of the so-called "home" communists, those who had not spent the inter-war period in Moscow and had joined the underground party. A veteran of the Spanish Civil War he had been a leading figure in the party during the "popular front" period and the Minister of the Interior responsible for the security services during the party's use of "salami tactics" in 1946 and 1947. Rajk was tried and later executed for his part in a conspiracy against the state in which his alleged "Trotskyist" views had led him to enter into a conspiracy with Tito and western "imperialist" agents to destroy the socialist order in Hungary. The trial underlined the propagandists message that Tito was "the chained dog" of the imperialist west and was intended as a clear statement to those who believed that there were socialist alternatives to Stalinism ¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁵ - See Miklós Kun "Akik a Jelentéseket Olvasták Moszkvában" in Izsák & Kun (eds.) *Moszkvának Jelentjük*, p.293; on the relationship between the south Slav movement and the Communist party during the "popular front" period see István Fehér *Az Utolsó Percben. Magyarország Nemzetiségei 1945-1990*, pp.93-8, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1993

¹¹⁶ - On the Rajk trial the best account in English is George H. Hodos *Show Trials: Stalinist Purges in Eastern Europe, 1948-1954*, pp. 25-65, Praeger Publishers, New York, Westport & London, 1987; in Hungarian see Tibor Zinner *Adalékok a magyarországi koncepciók peréhez*, pp.15-28, História klub füzetek 3, Székesfehérvár, 1988, for a highly accessible overview of show trials and their political significance in Stalinist Hungary. For collections of documents on the trial and its background see Gábor Paizs (ed.) *Rajk Per*, Ötlet, Budapest, 1989; for the full stenographic transcript of the proceedings of the show trial see *Rajk László*

The turn towards a policy of purge, whether directed against the management of foreign companies, the catholic church, or "home communists" within the ruling party, led to the explicit creation of a politically controlled security state during 1949. The secret police had been reorganised becoming the ÁVH (Államvédelmi Hatóság) in late 1948, during 1949 they were given ever increasing independence and took over the management of the border guard from the army later that year. The responsibilities of the organisation were increased; in addition to its previous political duties its remit as defender of the state against the "internal reaction" meant that it became a key agent of repression in society; the total number it employed increased from around 9,000 in 1949 to a figure of 28,000 in early 1950. This was not to speak of the huge numbers of informers operated by them ¹¹⁷. New kinds of penitentiary institution were introduced; political prisoners were to be kept at Vác and the central prison in Budapest, concentration camps were established at Recsk in the north and at Hortobágy in the east of the country whilst in the early 1950s forced labour organisations were set up to put prisoners to work in the mines and in other dangerous places ¹¹⁸.

és Társai a Népbíróság Előtt 40 Év Távlatából, with an introduction by Tibor Zinner, Magyar Eszperantó Szövetség, Budapest, 1989.

¹¹⁷ - See Ormos et al. *Törvénytelen Szocializmus*, pp. 64-8; Mihály Berki *Az Államvédelmi Hatóság*, pp.71-82, privately published, Budapest, 1994

¹¹⁸ - On imprisonment see Ormos et al. *Törvénytelen Szocializmus*, pp.158-65; Berki *Az Államvédelmi Hatóság*, pp. 135-51; István Fehérváry *Börtönvilág Magyarországon 1945-1956*, Magyar Politikai Foglyok Szövetsége, Budapest, 1990. On the camp at Recsk see Géza Böszörményi *Recsk 1950-1953*, Interart, Budapest 1990 and Sándor Erdey *A Recski Tábor Rabjai*, Reform Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1989. On the Hortobágy camp see Miklós Fűzes *Törvénytelenül "Hortobágy pusztaságán nehéz idők járnak..."*, Pannónia Könyvek, Pécs, 1993. There is no good monograph on the institution of KÖMI, but there is one good local study; see Attila Tóth "A pokol tomácán..." in Anikó Fűrészsné Molnár (ed.) *Tatabánya 45 Éve Város*, pp.125-9, Komárom-Esztergom Megyei Önkormányzat Múzeumainak Igazgatósága, Tata, 1992

With the intensification of the Cold War in 1950 the third plank of the process of Stalinisation was laid by the state. This was the First Five Year Plan that combined a curious mixture of pro-industrial utopianism and the desire to create an economic base that would meet the demands of Soviet military strategy in Europe. It called for the creation of "a country of iron, steel and machines", an economy that was largely planned to meet the demands of the military and which had a conscious bias in favour of heavy industry ¹¹⁹. Whilst the industrialisation drive had important consequences for society that will be discussed later, it also re-organised relations within the economy in a highly repressive manner.

In industry the state dismantled the "social-democratic" compromise in industry instituted during the popular front years, and replaced it with a Stalinist industrial relations system compatible with the new economic plan. This consisted of the centralisation of labour exchange and training, it included the reform of the wage system with the creation of a centrally controlled system of payment-by-results across the economy and the parallel introduction of labour competition in industry. Within this there was little scope for independent trade unions, and they were progressively stripped of many of their most important functions ¹²⁰. In 1950 as wages were cut through the raising of work targets, shop floor resistance was brutally crushed by the security services, whilst victims were associated with a wave of show trials directed against former leaders of the Social

¹¹⁹ - On the military bias of many of the investments made in the First Five Year Plan see Iván Pető and Sándor Szakács *A hazai gazdaság ...*, pp.151-167; this aspect of the First Five Year Plan is also dealt with by Berend *A Szocialista Gazdaság fejlődése*, p.76. The two classic studies which deal with the conception behind the investments contained in the plan and those which underpinned economic policy during the period are Berend *Gazdaságpolitika az első ötéves terv*, and Birta "A szocialista iparosítási politika néhány kérdése"

¹²⁰ - The best history of how this programme was implemented is Lajos Sz. Varga *Szakszervezetek a Diktatúrában: A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja és a szakszervezetek*, Pannónia Könyvek, Pécs, 1995

Democratic Party accused of spying for the West and instigating sabotage
121.

In agriculture the state had already begun a policy of using a mixture of repressive measures directed at wealthier farmers, "kulaks" combined with a system of heavy taxation to coerce peasants into joining co-operative farms. The politics of industrialisation were superimposed in two ways onto this already tense situation. Firstly investment was directed towards heavy industry and agriculture was starved of cash, resulting in new co-operative farms that lacked machinery or fertiliser. The second was that agriculture was forced to feed the growing industrial and urban population; agricultural producers, especially small landholders were forced to meet ever more onerous compulsory deliveries that undermined their ability to produce, creating a vicious cycle of under production. Open resistance among small farmers to these policies did occur, but was rare. Instead they sought to evade taxes and other compulsory deliveries through hiding produce and selling on a growing black market ¹²².

¹²¹ - The best introduction to state wage policy in this period is Sándor Rákosi "Normarendezések 1948-1950-ben" in János Molnár, Sándor Orbán & Károly Urbán (eds.) *Tanulmányok a magyar népi demokrácia negyven évéről*, pp.201-18, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1985; Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság....*, pp.175-7; László Varga *Az elhagyott tömeg. Tanulmányok 1950-1956-ról*, pp.50-7, Cserépfalvi-Budapest Főváros Levéltár, Budapest, 1994. On shop floor resistance and repression in this period see Varga *Szakszervezetek a Diktatúrában*, pp. 97-106; Mark Pittaway *Individualisation and Informality in Wage Determination: the Case of Early Socialist Hungary*, pp.16-9, unpublished manuscript, Budapest and Wakefield, 1997. One of the most dramatic incidents of labour protest in 1950 was a demonstration of railway workers in Hatvan in northern Hungary which was savagely repressed, for information on this see Gábor Némethi "Harmincnégy hatvani vasutas család internálása 1950-ben", *Honismeret*, Nos. 5-6, pp.55-8, 1990; Gábor Némethi *Vasutasok pokoljárása. A hatvani tüntetés megtorlása*, Hatvani Lajos füzetek 11, MÁV Vezérigazgatóság, Budapest, 1991. On the wave of show trials directed at social democratic leaders in 1950 see Zsuzsanna Kádár "A magyarországi szociáldemokrata perek története", *Múltunk*, No.2, pp.3-48, 1996, the connection between the suppression of shop floor dissent and the persecution of former social democrats in Stalinist Hungary is explained in Éva Beráné Nemes & Erzsébet Kajari "A szociáldemokrata kérdése a szakszervezetekben (1948-1956)", *Múltunk*, No.3, pp.129-42, 1990

¹²² - On the general direction of agricultural production see Swain *Collective Farms which work ?*, pp.25-50; Donáth *Reform és Forradalom*, pp.131-56; Orbán *Két Agrárforradalom*

Furthermore the industrial growth laid out in the plan proved to be unsustainable. The construction of new towns at Tatabánya, Komló and Sztálinváros, the building of the Budapest metro and the reconstruction of the Diósgyőr steel plants were constantly plagued by severe shortages of raw materials. This was very much a symptom of the problem; certain sectors, especially those supplying raw materials to the fastest developing sectors faced unrealistic plans that were basically unrealisable. The growth of shortage goods was fed by the fact that in the first forty-eight months of the plan, on nine occasions the monthly quantity based plan had been under-fulfilled leading to an increase in shortage products every time ¹²³. Stalinism meant for ordinary Hungarians a world of falling living standards characterised by persistent shortage in every walk of life ¹²⁴.

Magyarországon, pp.65-30; Sándor Szakács "A mezőgazdasági termelés és néhány történeti jellegű befolyásoló tényezője (1945-1955)" in Sándor Balogh & Ferenc Pölöskei (eds.) *Agrárpolitika és agrárátalakulás Magyarországon (1944-1962)*, especially pp.81-90, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1979; András Zsilák "A mezőgazdaság szocialista átszervezésének kezdetei és ellentmondásai az 1950-es évek első felében" in Henrik Vass (ed.) *A Mezőgazdaság Szocialista Átalakulása Magyarországon*, pp.34-41, A Magyar Történelmi Társulat-Szolnok Megyei Tanács, Szolnok, 1981; Pál Závada "Teljes erővel (Agrárpolitika 1949-1953)" in István Kemény & László Gábor (eds.) *1963-ban alakult meg a Szociológiai Kutatócsoport*, pp.379-97, MTA Szociológiai Kutató Intézet - MTA Társadalmi Konfliktusok Kutató Központja, Budapest, 1994. On agricultural taxes and compulsory deliveries in Stalinist Hungary see Erdmann *Begyűjtés, Beszolgáltatás.....*, pp.71-161; Károly Szabó & László Viragh "A Begyűjtés "Klasszikus" Formája Magyarországon (1949-1953)", *Medvetánc*, Nos.2-3, pp. 159-179, 1984. On the reports of open peasant resistance to state policies see Pütkösti *Rákosi a Csúcson*, p.260. More evidence of covert peasant resistance and widespread evasion of tax and compulsory delivery obligations see Rév "The Advantages of Being Atomized"; Hann *Táziár*, p.36; Lampland *The Object of Labor*, pp.152-6

¹²³ - Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, p.189; for a brief contemporary discussion by a senior party economic expert see *Társadalmi Szemle*, February 1953, pp.143-4; for the problems this caused on some construction sites see the example of the Budapest metro as discussed in Endre Prakfalvi "A budapesti ős-metró (1949-1956)", *Budapesti Negyed*, No.5, especially pp.31-6, Autumn 1994, for a discussion of similar problem on the Sztálinváros construction site, the biggest single investment of the First Five Year Plan, see Miklós Miskolczi & András Rózsa *A Huszéves Dunai Vasmű*, p.41, unpublished manuscript, Dunaújváros, 1969. For the situation of the cement industry see Ernő Gerő *A vas, az acél a gépek országért*, p.303, Szikra, Budapest, 1952, and for Tatabánya see *Harc a Szénért*, 25th January 1952. On the plan in general see Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, pp.195-7

"Shortage" became much more than an economic reality in the early 1950s. It formed the crucial determinant of social relations in the realms of production, consumption and administration. This set of social relations that has been identified as the determining characteristic of "actually existed socialism" was brought into being by the First Five Year Plan. It furthermore weakened the effectiveness of state policy ¹²⁵. It was in the often cynical state responses to the social conflicts generated by "shortage" that Hungarian Stalinism demonstrated that it was not merely the creation of unwilling domestic leaders acting purely according to the dictates of the Soviets. They attempted to respond with a militant policy of attacking "class enemies" for such problems. The example of the persecution of "kulaks" in agriculture has already been noted, a further example would be the startlingly unsuccessful attempt to expel members of the former middle class from Budapest in 1951 at enormous human cost in order to free housing in the capital for groups that supported the regime ¹²⁶.

¹²⁴ - On living standards in the 1950s see Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, p.217; Zsilák "A magyar társadalom osztályszerkezetének...", pp.156-62 on working class living standards and pp.181-6 on the agricultural population; for industrial workers specifically see Varga *Az elhagyott tömeg*, p.65-84

¹²⁵ - My understanding of state socialist societies as essentially rising from the contradictions of societies characterised by "shortage" is very close to that of Katherine Verdery, see *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next ?*, Chapter 1, as well as her "Theorizing Socialism: A Prologue to the "Transition"", *American Ethnologist*, Vol.18, pp. 419-39, 1991. It is also close to Nigel Swain in the way he describes the "soft budget constraint" as forming a real social relation, see Swain *Hungary*, pp.3-4. All of these concepts owe a considerable amount to the work of Hungarian economist János Komai, for a clear and comprehensive statement of the nature of his views on East European Socialism see János Komai *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992; for an intelligent Hungarian discussion of the way "shortage" affected social relations on Hungarian shop floors see Varga *Az elhagyott tömeg*, pp.15-24

¹²⁶ - On policy towards the "kulaks" see Kávási *Kulák Lista*; Swain *Collective Farms Which Work ?*, pp. 30-1; Lampland *The Object of Labor*, p.155; Hann *Tázlár*, pp.36-7, as well as the other studies referred to in note 122 above. On my other example, that of the expulsion of "class enemies" from Budapest in 1951 see Tibor Dessewffy & András Szántó "*Kitörő Éberséggel*" *A budapesti kitelepítések hiteles története*, Háttér Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1989; Rátki "A volt magyar uralkodó osztályok"; Ferenc Gáspár & Klára Szabó (eds.) *Források*

On the ground the state began to lose control of production, as economic actors were increasingly able to exploit the climate of shortage in order to mitigate the decline in their standard of living. In agriculture tax avoidance and participation in explicitly "black" markets, often with the collusion of local officials, became ever more common, whilst in industry workers exploited labour shortage to quit their jobs and seek better ones in ever increasing numbers ¹²⁷. By way of response the state became ever more autocratic in its attempts to control the economy by resorting to ever more administrative regulation backed up by draconian measures. The state attempted control labour mobility through ever stronger measures. Such measures were seen as draconian, arbitrary and highly ineffective; labour turnover in construction was still 30% per month in the summer of 1953 ¹²⁸. Increasingly the security forces came to intervene directly to attempt to halt the forms of rule-bending and informal bargaining that were part and parcel of life in Hungary's "shortage economy" arresting workers, managers, peasants and petty bureaucrats. Often action by the security state was highly arbitrary and intervened directly to prevent recourse to survival

Budapest Történetéhez. V. kötet 1950-1954, pp.75-6 and pp.79-82, Budapest Főváros Levéltár, Budapest, 1985

¹²⁷ - For the situation in agriculture see Rév "The Advantages of Being Atomized", pp.338-9; Lampland *The Object of Labour*, pp.155-9. On industry and the problems of labour mobility see Gyula Belényi *A Sztálini Iparosítás Emberi Ára. Foglalkozási átrétegződés és belső vándorlás Magyarországon (1948-1956)*, especially pp.106-9, privately published, Szeged, 1993; see also his "Az extenzív iparosítás politikája és a fizikai dolgozók foglalkozási átrétegződés (1948-1953)" in Tibor Valuch (ed.) *Hatalom és Társadalom a XX. Századi Magyar Történelemben*, p.622, 1956-os Intézet - Osiris Kiadó, Budapest, 1995; Tamás Gyekiczky *A Munkafegyelem Jogi Szabályozásának Társadalmi Háttéré az 1952-es év Magyarországon*, pp.20-2, Művelődési Minisztérium Marxizmus-Leninizmus Oktatási Főosztálya, Budapest, 1986 and also his *A Fegyelem Csapdájában (Munkafegyelmi kampányok társadalmi hatásnak elemzése)*, pp.31-5, MTA Szociológiai Kutató Intézet, Budapest, 1989

¹²⁸ - On the campaigns against labour mobility see the studies references in note 155 above; the statistics on labour turnover are from "Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Jelentése Munkaügyi Adatok, 1953 III.n.év, 1953.XI.16"., p.14, Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, restricted research report, Budapest, 1953

strategies or forms of adjustment necessary to mitigate some of the worst effects of the operation of the economy on the population. Throughout the 1950s the numbers imprisoned rose enormously as a consequence 129. This was to breed a climate of insecurity and fear; one factory manager talking to a party committee in 1953 stated that managers and technical staff "feared arrest and feared the internment camps, because production did not proceed as it should have done". This, combined with the falls in the standard of living, created the impression of a highly repressive state among the population; one worker, on hearing of the party's abandonment of Stalinism in 1953, stated that "it was high time that that bloodsucking government resigned, if it had gone on much longer, we would have starved" 130.

This highly repressive system had, however, brought about a social revolution; it had "made" socialist Hungary. The first and most lasting legacy was the creation of a new ruling elite, replacing the purged former middle and upper classes. Individuals of worker and peasant origin were promoted upwards to fill key positions in public administration, the military, the security forces and economic management 131. This promoted ruling elite was not

129 - See Ormos et al. *Törvénytelen Szocializmus*, pp.275-8 for the numbers imprisoned at the end of the Stalinist period in 1953; a useful overview of the extent of intervention by the security forces in everyday life during the period is provided by Berki *Az Államvédelmi Hatóság*, pp.135-51. A chilling overview of Stalinist police and judicial procedure in cases of security force intervention in such matters is provided in Frigyes Kahler *Joghalál Magyarországon, 1945-1989*, pp.146-83, Zrínyi Kiadó, Budapest, 1993

130 - MOL M-KS-276f.53cs./145 ö.e.; *Tájékoztató az üzemi dolgozók és az üzemi vezetők által felvetett szociális és kulturális problémákról*, p.7; SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság /33d./1953; *Feljegyzés a kormányprogrammal kapcsolatos üzemi tapasztalatokról*, p.1

131 - Mária M. Kovács & Antal Örkény "Promoted cadres and professionals in post-war Hungary" in Rudolf Andorka & László Bertalan (eds.) *Economy and Society in Hungary*, especially pp. 139-45, Karl Marx University of Economic Sciences, Department of Sociology, Budapest, 1986; Antal Örkény "A társadalmi mobilitás történeti perspektívái", *Valóság*, No. 4, pp.20-35, 1989; György Gyarmati "A kádrendszer és a rendszer kádere az ötvenes években", *Valóság*, No.2, pp.51-63, 1991; on the sociological dimensions of one particular promotion campaign Mária M. Kovács & Antal Örkény *Káderek*, pp.5-19, ELTE Szociológiai és Szociálpolitikai Intézet és Továbbképző Központ, Budapest, 1991

completely united, and in the climate of "shortage" under Stalinism felt as intimidated by the security forces as much of the rest of the population, yet it was able to use its control over resources to secure its position as politically it gained an increasing stranglehold over the ruling party at local, if not national level ¹³². The traditional elites were eliminated whilst elements of the middle classes were marginalised in the new society, discriminated against in a number of different ways and considered politically suspect by the regime. The intellectual elites were similarly marginalised or straight-jacketed by censorship and the strong official control over subject matter and expression. In spite of this the Stalinist years represented an opportunity for many of those with technical training essential to the construction of socialist industry. Those who had been engineers in the pre-war period retained more of their status and security than their doctor, lawyer or teacher colleagues. Furthermore the serious shortage of skilled personnel created opportunities for many skilled workers and their children to become engineers on the new industrial sites of the First Five Year Plan ¹³³. In

¹³² - On the feeling of intimidation by the security services even at this high level see the comments of András Hegedüs on the response of party functionaries to the Rajk trial and the other waves of purges, see his *Élet egy eszme árnyékában*, pp.136-7; for this climate among enterprise managers the story told by Ambrus Borovszky, director of the Dunai Vasmű. In 1954, after the announcement of the New Course, he personally disagreed with Imre Nagy over the governments policy of reducing investment in heavy industry. For weeks after his disagreement, he claims he waited for "when they would come to take me away. That was because there was a kind of fashion for taking people away in the middle of the night" (OHA 99, p.157). The growing influence of the elite in the party can be seen even in the social composition of the membership, in 1950 49.3% of the members of the Hungarian Workers Party were workers whilst 23.9% were "employees"; by 1951 the relative proportions were 41.2% and 24.0%, by 1953 they were 38.0% and 38.8% respectively (for these statistics see Sándor Rákosi "A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja" in Erényi & Rákosi (eds.) *Legyőzhetetlen erő*, p.205).

¹³³ - On the traditional elites see the analysis of the people expelled from the capital in 1951, Rátki "A volt magyar uralkodó osztályok". For an excellent account of the fate of the former aristocracy in both the "popular front" years and under Stalinism see János Gudenus & László Szentirmay *Összetört Címerek. A Magyar Arisztokrácia Sorsa és az 1945 utáni megpróbáltatások (bevezetés egy szociológiai vizsgálathoz)*, Mozaik-Piremon, Budapest, 1989. There is unfortunately nothing on the fate or the role of former businessmen or capitalists, but on the provincial middle classes there is one study which is extremely suggestive of the strategies such groups employed during the Stalinist years, see Tibor Gáti & Agota Horváth "A háború előtti kisvárosi középosztály utótörténetéhez", *Szociológiai*

agriculture the excessive levels of taxation and the brutal "class war" policies had led to social levelling in the countryside even though they failed to produce a victory for co-operative agriculture. Furthermore industrialisation produced considerable proletarianisation in society as a whole ¹³⁴.

Hungarian Stalinism was in many ways the product of international circumstances, yet "class war" policies were pursued enthusiastically by a dogmatic local leadership against large sections of the population. Combined with the pressure on living standards and the frustrating experience of "shortage" in all spheres of social life from work, consumption and social welfare through to housing the state came to be seen by the overwhelmingly majority of the population as enormously repressive. Despite this it was transforming society, creating a new social structure. These two elements of Hungary's Stalinist experience were to mould the population's view of socialism in the longer term, and the state socialist regime itself would be forced into an accommodation with this new society.

Szemle, No.1, pp.81-97, 1992, for a general overview of the problem see Balogh "A magyar értelmiség a felszabadulás után". On intellectual elites most of the work is one the 1945-8 or the 1953-6 periods leaving the Stalinist period out altogether; for an introduction to literary policy under "high" Stalinism see János M. Rainer *Az Író Helye. Viték a magyar irodalmi sajtóban 1953-1956*, pp. 5-24, Magvető Kiadó, Budapest, 1990; on general cultural policy the best introduction is Gyarmati et al. *Magyar Hétköznapok*, pp.298-335; for an interesting overview of the constraints placed on the visual arts as well as the impact of socialist realism in music see the studies in Péter György & Hedvig Turai (eds.) *Art and Society in the Age of Stalin*, Corvina, Budapest, 1992. As far as the impact of industrialisation on the so-called technical intelligentsia was concerned see László Varga *Pató Pálok vagy sztahanovisták ?*, pp.36-62, Magvető Kiadó, Budapest, 1984. Though this is a study of the changing situation of foremen it has the best information on engineers and other technical groups anywhere in the literature.

¹³⁴ - On social levelling in the countryside during the early 1950s see Zsilák "A magyar társadalom osztályszerkezetének...", pp. 170-2; Sándor Orbán "A parasztság szerkezeti átalakulásának kérdései a demokratikus és a szocialista agrárforradalom időszakában" in Balogh & Pölöskei (eds.) *Agrárpolitika és agrárátalakulás Magyarországon*, especially pp. 44-55; József Nagy "A paraszti migráció irányai és okai az 1950-es években" in Valuch (ed.) *Hatalom és Társadalom*, p.653. For the process of proletarianisation please refer to note 6 above

Between 1953 and 1958 the socialist regime was to struggle to overcome the poisonous legacy left by the years of Stalinism. These five years were ones of thaw, followed by freeze which led to revolution and then as a result of the intervention of the Soviets the institutionalisation of a strategy of pragmatic management by the domestic leadership within the constraints dictated by Hungary's international situation. In spite of the fact that the Soviets brought high "Stalinism" to an end in 1953, it was not until its political legacy was overcome that Hungary's Stalinist experience was ended. It was only with the installation of a leadership dedicated to pragmatic management within the confines of the state socialist settlement imposed upon Hungary originally in 1948, and re-imposed in 1956, that the country was to shift to a new era. Nevertheless the years of "high Stalinism" turned Hungary into a socialist society.

Socialist Hungary as a Work Based State

The account presented above has sketched the circumstances that brought about the Hungarian Stalinist experience and has described its nature. This picture belongs to the short *durée* of individual time, and not to the medium *durée* of social time ¹³⁵. When examined on this level the Stalinist experience represented a decisive moment in which state-society relations were decisively re-cast. Hungary moved from a hierarchical, caste-like gentry society during the inter-war years, to a socialist state in which citizenship was dependent upon one's status as a "worker". This entailed not merely a radical change in the definition of citizenship, and thus of state-society relations but a decisive shift in the social role of labour.

¹³⁵ - This terminology is borrowed from Fernand Braudel *On History*, pp.3-14, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1980

To become a full member of socialist society one had ideologically to be considered a part of the *dologozó nép*, or working people. That meant from 1948 onwards that an individual had to work either in a sector of the economy that was already socialised, or one that was approved by regime policy. Membership of the *dologozó nép* was to be extended to previously marginalised groups, such as women, the Roma, and the unemployed, in order to "integrate" them fully into the new society ¹³⁶. In return for socialist labour an individual gained rights to a wide range of benefits from health care through to supplementary family support paid through the wage packet, up to and including entitlements to rationed goods until 1951 ¹³⁷.

¹³⁶ - This argument comes over very strongly in all of the propaganda during the socialist period. It has also been pointed out by a number of social scientists, particularly, but not exclusively anthropologists, who have analysed social change under state socialism. See Michael Stewart *The Time of the Gypsies*, especially pp.99-101, Westview Press, Boulder and London, 1997, for an analysis close to mine in general terms and excellent information on its impact on the Roma. For the importance of proletarianisation to the liberation of women and their acquisition of socialist citizenship see Joanna Goven *The Gendered Foundations of Hungarian Socialism: State, Society and the Anti-Politics of Anti-Feminism, 1948-1990*, pp.66-8, PhD. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, 1993; Andrea Pető "'As He Saw Her": Gender Politics in Secret Party Reports in Hungary During the 1950s" in Andrea Pető & Mark Pittaway (eds.) *Women in History - Women's History: Central and East European Perspectives. CEU History Department, Working Paper Series 1*, pp.107-17, Central European University, Budapest, 1994. Nothing has been done on industrial workers themselves in their Hungarian contexts, but Alf Lüdtke has examined how the socialist state in the DDR aimed to organise itself ideologically around the notion of the "honour of labour", see Alf Lüdtke "'Helden der Arbeit" - Mühen beim Arbeiten. Zur Mißmutigen Loyalität von Industriearbeitern in der DDR" in Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka & Hartmut Zwahr (eds.) *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, pp. 188-213, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1994

¹³⁷ - This point is very forcefully made by the London based legal and constitutional historian László Péter in his discussion of the paradoxical role played by the socialist party-state in the development of citizenship rights. See László Péter "Volt-e magyar társadalom a XIX. században? A jogrend és a civil társadalom képződése" in Endre Karátson & Péter Várdy (eds.) *Változás és Állandóság. Tanulmányok a magyar polgári társadalomról*, especially p.94, Hollandiai Mikes Kelemen Kör, Utrecht, 1989. The link between work and access to social rights has been underlined by social policy specialist in Hungary itself, see Júlia Szalai "Társadalmi Válság és Reform-Alternatívák" in Júlia Szalai, András Lányi, Ferenc Miszlivetz, Sándor Radnóti & Ágnes Vajda (eds.) *Arat a Magyar. A Szociálpolitikai Értékesítő és a Fejlődés-Tanulmányok Sorozat Különszáma*, p. 58, MTA Szociológiai Kutató Intézete, Budapest, 1988

As work and citizenship were conflated, the state socialist regime transformed the role of labour. The notion of labour as a commodity which an individual could buy and sell was to be eliminated, whilst the state was to become the sole employer it was to be, at least in official ideology, the dictatorship of the proletariat, at least of worker citizens. This was to enable it to justify ideologically its role as the sole assessor of the contribution which labour had to make to society in order to obtain a given reward. Indeed as the new state began to plan the economy it was to do so on the basis that labour was the source of value within it, that its price was the central economic cost within society. In order to "measure" the value of labour it was to employ ever more complex methods to quantify labour power on the shop floor ¹³⁸.

It was this utopian programme of transforming state-society relations and social relations themselves that determined the Stalinist regime's programme of proletarianisation as much as did the dictates of either Cold War geo-politics and the demands of industrialisation. Indeed it could be argued that it was precisely this mix of utopianism and expediency that determined many of the unusual features of the Stalinist experience as far as they impacted on industrial workers. Society had sufficient autonomy to respond to the Stalinist regime's policies and through a process of conflict and struggle to reshape them further determining in many ways the nature of social relations that were to emerge in the post-Stalinist period up until 1989.

The implication of the argument presented here is that the social relations that impacted upon industrial workers in later socialism were not

¹³⁸ - For an explanation of how fundamental scientific management was not merely to wages, but to labour planning in Stalinist Hungary see *Munkaerőterület*, August 1951; see also Pittaway *Individualisation and Informality*, pp.4-9

creations of a period of reform from the early 1960s onwards that allowed society to express itself in an autonomous manner as many historians and social scientists have argued ¹³⁹. This view states that the low legitimacy of state among industrial workers, the endemic informal shop floor bargaining, the highly privatised social identities of many workers and the widespread participation of workers within the informal economy ¹⁴⁰ were not created by economic reform. This is not to argue that reform and economic change over the three decades between 1958 and the beginnings of the final collapse of Hungarian socialism left everything unchanged. It is merely to state that these phenomena grew out of the responses of both industrial workers to the regime's attempts to transform them into socialist citizens and other groups responses to the state's attempts to make them into industrial workers in the context of the country's Stalinist experience. That social change modified and profoundly altered many of the patterns of behaviour

¹³⁹ - In addition to the arguments presented by Hankiss above arguments which refer more explicitly to labour which have been made in this vein are István Kemény "A Központosított Gazdaság és a Civil Társadalom" in his *Közletről s Távolból*, pp.106-130, Gondolat, Budapest, 1991, and the much less stimulating Csaba Makó "Workers' Behaviour and Interests in Socialist Society", *Journal of Communist Studies*, Vol.6, pp.179-89, 1990

¹⁴⁰ - There is an enormous social scientific literature which describes these phenomena in the 1970s and 1980s, see Swain *Hungary*, Chapter 6 for an excellent overview of the research; for a sample of the more important studies see Michael Burawoy & János Lukács *The Radiant Past. Ideology and Reality in Hungary's Road to Capitalism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1992; Galasi & Sziráczi *Labour Market and Second Economy in Hungary*; Lajos Héthy & Csaba Makó *Munkásmagtartások és gazdasági szervezet*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1972; Lajos Héthy & Csaba Makó *Munkások, Érdekek, Érdekegyeztetés*, Gondolat, Budapest, 1978; Kemény *Ouvriers hongrois*; István Kemény *Velük nevelkedett a gép. Magyar munkások a hetvenes évek elején*, VITA, Budapest, 1990; David Stark "The Micropolitics of the Firm and the Macropolitics of Reform: New Forms of Workplace Bargaining in Hungarian Enterprises" in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer & Evelyne Huber Stephens (eds.) *States versus Markets in the World-System*, pp. 247-73, SAGE, Beverley Hills, 1985; David Stark "Rethinking Internal Labor Markets: New Insights from a Comparative Perspective", *American Sociological Review*, Vol.51, pp.492-504, 1986; David Stark "Coexisting Organizational Forms in Hungary's Emerging Mixed Economy" in Victor Nee & David Stark with Mark Selden (eds.) *Remaking the Economic Institutions of Socialism: China and Eastern Europe*, pp. 137-168, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1989

of industrial workers is beyond doubt; yet it was prior to 1958 the essential responses of this group to their situation developed ¹⁴¹.

In order to examine Stalinism as a contradictory attempt to implement a utopian political programme of social transformation and to examine how it interacted with industrial workers it is necessary to descend from a discussion of broad national level processes to the level of daily life. The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part considers the effect of state intervention in the realm of production and its effects upon that sphere. Part Two considers the way in which workers responded to the social environment created by Stalinism as its implications became clear during the mid-1950s. It also examined the effects those responses had on worker identity. For too long have historians of East-Central European Stalinism ignored society, it is time to place society firmly at the centre of the stage.

¹⁴¹ - I make this argument elsewhere, see Mark Pittaway "The problems of reconstituting a union in a reorganised state enterprise: an exploration of aspects of Hungary's shop floor industrial relations", *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, Vol.3, No.2, pp. 357-76, 1997

Part One

Building Socialism on the Shop Floor

Introduction

In 1949 one female party worker in the Chinoïn pharmaceuticals factory looked back on factory politics in the plant in 1947 contrasting its disorder with what she perceived to be the improvements "in the behaviour of workers towards each other, and towards their work" that had taken place in the preceding two years. She described a situation in which "in the canteen two, or rather three camps developed. On one side the Communists sat, on the other one the right wing Social Democrats, and there was an indifferent side as well. If the Communists announced they were holding a meeting, then the right-wingers tried to make sure everybody went away from there" whilst two years later "a good degree of agreement" could "be seen in production" ¹.

In this account the furious competition between parties that characterised shop floor politics in popular front Hungary was replaced simply with a consensus in the factory around production. In short, politics was replaced with work. During 1948 and 1949 the newly unified Hungarian Worker's Party destroyed the relatively democratic political institutions of the popular front period. This process culminated in the parliamentary elections of 1949 when citizens were presented with a single list of candidates. With these elections came the end of the limited representative democracy that had existed since the end of World War Two.

The state no longer recognised a legal division between it and a legally protected civil society. In the new constitution passed in 1949 the state conceived its relationship with the citizenry in a new way; the constitution stated clearly that "the basis of the social order of the Hungarian

¹ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.3/55 ö.e., p.15

People's Republic is work". The basis of citizenship was to perform labour and thus to contribute to the generation of the social product. Given that the task of the new state in the social realm was "the construction of socialism" labour was to be increasingly performed in the socialist sector ².

Given that the performance of labour was the basis of citizenship and that the new state aimed to "construct socialism" in post-war Hungary, production became the arena in which worker-citizens could make their political contribution, at least according to the ideology of the country's new rulers. This could be seen, for example, in the way in which most party members by the early 1950s were members of their workplace cells rather than members of the party organisation where they lived. Of the recorded members and candidates for membership of the party in Fejér county in 1952 2,348 were members of office based organisation, 6,318 of factory cells, 1,960 of agricultural co-operative party branches, 812 of cells based at state farms, 420 of branches at machine tractor stations and only 6,651 were members of territorially based cells. Of the latter the majority were economically inactive ³.

This ideology in which production was conceptualised as a political act explains the extraordinary politicisation of production that characterised the socialist shop floor during the early 1950s. Labour competition, the institution through which the workforce was to be mobilised behind the goals of greater and better production, was a clear example of this politicisation of production. The various labour competition campaigns became rituals designed to demonstrate worker support for the goals, policies and often the

² - *A Dolgozó Nép Alkotmánya - A Magyar Népköztársaság Alkotmánya*, p.37, Szikra, Budapest, 1949

³ - For these statistics see FML MSZMP FMBA ir. 9f.1/46ö.e.; *Statisztikai Összesítő (kerület, járás, város, nagyüzem részére): Fejér megyei összesítő 1952 I. hó*

leaders of the Stalinist state. In December 1949 the spread of individual forms of labour competition culminated in the Stalin shift, in which the workers of Hungary were to celebrate the 70th birthday of Stalin through the achievement of ever higher production targets. The labour competition campaign that followed the revision of the norms in August 1950 was named the Korea week, and presented ideologically as an opportunity for Hungarian workers to show their unity with the Communist North. In 1951 the second congress of the Hungarian Workers' Party coincided with a major labour competition campaign across the country, in which workers were to celebrate the congress through achieving record production levels. In March 1952 workers were requested to increase production as part of the official celebration of the 60th birthday of Mátyás Rákosi ⁴.

It would be a mistake to regard the politicisation of production as a temporary feature of factory life in Stalinist Hungary. The ideological replacement of politics with socialist labour ensured that workers were reminded that the state regarded production as a political act. Labour competition campaigns occurred on important dates in the socialist calendar, with workers invited to commemorate the anniversaries of events like the "liberation" of Hungary on 4th April, May Day and the October

⁴ - On the Stalin shift and its connections to the official celebrations of the Soviet leader's 70th birthday on 21st December 1949 see MOL M-KS-276f.65/76ö.e., pp.30-1; see also Gyula Hevesi *Sztáhanov Útján. A Magyar Újjítómozgalom Fejlődése és Feladatai*, p.99-104, Atheneum Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1950; "Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Központi Vezetőségének Határozata a Szocialista Munkaverseny Eredményeinek Megszilárdításáról és Továbbfejlesztéséről" reprinted in *A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Központi Vezetőségének, Politikai Bizottságának és Szervező Bizottságának Fontosabb Határozatai*, p.87, Szikra, Budapest, 1951; on the Korea week in factories in south-western Hungary see SZKL Zala SZMT/41d./1950; *Nagykanzsa, 1950 augusztus 11*; on the Congress labour competition of 1951 see MOL M-KS-276f.116/38ö.e., pp.1-3; "A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Központi Vezetőségének válaszelevele a dolgozók kongresszusi munkaverseny-kezdeménnyezésére (1951 január)" reprinted in *Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Központi Vezetőségének, Politikai Bizottságának és Szervező Bizottságának Fontosabb Határozatai*, pp.124-6; on the competition campaign for the 60th birthday of Rákosi in 1952 see János Nemes *Rákosi Mátyás Születésnapja*, pp.33-6, Láng Kiadó, Budapest, 1988

Revolution on 7th November. As a result of the "cult of personality" production often took place in factories decorated with the portraits of Rákosi, Lenin and Stalin. Workers were reminded the linkage the regime made between political support and production through the decoration of factories and mines with banners. At the pit heads of mines in Tatabánya one worker remembered banners calling for "More Coal for Our Homeland!", "Produce More Coal Today than Yesterday!", "Every Cart of Coal is a Blow to Imperialism!" and "Produce More Coal So That Villages and Towns Will Be More Beautiful!". In 1956 such portraits and other decoration was a frequent target of the revolutionaries; in the Standard factory one workers' council member remembered that "I walked in the factory, and took down the decorations: pictures, stars, statues, all the rest. I said that if anyone can't do without them they can take them home - it is possible to produce without ornaments" ⁵.

Labour competition campaigns, work movements, even the decoration of factories and the hanging of banners on the walls of shops transformed production at one level into a series of rituals of support for the socialist state and the leadership of the country. At another level work campaigns were experienced by industrial workers as a series of profoundly exploitative measures. This was especially the case with labour competition campaigns which workers came to experience simply as periods of heavy exploitation of the workforce. During one competition week, a former worker remembered "a large amount of work was done. At the end of shifts we were all tired from the stupid pace of work the pledges we made for the competition were forced out of us but they did not give us any greater

⁵ - For a sample of the anniversary commemorations see for 4th April in 1950 *Szabad Nép*, 1st April 1950; for 1st May see *Szabad Nép*, 25th April 1950; for the 7th November see *Szabad Nép*, 3rd November 1950; OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 06094/53, p.1; the last example is quoted in Lajos Horváth *A BHG Híradástechnikai Vállalat Munkástanácsának Története /1956-1957/*, p. 9, unpublished manuscript, Budapest, 1992

ammount of money". The work movements were seen as a similarly exploitative set of rules; "over and above the overly fast work tempo and the enormously high norms I had to think about a range of "relaxing" rules, which were simply only any good, in the sense that they stopped me thinking about the band of robbers in power up there" ⁶.

The politicisation of production had several important implications. First of all it led to the criminalisation of certain customary practices in the workplace. Furthermore it came to define in certain cases incompetence, or even work place resistance as a political crime, as sabotage of the national economy. This is clear from the several cases where the secret police intervened directly in production in the oil fields in south west Hungary during 1950. In one incident a plant engineer at the Bázakerettye oil enterprise was arrested for "sabotage" after a production stoppage that the secret police claimed was due to him not checking that the pipes were of an adequate quality. In the Nagykanizsa machine repair shop the theft of gas piping provoked secret police intervention who discovered that a group of workers and their foreman were using it to conduct a private job in the informal economy. They were also arrested and charged. In the same shop one worker was detained for opposing the pledges in the then current labour competition campaign on the grounds that they placed greater physical demands on the workers than was necessary ⁷.

The second and most important effect of the politicisation of production was the politicisation of shop floor resistance around the questions of wages, working conditions and the intensity of work. The

⁶ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 08794/53, p.1; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 6937/54, p.2

⁷ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1/77 ö.e., p.9; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1/73 ö.e., pp. 41-3; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1/77 ö.e., p.27

politicisation of production far from mobilising the industrial workforce behind the state had precisely the opposite effect. This is well illustrated by the response of one former worker from Győr who escaped to the west to the work movements connected with labour competition; "the "Gazda" movement was started in the interests of saving raw materials. In any case it would be a good thing to do because the workers today really waste raw materials they are happy if they can harm the Communist system". By the early 1950s, therefore, the state was only able to maintain the facade of worker support for the regime through violence and coercion. Beneath the facade of workers demonstrating their support for the system through the over-fulfilment of their labour competition pledges, there was considerable resistance to that state ⁸.

Parallels can be identified between the effect ideology had on the political authority of the regime in the early 1950s, and what Michael Burawoy and János Lukács described as "painting socialism", that they identified in a north-east Hungarian steel plant during the twilight of Hungarian socialism in the 1980s. Though the degree of state violence to secure outward compliance with the aims of the regime was not present in the 1980s, nor was the degree of anger generated by the large decline in the standard of living of many workers and rapidly increasing work intensity the effect on workers' attitudes of the state's politicised, productivist ideology seems to have been similar. Rather than "inciting workers to recognise how the world could be but isn't" as Burawoy and Lukács suggest for late socialist ideology, the effect of Stalinist ideology simply emphasised,

⁸ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 08794/53, p.1

perhaps over-emphasised, the link between the decisions of the party leadership and workers' own poor working and living conditions ⁹.

In the factories the Stalinist state was rejected by the Hungarian workforce. It was rejected primarily because of the effect its programme of the transformation of the shop floor and the consequent process it released had on ordinary workers. That process of transformation reshaped not merely the shop floor but the workforce itself. This transformation was the result of a process and not merely the reaction of industrial workers to a state programme. This distinction is important because it underlines the fact that although the state had considerable power, that power was limited when it came to intervene in the economy and society of post-war Hungary. The following chapters develop these arguments further demonstrating that state policy towards the shop floor and to the economy generally was frustrated by problems of shortage. This was in part an economic issue, in part a social one; economic in that shortages of raw materials resulted from the interaction of an ambitious industrialisation strategy with economic realities, and social in the sense that labour shortages resulted from both the organisation of production and the reluctance, despite coercion, of many potential workers to work for the state. Furthermore the implementation of centralised economic planning, with the norms and wage system that followed in its wake provoked worker opposition that resulted in a refusal to actively co-operate with it in the workplace.

These factors led to a loss of state control over socialist production, which increasingly followed a logic that was autonomous of, though could be profoundly affected by, state intervention. State intervention through the industrialisation drive was responsible for an experience that was common

⁹ - Burawoy & Lukács *The Radiant Past*, pp.111-42; the direct quote is taken from *ibid.*, p.140

to the whole of the industrial workforce; declining standards of living and ever higher work intensity. Shortage hampered the ability of the economy to function in the way that the state intended and led to a variety of highly local compromises between lower managers and small groups of core workers within production. This in turn was to lead to greater fragmentation within the workforce.

The development of workforce fragmentation was not simply the result of such decentralised compromises but they combined with the influx of "new" workers from agriculture to sharply intensify this process. The so-called "new" workers who entered industry during the early 1950s were a diverse group in terms of both social origins and the experiences that they brought to industry. Some managed to enter industry and eventually occupy core positions within the industrial workforce depending upon the process of social mobility and transformation in particular sectors or factories, but this was not the experience of the majority. For this majority proletarianisation proved to be a profoundly alienating experience as they were cast to the periphery of the workforce. Indeed as the state resorted to ever more despotic measures to restore a degree of control over the shop floor it was the "new" periphery of the workforce that bore the brunt of the increased legal and administrative control of their behaviour.

This argument is expanded and illustrated in the four chapters that follow. The first examines the implications of the system of Soviet style central planning for the Hungarian shop floor, arguing that it entailed the individualisation of production relations and sought to create a direct relationship between the individual producer and the Stalinist state through economic planning. It then analyses the way in which these intentions were translated into shop floor practice through wage systems, production norms and labour competition campaigns and how, at least for a time workers were

mobilised by these mechanisms. Eventually, however, as living standards decreased and managerial control over individual production became ever stronger the implementation of the planning system itself came to generate widespread, although hidden, worker opposition.

The second chapter examines the way in which the circumstances of shortage were superimposed onto the mechanisms of the plan at shop floor level and the forms of workplace relations this often produced. Individuals experiences of work and production were shaped by their lack of control over earnings as production was characterised by constant stoppages. High work intensity, low wages and high accident rates came to characterise production during the early 1950s. Localised compromises were extended to small groups of workers within enterprises as a result of management attempts to cope with the problems of production in Hungary's shortage economy. These compromises were shaped by the labour processes in different sectors and by the perceived cultural attributes of the workforce, a factor that fed the particularisation of worker identity that is described in Part Two. In the short term such bargaining interacted with inequalities between workers and the individualisation of production to fragment the industrial workforce.

The third chapter sets the expansion of the workforce in context, and in so doing analyses the sources of the human constraint on rapid industrialisation, namely the problem of labour shortage. Proletarianisation, the integration of the whole of the population into socialist labour was a central social policy goal of the Stalinist regime and as such formed the context in which the recruitment of labour into industry occurred. Labour recruitment was partially successful in that it led to the expansion of the industrial labour force yet failed to solve the problem of labour shortage.

That expansion interacted with the re-composition of the industrial workforce. The fourth chapter describes that process and the limits of recomposition. This process was affected by the dynamics of state policy in agriculture and the distrust and hatred of the regime it created in rural areas. This meant that many potential industrial workers refused to enter industry, and those that did were often driven by absolute necessity as a result of the repressive policies of the state. Because of their experiences in agriculture they were unlikely to be transformed into model industrial workers by participating in politicised production. Some made it to become skilled workers but for many a permanent position on the periphery of the socialist labour force was the outcome of their proletarianisation.

Chapter One

Planning the Workplace: Collectivist Centralisation and Individualisation

Introduction

In the very early months of 1950 the management of Magyar Pamutipar, a leading Budapest textile factory, began to alter the system by which the factory maintenance staff were paid. Prior to that date they had been paid according to work targets that were established at the level of the group; thus the collective rather than the individual was measured in order to establish the basis of remuneration. The authorities were especially keen to see that the individual became the unit on which the wage was established. The rhetoric of their justification for this shift was surprisingly anti-collectivist - without individual work targets (*normák*) individual contributions to the economy could not be measured. Furthermore, work discipline could not be maintained if good workers within a group were to be remunerated at the same level as the bad and the lazy ¹.

It has been widely assumed that Stalinism was highly collectivist both in its ideology and in its practice. It has been seen as being at an extreme of a state socialist paradigm characterised by the elimination of individual civil rights, property rights and in some variants the abolition of a distinction between public and private spheres altogether. The contradiction between the apparent assumption of "individualisation" that characterised socialist wage systems and the collectivist ideology of the regime in Hungary was noticed in the later socialist period. Miklós Haraszti commented on how "in one newspaper, a Hungarian expert on "management science" claimed that payment-by-results was the ideal form of socialist wages. It was, he said, the

¹ - *Pamut Újság*, 1st January 1950

embodiment of the principle "from each according to his capacity, to each according to his work". But in another issue of the same paper a veteran communist who now holds a high position warmly remembered a former comrade in arms who had been prominent before the war in the organisation of workers' demonstrations against the Bedeaux system - the "scientific" system of payment by results then in force" ².

The resolution of this apparent contradiction is essential if an understanding is to be gained of the way the Stalinist regime re-made shop floor relations in Hungary. The call in the Magyar Pamutipar was not an isolated example, from 1949 onwards the state clearly sought to individualise relations at work. This could be most clearly seen in changes made to the institution of the labour competition during the last six months of 1949. The "innovation" movement, where workers could suggest improvements that would boost production, was aggressively promoted, as were the individual, as opposed to the brigade based, collective forms of labour competition. In the run up to the so-called Stalin shift, the campaign to celebrate the Soviet leaders 70th birthday, the "best worker of a skill" competition was launched, an event that was to lead to the birth of the Stakhanovite movement that was to glorify individual "heroes of labour" holding them up as examples to the rest of the workforce ³.

The creation of a classical centrally planned economy was characterised by considerable institutional centralisation. Enterprises were nationalised, their autonomy was stripped away as they were subordinated to state agencies. Plans were expressed as a series of quantitative

² - Miklós Haraszti *A Worker in a Worker's State*, p.21

³ - For the background to the changes of late 1949, see *Társadalmi Szemle*, January 1950, pp.30-32

production targets that were centrally set. These targets were then passed down the hierarchy, through the branch ministries to the enterprises. The enterprise rather than being like an individual capitalist firm was a mere cog of the planning machinery, and the production targets were further decentralised right down to the level of each individual producer. In short the planning process sought both the centralise decision making and to individualise the execution of the allocated tasks. István Rév has accurately captured the apparent paradox inherent in Stalinist central planning in his statement that "the construction of the anti-individualistic, collectivist, centralised society starts with unprecedented individualisation" ⁴.

This chapter resolves this apparent contradiction by locating the origins of this paradox in the design and implementation of centralised economic planning. It firstly discusses the intellectual background to Stalinist centralised economic planning and moves then to examine its institutionalisation in post-war Hungary. The focus then shifts to a consideration of how that institutionalisation occurred on the shop floor and worker responses to it.

Marxist Concepts, Soviet Practices, Hungarian Policies

It has become something of a *cliché* to state that whilst Marx produced a thorough critique of mid-nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon capitalism, he left his followers with an ambiguous legacy from which to build a socialist society. Labour was central to Marx's theoretical project. He argued following political economists like Ricardo and Smith that the values of products were defined inherently by the labour needed to produce them. This labour theory of value was central to Marx's critique of capitalism, a

⁴ - The best short account of the creation of the structure of command in central economic planning is Swain *Hungary*, pp.54-8; Rév "The Advantages of Being Atomized", p.337

system in which the capitalists were able to force proletarians to sell their labour power as a commodity on the market. A certain amount of labour was necessary to ensure subsistence, yet the proletarian was also capable of surplus labour beyond this. That surplus labour was effectively confiscated by the capitalist and accumulated within capital; in other words "living" labour was transformed into "dead" labour. Proletarians were locked into such exploitative relations by the circumstances of the commodification of labour, through which the bourgeois as a class used market relations as a means of proletarianising society and thus of exploiting producers ⁵.

With the abolition of capitalism not only would the means of production be taken into common ownership but the commodification of labour would be ended. The need, however, for society to generate a surplus which would be distributed to its members would not disappear and nor would the division of labour. For this reason the problem of accounting for and measuring the cost of labour in non-market conditions would come to the fore. Whilst Marx had elaborately analysed the process through which prices of commodities, including labour, were arrived at under capitalism this left few clues as to how this might be done under socialism. The key problems would revolve around the concepts of labour power and labour time. These concepts were separated from labour and the distinction was drawn by Marx in the following way; "the capitalist, it seems, buys their labour with money. They sell him their labour for money. But this is merely

⁵ - On the labour theory of value see Karl Marx "Wage Labour and Capital" in Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels *Selected Works. Volume 1*, 6th revised edition, pp.157-82, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1989; see also the section of the Communist Manifesto where the formation of the proletariat is discussed - Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels "Manifesto of the Communist Party" in Marx & Engels *Selected Works Vol. 1*, pp. 119-22; for useful summaries see Harry Braverman *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, foreword by Paul M. Sweezy, Chapter 1, Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1974; Ian Gough "Marx's Theory of Productive and Unproductive Labour" in Donald McQuarrie (ed.) *Marx: Sociology/Social Change/Capitalism*, pp. 199-229, Quartet Books, London, Melbourne and New York, 1978; Nove *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, pp. 20-30; Swain *Hungary*, pp.63-4

the appearance. In reality what they sell to the capitalist for money is their labour power. The capitalist buys their labour power for a day, a week, a month etc." Therefore any future socialist society seeking to plan labour rationally would firstly have to find methods of measuring labour power and labour time in order to calculate values in a socialist economy. Furthermore as wages were by definition "the price of labour power", fair remuneration in a socialist society would have to employ an explicit calculation of labour power and labour time. The essential problem was that Marx left few clues as to how labour power could be calculated objectively, nor how the price of that labour power could be determined in the absence of market relations ⁶.

Anson Rabinbach has demonstrated that Marx's discovery of labour power as distinct from labour was paralleled by the growth of scientific interest in the physiology of labour and attempts to apply that knowledge in industry during the nineteenth century. As production shifted increasingly to larger units at the end of the nineteenth century this science of work was transformed into scientific management principally but not exclusively through Taylorism. This was the term applied to the ideas of Frederick Winslow Taylor for transforming the labour process. Taylor argued that the unification of conception and execution that nineteenth century forms of industrial labour organisation implied allowed the craft workers to regulate the pace of their own production thus preventing the plant manager from "exploiting" them in the most productive way. In order to eliminate this he advocated the separation of conception and execution and the splitting of a given production process into clearly defined stages that would be transparent to managerial scrutiny. So that this could be done he advocated

⁶ - For some of Marx's thoughts on the role of labour in a post-capitalist society see Karl Marx "Critique of the Gotha Programme" in Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels *Selected Works* Vol. 3, 6th revised edition, pp.13-31, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1989; the quote is from Marx "Wage Labour and Capital", pp.158-9

the stopwatch based measurement of workers performing individual tasks, and the payment of performance based wages in order to ensure that they produced at the management defined pace. It was condemned by labour movement activists as leading to greater exploitation of the worker. It nevertheless had a decisive influence on those in the Soviet Union and East-Central Europe who sought to create a system of labour planning distilled from the ideas of Marx⁷.

In the years immediately preceding World War One Taylorism spread across the United States and made substantial inroads, albeit in modified form into Europe. After the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the consolidation of the new socialist state that followed those who sought to transform Marx's ideals into political practice began to develop an interest in Taylor and his system of "scientific management". Lenin in particular showed an interest in applying the principles of "the Taylor system" to Soviet industry. His interest in the system, however, was in its potential to improve productivity and thus lay the foundations of socialist society, indeed in April 1918 he wrote that after a "socialist revolution there necessarily comes to the forefront the task of creating a social system superior to capitalism, namely raising the productivity of labour". What was more, argued Lenin "the Russian worker is a bad worker compared with people in advanced countries The Taylor system, the last word of capitalism in this respect,

⁷ - For this argument see Anson Rabinbach *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue and the Origins of Modernity*, especially the Introduction and for his discussion of Marx pp.69-83, University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1990; on the background to the transformation of capitalist production that Taylorism implied an original and excellent work of synthesis is Giovanni Arrighi *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times*, pp.239-300, Verso, London and New York, 1994; the production related dimensions of this transformation are well captured in the four country comparison provided in Scott Lash & John Urry *The End of Organised Capitalism*, pp.17-83, Polity Press, Oxford, 1987. Taylor's arguments can be found in Frederick Winslow Taylor *Scientific Management. Comprising Shop Management, the Principles of Scientific Management, Testimony before the Special House Committee*, with a foreword by Harlow S. Person, Greenwood Press Publishers, Westport, Connecticut, 1972; useful and critical analyses of the Taylor system are provided by Braverman *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, pp.85-137 and Rabinbach *The Human Motor*, pp.238-44

like all capitalist progress, is a combination of the refined brutality of bourgeois exploitation and a number of the greatest scientific achievements in the field of analysing mechanical motions during work, the elimination of superfluous and awkward motions, the elaboration of correct methods of work, the introduction of the best systems of accounting and control etc. The possibility of building socialism depends exactly upon our success in combining the Soviet power and the Soviet organisation of administration with the up-to-date achievements of capitalism" ⁸.

Whilst Lenin had endorsed the use of ideas derived from the Taylor system in Soviet labour organisation on the grounds that as advanced ideas from capitalism they would be necessary to socialist construction he never attempted to use ideas of "scientific management" to solve the unresolved problems left to future socialist planners by Marx. The major step forward in developing the synthesis of Taylor and Marx that would be fundamental to the design of state socialist institutions of labour planning came from the Central Institute of Labour, established with Lenin's backing, and its visionary founder-director, Alexei Gastev. In the early 1920s Gastev began to subject trends within the "advanced" capitalist world to critical scrutiny seeing the future of industry in standardised mass production concentrated in large units. He began within this industrial economy to categorise workers into five groups based on the degree of skill and autonomy their job required, but he believed that those workers performing standardised, repetitive tasks would constitute the majority within the workforce of the

⁸ - On the spread of Taylorism see Rabinbach *The Human Motor*, Chapter 9; on its spread in Britain throughout the first half of the Twentieth Century see Kevin Whitson "Worker Resistance and Taylorism in Britain", *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 42, pp.1-24, 1997; for Lenin's views see V.I. Lenin "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government" in V.I. Lenin *Selected Works*, p.412, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977; V.I. Lenin "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government", pp.413-4

future. He argued that increasingly men and machines would have to work in harmony as part of one gigantic mechanically functioning whole ⁹.

Drawing upon this analysis he argued that labour should become a foundation stone of the new Soviet state, stating that each citizen should have a given labour obligation calculated scientifically and that there should be a "labour championship, by which a finely performed labour operation will be honoured with a decoration before a thousand eyes of professionally experienced workers ?" ¹⁰. Indeed Gastev's vision of each citizen having an "obligation to labour" working together with machines in a gigantic mechanically functioning whole seems to herald the utopian ideology behind comprehensive economic planning adopted in the Soviet Union at the end of the 1920s and in Hungary at the end of the 1940s. Furthermore the notion that increasingly techniques of "scientific management" needed to be applied to increasingly standardised tasks within the economy clearly signposts the role that assumptions inherited from Taylorism would have in measuring both labour power and its price within the planned economy.

In short the institutions of both labour planning, organisation and remuneration that were instituted in Hungary in the late 1940s and early

⁹ - My account of Gastev's ideas draws very heavily on Kendall E. Bailes "Alexei Gastev and the Soviet Controversy over Taylorism", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 24, pp.373-94, 1977; for useful historical background see Lewis H. Siegelbaum *Soviet State and Society between Revolutions, 1918-1929*, p.110, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1992; Stephen E. Hanson *Time and Revolution: Marxism and the Design of Soviet Institutions*, pp.125-6, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1997 - though it should be noted that I think Hanson is far too dismissive of Gastev's final influence on the design of Soviet labour management; additional information on the context of Soviet "scientific management" in the 1920s can be found in Zenovia A. Sochor "Soviet Taylorism Revisited", *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 33, pp.246-64, 1981; Samuel Lieberstein "Technology, Work and Sociology in the USSR: The NOT Movement", *Technology and Culture*, Vol.16, pp.48-66, 1975

¹⁰ - Quoted in Bailes "Alexei Gastev and the Soviet Controversy over Taylorism", p.385

1950s sprang essentially from the advocates of "scientific management" in the Soviet Union of the 1920s to use Taylor, in order to implement Marx.

The Institutionalisation of Central Planning and the Shop Floor

On 20th August 1949 the Peoples' Republic of Hungary sealed its transition from a quasi-democratic state ruled on popular front principles to a state that sought to embark on "the construction of socialism" with a new constitution. This constitution stated clearly that "the basis of the social order of the Hungarian People's Republic is work". In addition it laid down the principle that all citizens of the new state had an obligation "to work according to their ability" in order to participate in "the construction of socialism". In assessing the particular obligation of each citizen "the Hungarian People's Republic attempts to realise the socialist principle "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need"". This obligation to work amounted to the participation of each citizen in the economic life of the country. The constitution clearly stated that "the economic life of the Hungarian People's Republic is determined by the state people's economic plan". Therefore the economic plan was, at least in theory, the institution that regulated the labour obligation of each and every citizen in the new state. As such it was to be much more than a means of regulating the performance of the economy, though, of course, it was also very much this. It aimed to calculate the contribution of every citizen to the generation of the social product ¹¹.

This entailed considerable institutional centralisation, as a hierarchical system of central planning copied from the Soviet model was introduced. Decision making authority within the system would be vested in

¹¹ - *A Dolgozó Nép Alkotmánya - A Magyar Népköztársaság Alkotmánya*, pp.37-9

the government through the Council of Ministers and in the Peoples' Economic Council (*Népgazdasági Tanács - N.T.*) established in 1949 as an overall co-ordinating body. This set the framework within which planning was to take place. The planning process itself was overseen and conducted by the National Planning Office (*Országos Tervhivatal -O.T.*). As the institutions of central planning were consolidated it assumed the role of nerve centre within the economy, translating the directives of both the Council of Ministers and the N.T. into general quantitative plans for the economy as a whole and its individual sectors ¹².

Each sector of the economy was supervised by a branch ministry. Within each branch ministry there were a number of industrial directorates that devised the plans for each enterprise within the appropriate sub-sector ¹³. Following from the pioneering study by János Kornai in 1955 of the operation of the system of planning devised in 1949 in light industry, those seeking to critically examine the system have sought to examine the tension within it between excessive centralisation and the requirements of the enterprise unit. Analyses based on this approach tend to conceptualise the enterprise as the basic unit in socialist production, and as the organisation that sought to respond to the mixture of instruction, incentives and regulations that were issued by higher authorities. Such an assumption would, of course, seem to contradict the view that running almost in parallel to the process of collectivist centralisation there was also a process of individualisation. Whilst for a variety of reasons enterprises responded as units to the instruction of planners in practice, the structure of the central

¹² - On the broad outlines of classical Soviet central planning in its Hungarian context see Swain *Hungary*, pp.55-8; Berend & Ránki *The Hungarian Economy in the Twentieth Century*, pp.208-10; Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság....*, pp. 104-20;

¹³ - On the creation of the branch ministries see Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság....*, pp.110-2; Swain *Hungary*, p.55; Berend *A szociálista gazdaság fejlődése*, pp.86-7; Spulber *The Economics of Communist Eastern Europe*, p.76

planning system was based on the assumption that the individual producer, not the enterprise unit was the basis of the plan ¹⁴.

Comprehensive Soviet style economic planning sought to re-define the role of the enterprise turning it from the legally autonomous entity of capitalist society into a mere administrative level within the planning process. The first manifestation of this shift was the beginning of the process of "profilisation" in 1948. This essentially meant that every enterprise, so that its production range would be transparent to central planner, should have a "profile", a range of products for which it had exclusive or near exclusive responsibility. Enterprises lost production units that produced goods which came under different industrial directorates, or even ministries ¹⁵.

The state aimed to decentralise the implementation of the plan to units below that of the enterprise often combining this with the principle of "profilisation" to produce a series of re-organisations across industry during the early 1950s. This process of re-organisation in order to secure more effective control of production took the form of the creation of Trusts in industry. This was clearly illustrated by the example of the Tatabánya coal mines where such a Trust was formed in early 1952. This acted as a strategic planning unit for the whole of the mines with considerable responsibility for labour management and social policy. It drew up and monitored the performance of the separate production plans for factory and

¹⁴ - The classic study is János Komai *Overcentralisation in Economic Administration: A Critical Analysis Based on Experience in Hungarian Light Industry*, translated by John Knapp, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1994; for an example of an analysis of classical Stalinist central planning which erroneously identifies the enterprise as the basic unit of the central planning system see Berend *A szociálista gazdaság fejlődése*, pp.87-93

¹⁵ - On the process of "profilisation" see Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság.....*,pp.112-4; Berend *Gazdaságpolitika az első öt éves terv megindításakor*, pp. 17-9; Swain *Hungary*, pp.57-8

workshop units under its control ¹⁶. Though the Trust was the general model of sub-enterprise planning in Stalinist Hungary it could never be applied to the whole of industry. In textiles the implementation of the principle of "profilisation" led to planners by-passing the enterprise level in some plants. In the heavy engineering sector enterprises were divided into "self-accounting units" (*önelszámoló egységek*). These units each had their own distinct profile and contained all of the technical administration necessary for the production of the goods in each units "profile". Each unit was responsible not only for fulfilling its plan but for controlling its production costs ¹⁷.

The basic subject of the plan was not the factory unit or workshop but the individual producer. From 1949 onwards attempts were made to individualise economic plans, for each individual worker there would, at least on paper, be an individual Five Year Plan. This process was known as the "breaking down of the plan" (*tervfelbontás*) and was attempted in a large number of enterprises and factory units. The breaking down of the plan to individual producers was far from uniformly achieved. Very little information exists on the proportion of workers working to an individual plan, and such figures would make little sense in examining the practice of labour relations in the socialist economy simply because of the disorganisation of production. Regime intentions are provided by an examination of the situation in individual factories. In the workshop of the United Electrics Factory that made radio components, for example, in summer 1951, of 1341

¹⁶ - The best source for the various organisational changes to the mines in Tatabánya can be found in Sándor Rozsnyói "A város nagyüzemei" in Gábor Gombkötő et al. (ed.) *Tatabánya Története. Helytörténeti Tanulmányok II. Kötet*, p.87, Tatabánya Városi Tanács VB, Tatabánya, 1972

¹⁷ - For a description of how "profilisation" in other cases see Hanák & Hanák *A Magyar Pamutipar*, pp.314-5; József Szekeres & Árpád Tóth *A Klement Gottwald (Ganz) Villámosság Gyár Története*, p.266, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1962

employees in total 582 worked to individual plans even though 767 had individual labour competition records. Given the complexity of individualising factory plans managements often adopted a more indirect method; the total maximum working time of an individual worker over five years would be calculated and any worker who completed work that was supposed to have taken that time as defined by the work norms was judged to have completed their plan. It was on this basis that the state drew attention to the achievements of individual Stakhanovites, who according to regime propaganda had completed their individual First Five Year Plans in under five years ¹⁸.

The individual producer was central to the planning process. In particular the individual was central to the process of labour planning. In an economy that was not driven by fully autonomous firms subject to the discipline, at least on a theoretical level, of the market, alternative criteria had to be devised by which enterprises determined how many workers should be employed. The major criterion was that of the degree of labour power that needed to be utilised to produce a particular product. The level of employment would then become a matter of simple calculation for the planners. They would determine what needed to be produced, the amount of labour power required to produce those goods could then be calculated, and from this calculation the total level of employment in the economy could be determined ¹⁹.

¹⁸ - BFL XXIX/321/2d.; *Tervfelbontás a Rádiócsőgyártásban 1951 augusztus 11-től 18-ig*; for the best known example of this see Károly Déri *Pióker Ignác - Ötéves Terv Huszonhárom Hónap Alatt*, p.3, Népszava, Budapest, 1952

¹⁹ - This system of labour power planning was effectively incorporated into the yearly economic plans in 1950, that is for the 1951 Peoples' Economic Plan. For an explanation of this principle see *Munkaerőtartalék*, August 1951, pp.251-7

These systems profoundly affected social relations on Hungarian shop floors. The raft of measures and systems, ranging from norms to piece-rates, through to labour competition campaigns impacted directly on workers. As many of the components of this system were introduced during the late 1940s they met with little opposition, and in fact the state was able to elicit a degree of consent from industrial workers. By the end of 1950 when the whole of this system was in place it would be seen by them as extremely oppressive. This chapter now shifts focus in order to examine the implementation of central planning on the shop floor through the wage system and labour competition, beginning with an analysis of why industrial workers consented to the introduction of much of this system prior to 1950. The roots of this lie in the politics of living standards in the popular front period during the late 1940s.

Worker Instrumentalism and Payment-by-Results: Wage Policy and the Shop Floor in Popular Front Hungary, 1946-1948

Workers came to accept payment-by-results systems and labour competition for purely instrumental reasons during the late 1940s. Workers were prepared to accept what on paper were anti-labour measures in the spheres of wages and the organisation of production provided that they received direct material benefits for them. Up until 1950 the creation of such institutions coincided with increases in worker incomes and as such they gained a degree of worker consent. Initially when payment-by-results was introduced it was designed in the context of a policy of increasing living standards to ensure the survival of the "popular front" political system during the climate of high inflation in the first half of 1946.

Inflation had accelerated severely cutting into working class incomes from Summer 1945 onwards. In August 1945 workers' real wages stood at a

mere 54% of their 1939 level, by December they stood at only 13.8% of that level. This in turn led to rising working class militancy. Anger was fuelled not only by the price rises and the cuts in real incomes, but also by the failure of the workers' parties and the unions to argue for wage rises which would compensate for galloping inflation ²⁰. The situation had reached crisis point in the Spring of 1946 when it became clear that widespread unrest would be unavoidable without recourse to a policy that would protect living standards. Money effectively became worthless and working class unrest became ever more widespread and violent in nature, with riots on 15th March in Ajka, a pogrom in Miskolc and attacks on Jewish traders across the country. In this climate policy makers placed the protection of workers' living standards at the centre of their proposals. In order to do this the state resorted to a temporary wage system in which the workforce was paid-in-kind to mitigate the effects of inflation ²¹.

Payment-in-kind was only a temporary measure, but in their plans to end hyper-inflation the state ensured that the protection of industrial workers' living standards would be central, if only to prevent unrest. Inflation was halted by an economic stabilisation package in August 1946 that

²⁰ - Baksay A *Munkaerőhelyzet Alakulása*, p.26; SZKL Vasas 1/12, 1945; *levél Mese Jánostól, 1945.VI.17*; SZKL Vasas 3/36, 1945; *Jegyzőkönyv felvétel 1945. évi július hó 14.-én a Ganz Waggongyár Üzemi Bizottság irodájában*, p.1; *Pártmunka*, 15th August 1945

²¹ - On the growing pauperisation of the population see the statistics in PIL 274f.12/120ö.e., pp. 3-6, 19-22, 29-30, 37-8, 61-2; on worker unrest see Mark Pittaway "'The Unlucky Worker Who Waits for the Building of the Country Goes Hungry": Workers, Politics and Reconstruction in Hungary, 1945-1946; an outline", Paper presented at the Conference 1944-1945: *Plans for a New Democratic and Social Europe: Programmes and Reality*, Europa Institute, Budapest, 23rd-25th February 1995, see also Standeisky "Antiszemita megmozdulások Magyarországon a koalíciós időszakában"; Severini *Munkaverseny és a Magyar Munkás Lelkisége*, p.65; the best simple description of the calorie wage system is György Csatár & Ferenc Martin *A Munkabér és a Munkanormák Kérdései*, pp.60-1, Szikra, Budapest, 1955; on the payment of premiums in kind see *A Magyar Szabad Szakszervezetek Országos Szövetsége (Szakszervezeti Tanács) Jelentése a XVII Küldöttközgyűlésnek*, p.37, Szakszervezeti Tanács, Budapest, 1948; for information on the problems of implementing the wage system see the documents in SZKL SzT./18d./1946; PIL 274f.12/120ö.e., p.101

consisted of the introduction of a new currency - the Forint, a drastic package of price controls and government spending cuts. Alongside this package new collective agreements were introduced that attempted to severely restrict and in some cases abolish payment-in-kind and legislated for the introduction of a payment-by-results system across industry. As far as possible the agreements forced every factory to establish a norm for every worker where possible, this norm was to be set in most cases at 75% of the 1938 production level. Thus the norm was statistically established, based not on any techniques drawn from the scientific measurement of time, but from historical company records. The link between the production target and past production was made explicit. The work target was clearly linked to the political and ideological rhetoric of reconstruction politics. As a reward for fulfilling the norm an *akkord* was to be paid, this was essentially based on a wage scale dependent on the fulfilment of the norm. It was steeply progressive and designed to use inequality of earnings based on production as a motivating factor. Skill based differentials were also introduced; the collective agreements forced enterprises to categorise their workers into highly qualified skilled workers, skilled workers, semi-skilled workers, unskilled workers and apprentices. The differentials permissible according to skill classification were not, however, as great as those dependent on work performance ²².

As a result of the success of reconstruction workers began to overfulfill their norms. Consequently the earnings of workers paid on the *akkord* came to exceed those of the same skill level who received simple hourly wages. This could be seen from union statistical data as early as the

²² - On the way in which concern about living standards affected the design of the new wage system see PIL 274f.12/120ö.e., pp.67-8; on the plans for the new wage system see PIL 274f.12/121ö.e., pp. 33-4; PIL 274f.12/121ö.e., p.76; SZKL Sz.T/106d./1946; *Magyarázat a progresszív bérezésre*, p.2; SZKL Sz.T/18d./1946; *Vasipari bérezés*

fourth quarter of 1946; in December an exceptionally qualified skilled worker paid on hourly wages earned on average 1.71 Forints per hour, an ordinary skilled worker paid in the same way took home 1.38, but the ordinary skilled worker paid on *akkord* took home more than both of them with 1.94 Forints per hour. This was not all; the average for all skilled workers paid according to hourly wages was 1.43 Forints per hour in the same period, a sum that was surpassed by semi-skilled workers paid according to *akkord* who took home 1.52 Forints. This unsurprisingly fed shop floor discontent and led to some differentiation within the workforce. One Communist activist in a Budapest leather factory remembered the protest among the skilled worker elite of the factory at payment-by-results wages which resulted but noted that they did not succeed in winning support from most of the workers who welcomed the opportunity to increase their living standards that the *akkord* brought. In post-war Hungary payment-by-results was seen as a route out of the poverty of the era of inflation, and this came to define the implicit settlement on shop floors across the country which allowed the one party state to begin the transformation of the shop floor when it came to power in 1948²³.

The "Year of Change" in the Factory, 1948

From 1948 onwards the state sought more direct control over production. Wage policy shifted as the authorities began to move towards greater dependence on so-called precise norms, calculated by scientific means which by their nature were standardised. This entailed firstly a reform of the system of payment-by-results and secondly a move to reform the organisation of production itself.

²³ - *Szakszervezeti Tanács Gazdasági és Statisztikai Közlönye*, February-March 1947, p.2; PIL 867f.k.-290, p.1

The reform of the system of payment-by-results began in January 1948 with the so-called second supplement to the collective agreements of that year. Norms had been in existence since 1945 but these were linked to statistical estimates of previous production in a given plant. In many cases they had been informally established on a decentralised basis at the point of production. As far as the authorities were concerned this was a problem as they sought to control the ways in which the norms were established. It called for the introduction of new, so-called *szabatos* or precise norms, calculated on the basis of "scientific" principles. Where such norms were not brought into being earnings would be cut by revising the statistical norms downwards, average norm fulfilment in November 1947 would act as the base line that would be used to determine 100% fulfilment ²⁴.

The introduction of "scientifically" established precise norms met with one major obstacle from the shop floor, namely the high degree of control of the job and remuneration enjoyed by certain groups of skilled workers. This control had been largely exercised through close control by the skill sections of certain unions, particularly the Metalworkers, of the labour market for particular groups of skilled workers so that a high degree of union control over job rates could be exercised. This was paralleled by a high degree of control on the shop floor, especially where piece based systems were in force, by the shop stewards over pay claims in order to regulate the rates of skilled workers. The case of how union control of the labour process and remuneration worked in a workshop of a railway repair shop in the late 1930s and early 1940s describes this process well. The shop steward had to approve of the rate for a specific job before it was given to the turners in the workshop. The fulfilment of the rate was not measured individually, or

²⁴ - The best account of the policy background to this attempts is Rákosi "Normarendezések 1948-1950-ben" pp.202-4

directly by management, but by the shop steward in order to preserve a "solidaristic wage policy" operated by the union on behalf of its members. There is considerable evidence that such practices had not merely survived but remained widespread in many sectors, particularly in heavy engineering and machine manufacture, at the end of the 1940s. In the machine manufacture shop of the United Electrics Factory in 1948 there were frequent complaints that the shop stewards controlled the performance of turners, instructing them to make no more than 135% of their norm, when they could have easily made 170% ²⁵.

The state attempted to break these solidarities by generalising labour competition, thus mobilising all workers to bust rates, and as such needed to secure the consent of large sections of the workforce. It also aimed to pave the way for planning production at the shop floor level. From 15th March 1948 until 31st August the first National Labour Competition was held. Each enterprise and shop formed a competition committee in which the social organisations, management and to an extent the workforce were to discuss changes in work organisation necessary to improve productivity. All enterprises and shops were then to be assessed through various criteria based on production, productivity, and good work discipline. Rewards were then distributed to those units in each sector with the highest point scores that were in turn distributed among the workers. Central to this was an attempt to modify work practices, and fundamental to the attack on traditional shop floor solidarities was the launch of the brigade movement, and brigade competition. This aimed to unify all workers engaged in a given production process into a unit that would then compete using centrally defined criteria with other units, or brigades, for which they would be given

²⁵ - For the case of the railway repair shop see András Tóth *Civil társadalom és szakszervezetek*, pp. 72-3, kandidátusi értekezés, Budapest, 1994; on the United Electrics Factory in 1948 see MOL M-Bp.-134f./4ö.e., p.104

rewards. This would be measured against newer and more explicitly decentralised economic plans. As the labour competition was continued throughout 1948 brigades spread throughout industry ²⁶.

Factories like United Electrics with its strong traditions of unionisation were particular targets for the authorities. The labour competition met with early success at level of increasing productivity and production in the factory; by the end of April the average value of production per worker stood at 10.75 Forints compared with 8.04 Forints prior to the competition, whilst scrap as a percentage of total production fell from 13.01% to 9.2% over the same period, as average norm fulfilment rose from 103.8% to 166.2%. The enterprise party secretary when commenting on these initial results implicitly announced that the intention of the competition was to pave the way for greater direct control of production calling for "the speeding up of production and the reduction of costs". The first labour competition was a success in the plant with 13 workers rewarded by the state as excellent workers (*élmunkások*). With the national congress of excellent workers in August 1948 a new labour competition was announced which was to shift more explicitly to a transformation of the organisation of production. In the United Electrics Factory the bureaucratisation of the initial competition was criticised and in order to improve participation in the brigade movement the drawing up of production plans for each individual shop was announced. This change in the gear of labour competition met with a swift response from the shop floor. Sixty-one brigades were formed in the month of September and began to enthusiastically compete with each other in competition, so

²⁶ - The 1948 labour competitions are described in *Társadalmi Szemle*, April-May 1948, pp.299-315; *Társadalmi Szemle*, August-September 1948, pp. 513-36; PIL 274f.20/23ö.e., pp.73-6

much so that the factory newspaper was to express concern that overwork on the part of brigade members was leading to tiredness on the job ²⁷.

Given that labour competition was in large part an attack on established working practices in the factory its apparent popularity requires explanation. This is particularly important as participation in the brigade movement was as great in those parts of the firm, like in the machine manufacture shop, where the tradition of union control of the job was strong, as in sections like the radio components plant where semi-skilled, production line based work characterised by strong managerial control was widespread. Furthermore the willingness of workers to make the brigades a success can be clearly demonstrated from some of the results that they achieved in securing improvements in productivity in certain work processes. Among unskilled workers the loading of a railway carriage full of completed goods was cut from four and a half hours to three in a month, whilst across the radio component production shop productivity gains of around 10% were achieved over the same period ²⁸.

The key seems to have been the close link between the labour competition and the wage system. Under the payment-by-results system then in force characterised by an hourly wage per worker determined on the basis of 100% fulfilment of a production norm increased production led to increased wages. Promises made by management and the state that the

²⁷ - On the strong labour movement traditions of the United Electrics see Ferenc Gáspár *A Tungram Rt. Története II. rész*, pp. 86-107, A Tungram Rt. Gyártörténeti Bizottsága, Budapest, 1987; *Tungram Híradó*, 1st June 1948; *Tungram Híradó*, 10th August 1948; on the announcement of the Second National Labour Competition see *Az első országos Élmunkás Kongresszus határozata*, pp.2-3, Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa, Budapest, 1948; *Tungram Híradó*, 10th September 1948; on the formation of brigades in the factory see SZKL Vasas/307d./1948; *Az Újpesti Vasas Titkárság jelentése a brigádmozgalomról*, p.2; *Tungram Híradó*, 15th November 1948

²⁸ - MOL M-Bp.-134f./3ö.e., p.64-5

workforce would increase effectively undermined the fear that productivity gains achieved through the labour competition would lead to higher unemployment. Workers were able to see the results of participating in the labour competition through their pay packets; in late 1948 one factory party official observed that "the opinion of most of them is that labour competition should have started a long time ago. We have to note that this is not coming from political conviction, but that increased earnings are the biggest attraction". Furthermore the labour competition meetings came to be used as a forum in which workers suggested improvements in work methods and factory organisation in order to increase both their production and earnings 29.

This instrumental support for the labour competition was not merely restricted to United Electrics, or to factories in heavy industry. In the Magyar Pamutipar cotton plant, for example, throughout the summer of 1948 the semi-skilled and largely female machine operators were mobilised behind the labour competition through the tangible increases in pay that the competition brought. This relationship was very much a two edged sword for the regime. Firstly, such instrumental attitudes allowed the regime to mobilise support around the notion of a re-shaping of labour organisation and of the institutions of production, which smoothed the introduction of comprehensive central planning at factory level. Secondly it made this support conditional upon the continued growth in workers' earnings. The degree to which support for the competition was dependent on earnings growth, however, was demonstrated to some extent by the way in which the competition led to abuses in terms of work practices, and in the use of machinery and raw materials in the constant struggle to drive up production. The productivist emphasis of the competition combined with the pressure to

²⁹ - On the promises to expand employment in the factory see *Tungsram Híradó*, 10th September 1948; MOL M-Bp.-134f./3ö.e., p.24; MOL M-Bp.-134f./3ö.e., p.59

overfulfill norms led to an "overly intense work-tempo which went together with disadvantages in terms of quality" ³⁰.

Individualisation at the Point of Production: Stakhanovism, Speed-up and the Piece Rate

From the middle of 1949 the state introduced the mechanisms of centralised economic planning together with their implicit, though paradoxical individualisation of production. The focus of labour competition began to change to fit this emerging economic model. The state increasingly began to criticise the enterprises for giving insufficient weight to what it saw as "the most important basic condition of the labour competition movement, the individual labour competition". Such an individual labour competition movement was regarded as a fundamental part of the individualisation of production obligations, given that in the forms of labour competition that had existed hitherto "whilst the factories had globally joined one stage in the labour competition, the degree to which the implementation of particular tasks helped the totality of an enterprise fulfill its work" went unrecognised. Not only was individual labour competition designed to provide planners with information on how plans could be individualised, it also formed part of an intensification of the state's drive against traditional work practices. The state aimed to promote particular individuals within production in order to measure particular work methods that they could then record and use to re-organise production in other factories and base newer, more scientific norms upon such methods ³¹.

³⁰ - *Pamutipari Értesítő*, 1st June 1948; MOL M-Bp.-134f./3ö.e., p.65; MOL M-Bp.-134f./3ö.e., pp.79-80

³¹ - SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/46d./1949; *A Magyar Munkaverseny Mozgalom Fejlődése*, p.4; on the plans and processes by which individual competition was to be and was used to make new norms see SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/3d./1949; *Kiváló teljesítmények vizsgálatáról készült összefoglalás*

During the Autumn of 1949 the stress of regime policy was to promote individual competition and to identify those individuals who would be capable of achieving real changes in their own work methods to improve productivity. The whole phenomenon assumed the role of a campaign leading up to the 70th birthday of Stalin on 21st December 1949. Between the beginning of September and the middle of November participation in individual labour competition increased enormously as a result of the campaign with the numbers of declared individual competitors increasing fivefold in some factories. Again it was those factories where traditional work practices predominated that were the focus of the introduction of individual competition like the United Electrics. In this firm the number of individual competitors rose from 6 at the end of August to 450 by the end of October 32.

With this campaign the state was seeking not merely an increase in those engaged in individual labour competition but was looking for a qualitative shift in the very nature of the individual competition. The first national competition had rewarded individuals with exceptional work performance, the so-called *élmunkások*. The singling out of these individuals caused disquiet on the shop floor, though this was to some extent masked by general satisfaction with the economic results of the competition itself. The *élmunkások* were not especially popular on the shop floor; when workers in three Budapest factories were asked about them 38% defined *élmunkások* as those who produced the most, as opposed to 16% who described them as the best workers. In many senses, however, the *élmunkások* remained bound by the conventions of the shop floor. In this sense the competition had brought the wrong results for the regime, and

³² - For the national picture with individual competition see MOL M-Bp.-95f.2/296ö.e., p.157; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/147ö.e., p.42

created an elite among the workforce that protected, and did not transform the pre-existing shop floor culture. As individual competition in 1949 spread the *élmunkások* in the United Electrics sought to regulate the speed at which workers made their rates in almost the same way that shop stewards had done a year earlier. They often threatened the largely younger workers who came close to breaking the rates with physical violence and spread rumours of imminent tightening of the norms across the shop floor to intimidate potential competitors ³³.

Faced with endemic worker control over the job the authorities across the country sought to identify candidates to become new a kind of individual competitor. They would seek to break rates spectacularly. It was this process that gave birth to the Stakhanovite movement in Hungary. In the United Electrics the machine manufacture shop was the focus of this campaign. The future Stakhanovites were carefully picked from among the workforce of the plant by management and the authorities who carefully exploited the social, political and personal tensions in the shops to persuade and coerce workers into the movement. The campaign in the shop began not with a call to competition but the foundation of a new kind of brigade by one skilled worker Józef Kiszlinger. Together with five work mates he promised that by the end of the year he would save the factory 50,000 Forints through the use of new work methods and through reducing the production of scrap. By December Kiszlinger had an average fulfilment of his norm of 1140% due to a re-organisation of production designed to help him achieve an exceptional result ³⁴.

³³ - Tibor Garai *A Kultúrtényező Jelentősége a Versenyszellem Kialakításban*, p.13, Munkatudományi és Racionalizálási Intézet, Budapest, 1948; MOL M-Bp.-136f./5/a ö.e., p.55

³⁴ - On the strong organisation of individual competition from above in the United Electrics, see MOL M-Bp.-95f.2/295ö.e., p.224; on its beginnings see *Tungsram Híradó*, 8th September 1949; *Tungsram Híradó*, 5th December 1949

Increasingly, however, the authorities seemed to have selected newer, younger skilled workers without the kind of background in the shop that Kiszlinger enjoyed. The first category was that of young workers. From this group the authorities selected two friends Ferenc Szlovák and János Lutz. Lutz had begun work as an apprentice eleven years previously in Sálgotarján and had only recently come into the machine shop in the factory. Less bound by the custom and practice of the machine shop he was ideal material for a drive to smash the rates among the iron turners, an occupational group noted for stubborn resistance to managerial control. Indeed by December he was making an incredible 2216% of his norm, albeit with considerable management support, whilst Szlovák made 900% working alongside him. The third key figure, János Stankovits, milling machine operator and turner was slightly older and had worked in the plant until 1945. At the "liberation" he was seized by the Red Army and deported to the Soviet Union as a prisoner of war. Ultimately he found himself practising his skill in a Moscow engine factory where he became a Stakhanovite prior to his return home in 1948. In 1949 at the beginning of the individual competition campaign he was pressured into making a pledge by an agitator, and angrily replied "Stalin can go to hell ! I worked for him for 3 years for nothing and when I come home why should I work for him again ?". As a result of his outburst he was reported and questioned both by the party and secret police representatives in the factory, who learned of his Stakhanovite past in Moscow and as a result selected him, under some duress, as a potential Hungarian Stakhanovite. By early December he was making 1222% of his norm ³⁵.

³⁵ - *Tungsram Híradó*, 5th December 1949; for his biography see the transcript of the interview he came to Ervin Czišzmádia in 1988 (Transcript - Interview with János Stankovics, conducted by Ervin Czišzmádia, Budapest, 1988); Transcript- Interview with János Stankovics, pp.5-6; *Tungsram Híradó*, 5th December 1949

As the work campaign for Stalin's 70th Birthday got under way these individuals met with the distrust of their work mates. Szlovák and Lutz were unpopular for joining the competition, another future Stakhanovite remembered that "everyone was afraid" for their earnings as a result of competition. Stankovits was faced with taunts from his work mates of "go back to the Soviet Union if you like it so much there". In order to undermine the unity of the shop against the new competitors, the management sought to select a worker who was less on the periphery of the shop than the others. They selected an older, former Social Democrat, Ignác Pióker, who was pressured into competition through the withdrawal of his wage supplements as an exceptionally skilled, experienced grinder. By early December he was making 1220% of his normal norm ³⁶.

Opposition to the spread of individual competition was not only overcome through the skilful selection of Stakhanovites, however. During the shift held to commemorate Stalin's birthday on 21st December 1949 in the United Electrics machine shop production was explicitly re-organised to ensure that the new Stakhanovites achieved exceptional levels of production. The factory newspaper celebrated "the good organisation of production" and the fact that "the preparation of tools and raw materials was decisive", whilst "the tool room worked like never before". Rising wages as a result of increased production during the campaign and the growing sense of collective as opposed to individual achievement as production increased created considerable enthusiasm for the competition across the country and not just in the plant. In Újpest there were reports of individuals arriving at work an hour before the beginning of their shift. In one Győr factory the

³⁶ - Transcript - Interview with Ignác Pióker, p.3, conducted by Ervin Czismádia, Budapest, 1988; for the attacks on Stankovits see MOL M-Bp.-95f.2/295ö.e., p.224; Transcript - Interview with Ignác Pióker, p.2; *Tungstram Híradó*, 5th December 1949

party secretary described the feeling during the Stalin shift as being like that at a football match ³⁷.

Workers had co-operated with the campaign for purely instrumental reasons, as they had with earlier forms of labour competition. Furthermore the state had its new worker elite, though it could not use them as a stick to create norms which would lead to improvements in productivity. Across the capital and the country as a whole there were spectacular individual performances. Many of these individual performances were largely manufactured by factory managements seeking to protect themselves from state intervention by giving clear preferential treatment to those workers they had selected to be Stakhanovites. The case of Pióker who was allocated several unskilled workers for the duration of the Stalin shift to ensure that he did not have to leave his machine for any reason during the eight hours was typical of many of the new Stakhanovites. Furthermore the general increases in productivity imposed major strains on the economy as raw material supply bottlenecks emerged purely as a result of the increased production during the campaign and the failure of the authorities to prepare for the strains that resulted from it ³⁸.

The state's aim of individualising production relations had been significantly advanced by the spread of individual labour competition. Production was re-organised whilst workers had been encouraged to regard their contribution to production as an individual, as opposed to a collective act. On to the individualisation of the labour competition was superimposed

³⁷ - *Tungsram Híradó*, 5th January 1950; MOL Bp.-95f.4/147ö.e., pp.134-6; MOL M-Bp.-95f.2/296ö.e., p.81; MOL M-KS-276f.65/76ö.e., pp.30-1

³⁸ - MOL M-KS-276f.65/76ö.e., pp.37-41; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/147ö.e., pp.98-100; Transcript - Interview with Ignác Pióker, pp.3-4; MOL M-Bp.-95f.2/296ö.e., pp.106-10

a wage system that explicitly tied remuneration to the value of a worker's production as set down in the plan.

This system was the *darrabér*, or piece-rate that was introduced across Hungarian industry in 1950. Whilst this form was never fully comprehensive it did become the hegemonic wage form in industry during the early 1950s. The central component of the system was that the work done, not the individual worker, was the subject of remuneration. Through this the principle was established that payment should reflect the amount and value of what was produced by a worker as laid out in the plan³⁹. This opened up the possibility of a worker working on several different hourly wage rates on the same shift. In many ways it came to resemble a kind of fee for work done, which made it very different from many of the piece-rates existing in capitalist factories. There were several important differences, however, between the piece-rate and a simple contract fee. The first was that the rate was received within the context of an employment relation, theoretically the recipient was not self-employed but was legally a waged worker-citizen. The second was the dual nature of the incentive. Work was divided into different categories depending on their difficulty that determined the rate. This rate would then be paid on the basis of the worker's fulfillment of their production norm. The interaction of the piece-rate and the norm created a pressure for the worker not only to complete a given number of pieces to make an adequate monthly wage but to constantly strive to complete every piece in the shortest possible time. The intention behind the system was to completely subordinate the worker to the dictates of "clock

³⁹ - For an explanation of the piece rate principle see Sándor Dekán *Darrabérrendszerrel a szocialista bérezés megvalósítása felé*, p.7, Népszava, Budapest, 1950; for important documents on the design of the piece rate see SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/3d./1949; *Tervezet a Darrabérendszerre Való Áttérés Előkészítésére*

time" ⁴⁰, in order to force the workers to improve their productivity according to the terms set out in the plan. As such it aimed to force workers to maximise the amount of their working time they spent performing productive labour. The third difference was that the worker did receive an hourly wage when they were not working, the rate was often set at a miserably low level by the foreman and linked to the category of work a worker could expect to get ⁴¹.

By the Spring of 1950 the state had through labour competition and the wage system largely succeeded in individualising work relations. A worker's performance was measured strictly on the basis of their individual contribution to the economy, and they received their reward as a result of the value of that contribution. Work on the shop floor was therefore formally tied to the plan.

From Individualisation to the Despotism of the Plan: Norm Revision and its Consequences, 1950

Labour competition as a form of moral and political incentive that could mobilise workers reached its high watermark with the Stalin shift on 21st December 1949, even before the actual beginning of the First Five Year Plan. During the first months of 1950 as production levels and consequently wages began to fall greater worker discontent emerged which manifested itself in sporadic labour unrest. The case of crane drivers in the MÁVAG Machine Factory illustrates this well. During the 1949 labour competition in the railway engine shop production increased leading to a

⁴⁰ - For this term see E.P. Thompson "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism" reprinted in his *Customs in Common*, pp. 352-403, Penguin Books, London, 1993

⁴¹ - On the process of *besorolás* see SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/3d./1949; *Tervezet a Darrabérendszere Való Áttéres Előkészítésére*, pp.6-7; Dekán *Darrabérendszerral a szocialista*, pp.8-9

rise in the wages of the crane drivers and unskilled workers of 160 to 180 Forints per month. The tempo of work declined as raw material shortages began to lead to work stoppages. As production fell so did workers' wages, which were linked to the production of completed railway engines, causing considerable discontent. This led to a limited strike with 18 crane mechanics walking off the job on the 21st March 1950 supported by both the drivers and the unskilled workers ⁴².

Such sporadic labour unrest was an indication of the withdrawal of consent on the part of workers for the institutions of the Stalinist shop floor that was to come. The turning point in this regard was the norm revision of August 1950 that shattered the basis of the implicit settlement through which workers had consented to the introduction of new institutions at shop floor level. After this date the state had to rely increasingly on repression. In mid-1950 the state became increasingly concerned about rising wages and sought to clamp down by revising the norms, in order to "close the damaging difference between the wage system and the production fulfilments achieved in the labour competition" ⁴³.

The tightening succeeded in increasing productivity by cutting the wage funds; the amount of money given to enterprises by the central apparatus to cover wage related expenses. In heavy industry they fell by 13.5% and in light industry by 11.4% as the new system was introduced in August 1950. Yet the increase in productivity was bought at the cost of huge reductions in workers' nominal wages at a time of accelerating inflation, that smashed any of the trust that had existed between workers and "their" new

⁴² - For records of this strike see MOL M-Bp.-95f.2/168/b ö.e., p.25

⁴³ - For this see *Munkaerőirtalék*, August 1951, pp.251-7; MOL M-KS-276f.116cs/ 18ö.e., p.34

state. Nominal wages fell by 14.3% in heavy industry, 12.5% in light industry and 19.4% in overground construction.

The introduction of the new norms was met by one of the largest waves of worker unrest in the post-war period. As early as July before the introduction of the new norms worker anger took the form of workers ignoring and cold shouldering union and party officials on the shop floor, in one Szeged factory a well-organised go-slow was used. In Kecskemet one worker was detained by the secret police for publicly comparing the regime to that of the Nazis. A norm setter in the same city was physically assaulted by workers after he argued that their 200% fulfilment was the result of the laxness of their production norm. In one textile factory the factory committee president stated that a new norm revision would follow if the new norms were systematically over fulfilled, and in the Hoffher tractor factory the electricians broke into the factory on Sunday and wrecked one of the most expensive machines as a protest. Mass discontent was quite generally reported; indeed, by the middle of August opposition to the regime in the Dorog coal mines was so great that the secret police had to be called in to deal with the situation. The discontent across industry was only defused through the Korea week labour competition campaign in early August, which management organised to allow workers to fulfill the new norms ⁴⁴. Despite this, however, the damage had been done and any shaky legitimacy that institutions such as the labour competition possessed had been destroyed.

This was to be made clear to the regime through the pattern of much of the worker protest that emerged. Labour competition was blamed directly by many workers for the norm revision and in many cases the "heroes of

⁴⁴ - MOL M-KS-276f.116/19ö.e., pp.129-30; MOL M-KS-276f.116/19ö.e., pp.220-3; MOL M-KS-276f.116/18ö.e., pp.180-3; MOL M-KS-276f.116/18ö.e., pp.197-9; MOL M-KS-276f.116/19ö.e., p.1; MOL M-KS-276f.116/19ö.e., p.5; MOL M-KS-276f.116/19ö.e., p.58; MOL M-KS-276f.116/19ö.e., pp.43-5

labour" were personally attacked for class treachery. In late July immediately after the announcement of the changes to the wage system it was reported that in many Budapest factories angry workers held the Stakhanovites responsible for what had happened, in Kiskunfélegyháza construction workers destroyed a wall built by Stakhanovites after they called workers to a labour competition to overfulfill the new norms. In many cases the pressure that many Stakhanovites experienced forced them to fall back with their work mates and oppose the new norms publicly; one Stakhanovite in the construction industry openly attacked the new norms as being too tight. In the textile industry, at the Magyar Pamutipar cotton factory one Stakhanovite was forced, under pressure from work mates, to formally request the norm office to base norms on average and not Stakhanovite fulfilment ⁴⁵.

The state, however, was prepared for labour unrest and showed a willingness to use repressive measures against those who protested. In the United Electrics Factory management working in close co-operation with the secret police were able to identify and squash discontent before it grew. Only two workers were sacked for "oppositional behaviour" in connection with the tightening whilst four were arrested by the secret police for "spreading rumours" likely to lead to discontent. This policy was replicated right across the country; in one Felsögálla factory a worker who publicly stated that only the norms of those workers with fulfilment rates of over 500% should be cut was sacked. Management were sometimes able to avoid the intervention of the secret police; in the machine shop of the Tatabánya mines in July a work stoppage was halted after twenty five minutes simply as a result of management threatening to report those participating to the authorities. Even individual acts of protests and attempts

⁴⁵ - MOL M-KS-276f.116/18ö.e., pp.180-3; MOL M-KS-276f.116/19ö.e., p.5; MOL M-KS-276f.116/ 40ö.e., pp.77-82

to informally bargain with management over the new norms were brutally dealt with; attempts by brigades on one western Hungarian construction site to institute a go-slow in order to secure better norms met with the intervention of the authorities ⁴⁶.

In the medium term the major effect of the 1950 norm revision was to create norms that were very difficult for workers to make, a situation that was clearly borne out by the statistics from late 1950 on the proportions of workers employed in industrial districts not making their norms. In Újpest in November there were thirteen factories where more than 20% of the workforce failed to make 100% of their norms. In the district's textile factories a majority of the workforce failed to make them; in one factory the proportion of those failing to reach their norm stood at 73.6%. In the Danube Shoe Factory where 32% failed to reach their norms another 20% only just made them. The whole process of norm revision did not lead to undifferentiated cuts in wages, nor in performance. Indeed it seems that the process led rather to the sharpening of inequalities between individual workers and between brigades, almost independent of their skill or their formal position within the division of labour. On one construction site in the capital soon after the introduction of the new norms, the average fulfilment rates of the bricklayers varied at between 70 and 169%, the range for carpenters was between 53 and 139%, whilst for unskilled workers it stood at between 32 and 130%. This was also true of other sectors, in the Danube Shoe Factory, where the majority of the workforce were either unable or only just able to make their norms there were just over 10% of the workforce who

⁴⁶ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/120ö.e., p.214; SZKL Komárom SZMT/42d./1950; *Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa Esztergom-Komárom Megye Bizottság, Tatabánya, 1950. augusztus 24.*, p.1; SZKL Komárom SZMT/43d./1950; *Kiértékelés*, p.1; SZKL Komárom SZMT/43d./1950; *Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa Esztergom-Komárom Megyei Bizottság, Tatabánya, Jelentés, 1950 augusztus 29.*, p.1

were able to achieve rates of over 150%, and a small number who able to achieve rates as high as 180%.

This inequality existed partially as a consequence of keeping Stakhanovism alive. With the fall off in support for the labour competition the high performances of a small number of workers were maintained by granting them preferential access to machines, tools and materials. One former worker in a textile factory close to the capital remembered that "the wages were not great and permanently fluctuated a large proportion of the weaving machine operators earned between 500 and 800 Forints, it was very difficult to get a wage of over 1000 Forints a month, only part members and Stakhanovites could get that. Of course they got the best machines and the 100 or 200 Forint wage supplement"⁴⁷. Increasingly other categories of worker were to resort to different forms of bargaining to ensure preferential treatment, but that is a different, although related story.

Conclusion

Central planning not merely entailed centralisation in the determination of production targets for the collective good, to an unprecedented degree it also entailed an individualisation of responsibility for their fulfilment. The institution of labour competition originally aimed to mobilise workers around the goals set down in the plan. The competition was the way in which moral and political incentives to produce for the socialist state were to be offered to the shop floor. Financial incentives were to be used in combination with the competition. Indeed, the introduction of a new wage system, of which the piece-rate was a central component, was

⁴⁷ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/120ö.e., p.252; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/120ö.e., p.238; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/120ö.e., p.58; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 5898/54, p.2

designed to make workers directly financially accountable for their production within the plan.

These two sets of incentives never functioned as they were intended to. Workers developed an instrumental attitude towards labour competition, in other words they only came to support it in so far as it led to increases in their personal earnings. At the end of the 1940s, however, as earnings rose the state was able to use it to create the structures of central planning and of direct intervention in production. This came at the cost of lower productivity growth than the state intended. The highly conditional support for the labour competition that had existed previously was withdrawn, and the state came increasingly to rely on financial incentives combined with the use of repression.

The state had succeeded in smashing many older shop floor practices, the huge inequalities between workers which were exacerbated by the 1950 norm revision demonstrated that the state had made some headway not merely in individualising the institutions of the shop floor but creating a climate of individualism on shop floors. This "new individualism" was to be later tempered not by the reappearance of older solidarities such as those which had underpinned pre-socialist "solidaristic" wage policies on the shop floor, but much more particular, newer solidarities deployed as part of the game in gaining preferential access to work. This "new individualism" on the shop floor was largely a negative achievement for the regime; it certainly undermined the ability of workers to resort to older strategies, but it did not help the state achieve greater control over the labour process. In the Danube Shoe Factory in late 1950, a plant which was organised on the basis of a tight vertical integration between different production processes, large differences in norm fulfilment between individuals were leading the development of bottlenecks in production. Weaker workers were not

producing as much as their colleagues and this caused frequent hold ups on the production lines ⁴⁸.

By the end of 1950 serious bottlenecks in production were developing which had different causes. In this chapter only one half of the story of the effect of central planning on the Hungarian shop floor has been told, the half that deals with the effect of the imposition of the institutions through which individual producers were to be bound to the plan on the shop floor. The second half of this story is that of the effect of Stalinist "voluntarism" as experienced through central planning on the factory floor.

⁴⁸ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/120ö.e., pp.238-40

Chapter Two

The Plan in Production: Shortage, Work and the Stalinist Shop Floor

Introduction

The mechanisms and institutions of Soviet style central planning in Hungary were to be used for an unprecedented programme of industrialisation. When the First Five Year Plan was passed into law it envisaged the near doubling of industrial production. This formed a key plank of the programme of "the transformation of Hungary from an agrarian dominated country into an industrial country, in other words a country, in whose economy industry would have the decisive weight and which would have a modern, developed agricultural sector". The plan represented the prioritising of the development of heavy industry over consumption. Its implications were quickly understood by many workers; during the Autumn of 1949 the plan loan campaign was launched during which workers were asked to "loan" a sum of money approximately equivalent to one month's wages to the state in order to help finance the plan. For many urban workers this campaign undermined the argument made by the regime that it was only through the development of heavy industry that living standards would rise. In Újpest whilst many workers were very interested in planned increases in housing construction they began to question "why so many construction sites are needed, it would be better to give higher wages" whilst one female worker asked an activist why pay was low and why the state was giving money to heavy industry ¹.

¹ - "1949. évi XXV. törvény a Magyar Népköztársaság első öt éves népgazdasági tervéről, az 1950. január 1-től az 1954. december 31-ig terjedő időszakra" in Sándor Balogh (ed.) *Nehéz esztendőkről krónikája 1949-1953*, p.164, Gondolat Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986; MOL M-Bp.-95f.3/55ö.e., p.46; MOL M-Bp.-95f.3/55ö.e., p.47

The rapid expansion of heavy industry envisaged in the plan was to lead to chronic shortages of goods, labour and raw materials across the economy. As workers were paid according to their production this climate of shortage rationed work and therefore opportunities to earn within the workforce replacing the unemployment of the 1940s, with the "unemployment behind the factory gate" of the 1950s. In the Summer of 1953, for example, in one factory the assembly shop was unable to start work on the monthly plan for July until the 20th, whilst by the 22nd it had only 45% of the materials to reach its target. In another plant the failure to guarantee the workers a continuous supply of raw materials led the workers monthly pay to decline from 1,100-1,200 Forints to 500-550 Forints. Persistent raw material shortages led to continual work stoppages in textiles also; in the one spinning factory these accounted for 9.31% of total working hours in June, 9.98% in July, and 12.87% in August².

The impact of the plan targets and the shortage that they frequently generated re-shaped the labour process and radically altered the environment within which production was carried out. The impact of the plan led to differences in the pace of work and the shop floor environment between different sectors depending on their role in the industrialisation drive. This was to create new patterns of differentiation between workers as older differences between work organisation and shop floor culture in the different sectors interacted with the new factors thrown up by the industrialisation drive.

This chapter examines how the industrialisation drive affected the Hungarian shop floor and how the experience of Stalinist central planning

² - SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/18d./1953; *Jelentés a munkaverseny, munkafegyelem és a munkavédelem alakulásáról a kormányprogram elhangzása óta*, p.2; MOL M-KS-276f.53cs/145 ö.e.; *Tájékoztató az üzemi dolgozók és az üzemi vezetők által felvetett szociális és kulturális problémákról*, p.28; SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/28 d./1953; *Feljegyzés ...*

re-shaped work environments across the country. Firstly a brief history of the politics of the industrialisation drive is presented, an account of the roots of Stalinist "voluntarism". Once the political context is established the chapter shifts focus examining the way in which the drive affected three different sectors in greater depth through a concentration on concrete case studies. These sectors represent one that was required to produce raw materials for industry, coal mining, one that was engaged in high priority production for the state, machine production, and one that was engaged in the production of lower priority goods for the consumer market, textiles. A careful comparison between the experiences of these sectors reveals how the priorities of the plan played a decisive role in re-shaping the labour processes in Hungarian industry, and how they led directly to differences in working conditions and in work culture itself.

The Political Origins of Stalinist Voluntarism: Drawing Up the Plan, 1948-1951

The First Five Year Plan was very much the product of a combination of two factors. The first was the programme to transform Hungary into a fully fledged socialist society. Drawing inspiration from the Soviet model the party leadership believed that the social problems of the "popular front" period could only be solved through the construction of an industrial country on explicitly socialist lines. The second was the intensification of the Cold War in the late 1940s and the pressures that Soviet demands for the transformation of the Hungarian economy to meet military needs brought to bear on policy.

Prior to the First Five Year Plan, economic planning as expressed in the Three Year Plan that had begun in 1947 aimed to meet the demands of economic reconstruction following World War Two. It aimed to function

within the constraints of the "popular front" settlement, and although it was successful in boosting industrial production, could not alone serve as the basis for a "socialist revolution" in the economic sphere. The Three Year Plan would not correct what Hungary's new rulers saw as its underdevelopment relative to the "advanced" economies of Western Europe. For them too high a proportion of the Hungarian population worked in agriculture, heavy industrial production represented too low a proportion of total industrial production, whilst agriculture remained underdeveloped as it was considerably less mechanised than in the "advanced" economies. The party leadership decided in May 1948 that a new Five Year Plan would be needed to correct the underdevelopment of the Hungarian economy. If it were to fulfill its aim it would have to strive for rapid growth so that industrial expansion would occur at a rate that surpassed those of its capitalist competitors ³.

The earliest drafts of the plan substantially concentrated on the rapid development of heavy industry, so much so that party economic experts warned that the plan would hamper agricultural development and restrict growth in living standards. In spite of these warnings as 1948 wore on the aims and objectives of the plan were to more closely reflect those of the original Soviet economic plans of the late 1920s and early 1930s. More radical industrialisation was contemplated, investment was to be sharply increased, whilst funds were to be further directed away from agriculture and domestic consumption ⁴.

³ - For the Three Year Plan see Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, pp.83-139; Ránki *Magyarország gazdasága az első három éves terv....*; the most useful source on regime perceptions of Hungary's underdevelopment is Berend *Gazdaságpolitika az első öt éves terv*, pp. 11-4; for the beginnings of the First Five Year Plan see Birta "A Szocialista Iparosítási Politika Néhány Kérdése", p.117

⁴ - The best discussion of the drafting of the First Five Year Plan is Birta "A Szocialista Iparosítási Politika Néhány Kérdése", pp.117-9; Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság.....*, p.151

The radicalisation of economic planning in Hungary was driven as much by Soviet responses to a deteriorating international situation as it was by the ideological aims of the Hungarian leadership. The creation of single-party socialist regimes across Red Army occupied East-Central Europe had raised the temperature of relations between the superpowers. During 1948 serious superpower tension existed over the future of Germany with growing western moves to create a separate western state in the French, British and American zones, and parallel moves in the Soviet zone to forcibly unify the Social Democratic and Communist parties. Such tensions combined with the attempts of western powers to introduce a currency reform in their zones was to provoke Stalin into blockading Berlin. Furthermore greater military union among the western states culminating in the signature of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949 was to lead to a further increase in tension. This rising tension created a conviction on the part of the Soviet leadership that within a number of years a full scale military confrontation between the superpowers in Europe would be unavoidable. This analysis was used by the Hungarian leadership as a basis for policy making, indeed behind closed doors it was stated that "an outbreak of war can be expected, if not immediately, then in several years time, and from this one must draw the conclusion that our own preparation must reach a point at which we can depend on a well equipped and trained military force with adequate leadership when that happens" ⁵.

The demands of Soviet defence policies were to radically intensify the over concentration on heavy industry that had characterised even early

⁵ - On the worsening international climate at the end of the 1940s see S.J. Ball *The Cold War: An International History, 1947-1991*, pp. 18-35, Arnold, London and New York, 1998; on Soviet and Hungarian responses to that situation see Berend *Gazdaság politika az első öt éves terv....*, pp.30-3; the quote from Hungarian internal party discussion is taken from Birta "A Szocialista Iparosítási Politika Néhány Kérdése", p.125

drafts of the First Five Year Plan. In Spring 1949 the decision was taken to combine the plans for military development with that of industrialisation. As the programme for military development was scheduled to be completed in Autumn 1951 this required the rapid development of an armaments industry to serve it and a heavy industrial sector that would in turn serve that. The radicalisation of planning to meet military needs together with the enormous level of defence expenditure that the military development plan demanded necessitated the absolute abandonment of any attempt to increase living standards and, indeed, a private recognition among the top levels of the party leadership that they would decline. The law in which the plan was made public in April 1949 hid these problems and many of the other basic difficulties, envisaged by decision makers that would be faced as industry attempted to implement the plan ⁶.

István Birta has convincingly demonstrated the effect of the combination of military development and industrialisation was to overload the economy. The only way that the state could maintain the desired levels of military expenditure and force the pace of socialist industrialisation was to radically reduce domestic consumption. On top of this various new problems emerged. The first of these was that the state had overestimated the capacity of the economy to produce and meet the plan targets they set. In terms of both technology and in the organisation of production industry was incapable of boosting its production to the extent demanded without a substantial increase in capacity. This new capacity would take time to come on stream. The second was that the military demands on the economy progressively increased as the international situation deteriorated, particularly as relations with Yugoslavia worsened during 1949. The result of

⁶ - This paragraph is substantially based on the account presented in Birta "A Szocialista Iparosítási Politika Néhány Kérdése", pp. 125-8; see also Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság.....*, pp.153-4

these factors was a "ratchet effect" on plan targets for enterprises that served the military. These were progressively increased and supplementary investment funds were released to allow them to make these increased plan targets. This process interacted with a further factor to undermine the industrialisation programme. The expansion of heavy industry required the import of large amounts of machinery and raw materials, whilst the industry that produced was unable to cover these with goods for export. With the intensification of the Cold War trade links between Hungary and the capitalist world were disrupted. To cover for this the state pursued a policy of "import substitution", attempting to solve its raw material supply problems by more intensively exploiting those resources that existed within Hungary. The possibilities for this were more limited than policy makers admitted in their plans with the result that industry began to experience considerable shortages of energy and basic raw materials during 1950⁷.

Throughout 1950 the international climate further worsened with the outbreak of the Korean War. This resulted in demands for the speedier development of Hungary's military. This placed further pressures on the plan that led to the comprehensive revision of plan targets between November 1950 and February 1951. According to the original plan passed in 1949 some 51 thousand million Forints were to be invested in the economy between 1950 and 1954, according to the 1951 modified version this sum was to be increased to between 80 and 85 thousand million Forints. Of this 40 thousand million Forints was to go to large scale industry, of which an incredible 37-38 thousand million was to be invested in heavy industry. Such an acceleration of investment in heavy industry given the basic problems and contradictions of economic policy prior to November 1950

7 - This paragraph once again heavily depends upon the analysis of István Birta, see his "A Szocialista Iparosítási Politika Néhány Kérdése", pp.128-34

intensified many of the basic problems which industry was experiencing by the end of 1950⁸.

Economic relations between the different sectors of industry and mining were re-drawn by such economic policies. Those industries that produced goods that were used in raw materials production failed to make their plans. The revised plan of February 1951 laid down targets of 16 million tonnes of coal for 1951 and 27.5 million tonnes for 1951, as opposed to 14 million tonnes for 1951 in the original 1949 version of the plan and 18.5 million for 1954. In reality only 15.27 million tonnes were produced in 1951, a figure that rose to 21.54 million in 1954. Over the course of the First Five Plan targets were not merely missed in coal mining, but also in the production of crude oil, iron, steel, rolled steel and electricity. Such failures manifested themselves in terms of frequent shortages in priority industrial sectors such as machine manufacture. Lower priority sectors in light industry were, if anything even more adversely affected by shortage; in the leather industry work stoppages due to raw material shortage accounted for 13.9% of total working days in 1953. These light industrial establishments had been plagued by a chronic lack of investment⁹.

The experience of work in different sectors of industry was not merely re-shaped as a result of the creation of central planning as a set of institutions, it was decisively transformed by the economic policies that were

⁸ - On the origins of the 1951 plan increases see Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság....*, p.154; Birta "A Szocialista Iparosítási Politika Néhány Kérdése", pp.136-44; on the precise increases see *A Szocializmus Építésének Útján: A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja II. Kongresszusának Anyagából*, 2nd edition, pp.211-2, Szikra, Budapest, 1956

⁹ - The evidence on plan fulfilment failure for the raw material producing sectors is taken from Birta "A Szocialista Iparosítási Politika Néhány Kérdése", pp.140-1; MOL M-KS-276f.53cs/145ö.e.; *Tájékoztató az üzemi dolgozók és az üzemi vezetők által felvetett szociális és kulturális problémákról*, p.19; SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/28 d./1953; *Feljegyzés ...*; PIL 867f.1/d-50, p.76

embodied in those plans. The three case are now presented in order to show how such policies affected production.

The Despotism of the Plan: Production Targets, Work Intensity and Natural Limits in the Tatabánya Mines

Late in the evening on the 30th December 1950 in Pit No. XII of the Tatabánya coal mines one of the worst mining accidents in the country's history occurred. An underground explosion all but wiped out the night shift in the mine, 16 underground workers survived whilst 81 perished leaving behind a total of 188 family members. The pschychological shock of the explosion throughout the town was enormous and the search for a scapegoat began. Eventually one of the mining engineers was blamed for causing the accident, and attacked as an "oppositional saboteur" by the party. For many miners and residents in the town the official explanation of sabotage offered was less than convincing. Firstly, the accused engineer had been promoted from the shop floor, had lived in the town all his life and was very much part of the mining community. As such the majority of the population refused to believe that he was either "oppositional" or for that matter a "saboteur". Secondly the miners had an alternative explanation for the situation that had led to the disaster. One former miner remembered that during the last months of 1950 work intensity increased enormously, as did the plan targets creating a relentless drive for increased production that shaped a climate in which safety was neglected. Within days of the accident wives were reported to be sending their husbands of to work telling them that "after this look after yourselves, work more slowly, don't join the labour competition so at least you'll have a chance of coming out of the pit alive" 10.

Behind the increase in work intensity identified by the miners as the principal cause of the disaster was the increase in plan targets. Mining suffered, and continued to suffer, from the "ratchet effect" that affected other sectors of the economy; the original version of the plan for coal production envisaged a total increase of 55.2% over the course of the five years of the plan. In 1951 this was again to be increased with the new version stating that the sector had to increase its production by 142% over the same period. The plans that were received by the Tatabánya mines not only demanded sharply increased production, but they were almost constantly revised upwards ¹¹.

For the workforce wages were closely tied to production, whether through a norm or a system of a fixed hourly wage, supplemented by a premium based on production. The organisation of production at the coal face was summarised well by one former miner; "production took place on three or four coal faces. On each face several brigades worked, and each brigade was divided into work groups. Each work group was made up of a coal hewer and a cartman. A charge-hand was responsible for the production at each face, he sorted out who would work where In Pit No. XII we only produced lignite. The coal was firstly loaded into carts and then transported". Within the work groups the coal hewer cut the coal whilst the cartman was responsible for ensuring a supply of empty carts and loading them. These two kinds of face worker were remunerated in different ways;

¹⁰ - For an account of the accident see TMA 795-91 Kézirat Gyűjtemény; Samuel Droppa *A tatabányai XII számú Bányüzem 1950 évi bányaszzerencsétlensége*; for the party investigation that followed see the documents contained in MOL M-KS-276f.65/261ö.e.; for the memories of the former miner see personal interview with Sz.J., Tatabánya Múzeum, 15th August 1995; SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/23d./1951; *Hangulatjelentés a tatabányai bányarobbanással kapcsolatban*

¹¹ - Iván T. Berend & György Ránki "A magyar iparfejlődés a felszabadulás után: Az ipar növekedési ütemének kérdéséhez" in Miklós Laczkó & Bálint Szabó (eds.) *Húsz Év*, p.35; for the increases in the plan at a local level see Rozsnyói "A város nagyüzemei", p.87

"the cart men didn't work according to a norm the coal hewer did". The cartman was always employed according to an hourly wage system with a premium, either calculated on the basis of the coal hewer's fulfilment of his norm, or sometimes on the basis of the percentage fulfilment of the pit's monthly plan though this latter system of calculation was much criticised by the authorities. The norm of the coal hewer tended to be identified by the miner as a certain number of carts of coal that were to be produced during a shift. These norms were sharply increased, leading to a marked rise in work intensity; in Pit No. XII in 1951 the norm had reached ten carts per coal hewer ¹².

This high work intensity led to desperate attempts on the part of mineworkers to make out. Even where production conditions were good, and almost always they were not, the norms could not be reached through "legal" work methods. "Illegal" and unsafe work practices pursued in the interests of making norms were held responsible for a high level of industrial accidents; according to one official estimate in 1952 more than 70% of all mine accidents were caused in this way. High work intensity and the pressure to make plan targets created a culture in which safety was neglected; the Mineworkers' Union in 1952 accused mine management in Tatabánya of "criminal laxness in respect of the health and safety measures laid down by the law and the collective agreement" ¹³.

¹² - For the description of the organisation of production see OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 8083/54, p.3; on the criticisms of certain mine's wage systems see MOL M-KS-276f.94/587ö.e., p.341; on the way coal hewers saw their norms see OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 8083/54, p.3; see Personal Interview with Sz. J., Tatabánya Múzeum, 15th August 1995; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 11727/53, p.4

¹³ - SZKL Bányász/460d./1951; *Jelentés Tatabánya IX.akna hangulatával kapcsolatban és egyes észrevételekről*, p.1; SZKL Bányász/542d./1952; *Jelentés*, p.2

Alongside the high work intensity the mines were increasingly unable to make their plan targets. In 1950 the Tatabánya coal mines successfully fulfilled their plan by 107.7%, but during the first half year of 1951 the six month plan was only made by 89%. This did not merely reflect the increase in the plan targets, but was generally indicative of the growing crisis of coal production. In 1950 average production per worker per month had stood at 54 quintals of coal, this had fallen to 49 quintals per month in 1951. Though the authorities frequently blamed the "poor organisation of production" as the reason for the non-fulfilment of the plan during 1951, there were deeper problems intensified by the high plan targets. These problems had a profound effect on the environment in which production occurred, working conditions and wages ¹⁴.

Many of the mines were simply unable to produce the coal that the plan demanded, even mine management were prepared to state at the beginning of 1951 that "the necessary production is just not realistic". Some were literally exhausted; one Stakhanovite recounted in 1951 that "under capitalism we could produce 2,080 carts of coal from Pit No. VIII, and now we are simply unable to achieve that". Often norms could only be fulfilled by filling carts not only with coal, but with the slag that was often mined with it. This lack of coal was experienced by miners through the lack of places to work at the face; often two work groups had to fight for the same place at the face. Frequently the mine party organisations blamed the engineers for their failure to technically prepare positions at the face for workers. Often,

¹⁴ - TMA 149-76 Kézirat Gyűjtemény; Ferenc Szantó *A szocialista építőmunka néhány kérdése a Magyar Dolgozók Pártja helyi szerveinek irányító tevékenységben 1948-1956*, pp.12-3; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/3ö.e., p.82; on the attempts of the authorities to blame the "poor organisation of production" for the problems see Mátyás Rákosi's intervention in a meeting on the reasons for poor plan fulfilment in the mines, KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/3ö.e., pp.64-78

however, only a small proportion of the workforce could be allocated places at the coal face. As a result large numbers were idle during their shift ¹⁵.

The shortages of positions led to mine management seeking to extend the coal face into areas that were regarded as unsafe by many of the technical staff. In Pit No. X the southern coal face was extended by mine management into what was considered a dangerous area. The face partially flooded creating a situation in which the mineworkers were forced to work knee deep in water, where it often went over the tops of their boots. In Pit No. VI flooding of one face was considered to be a major problem, whilst the waterproof clothing the miners were issued was reportedly heavy and therefore difficult to work in. In the mine electrical machinery simply could not be safely used because of the flooding ¹⁶.

The attempt to increase coal production not only placed enormous pressure on the mine and on maintenance staff but also on equipment. Chronic shortages of equipment hindered the mineworkers at the coal face. The lack of wood for props was a frequent complaint of many workers. Workers in Pit No. X in 1951 often had to wait as much as an hour for the necessary wood to make props if they ran out. An absolute shortage of mine carts resulted in mined coal left at the face. In the Sikvölgyi Pit by November 1951 it was reported that a severe shortage of coal carts had existed for two months, forcing mine management to deploy a large number of unskilled workers to move the coal manually. In 1951 an absolute shortage of picks hindered production ¹⁷.

¹⁵ - KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/23ö.e., p.145; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/3ö.e., p.85; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 8083/54, p.3; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/3ö.e., p.77; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/18ö.e., p.74

¹⁶ - KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/19ö.e., p.30; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/23ö.e., p.100; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.2/64ö.e., p.154

Attempts to mechanise the mines in order to increase production met with a marked lack of success and in many cases exacerbated the problems. The attempts in the mines to install conveyors in late 1951 was hampered by their poor quality, the belts themselves snapped whilst their motors frequently broke down and the power failed. All mechanised equipment was affected by frequent power cuts in the mines that rendered the machinery useless. By early 1952 breakdowns of machinery were so frequent that many miners felt that their production and thus wages were largely dependent on the machinery. In the new mechanised mines like the Mátyás Rákosi Pit breakdowns were so frequent that they were held almost exclusively responsible by the workforce for the failure of the pit to make its plan in 1952. The inability of machine maintenance staff to solve their own problems with shortages of spare parts led them often to improvise which resulted in them being blamed for subsequent machine breakdowns ¹⁸.

The poor plan fulfilment did not merely lead to low norm fulfilment and wages during the month but the development of a distinct rhythm of production within the mines. The first three weeks of a plan month would be characterised by low production, in the final week or ten days of the plan month management would concentrate on attempting to make their plan target by concentrating all their resources for a brief period on the coal face. Indeed in summer 1952 party investigators identified this across the town stating that "the fulfilment of the plan is hindered by the use of a scorched earth policy in production. In the last ten days of the month most of the

17 - KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/3ö.e., p.86; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/18ö.e., p.133; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/3ö.e., p.88; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/18ö.e., p.73; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/32ö.e., p.123

18 - KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/18ö.e., p.74; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/18ö.e., p.76 on frequent power cuts see KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/18ö.e., p.75; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/19ö.e., p.25; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/24ö.e., p.85; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.2/64ö.e., p.156

labour was directed to the coal face, they neglected maintenance and this has damaged their chance of making the plan now' 19. This end of month production rush led to pressure being brought to bear on the already long working hours in the mines. In the Tatabánya Upper Mining Enterprise overtime accounted for 14.7% of all hours performed by manual workers in October 1951. Whilst mineworkers often welcomed the extra money high levels of overtime led to tiredness, and to the neglect of their families 20. Maintenance also suffered during the end of the month production drive in the mine. In Pit No. VI this combined with unsafe working practices during the rush as scarce wood for props was pillaged from unused tunnels and maintenance staff were directed into coal production. Indeed so bad was the situation that one worker stated at the end of one monthly rush in 1951 that the pit should be closed for a month so that outstanding maintenance work could be carried out 21.

High work intensity, long working hours, the neglect of maintenance and the endemic problems of production led to huge increases in accidents during the early 1950s. In Pit No. VI where around 400 mineworkers were employed 35 suffered accidents, of which 28 required an absence of more than three days from work in September 1951 alone. Across the city during the first three quarters of 1952 the mines employed around 8,000 staff. During this period an incredible 2,350 accidents occurred of which 295 required the victim to be absent from work for more than 28 days, and of which 15 were fatal 22.

19 - KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/18ö.e., p.90

20 - MOL XXIX-F-107-m/52d.; IV.e. *Túlórák bontása, 1951. október hónap*; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.2/64ö.e., p.155

21 - KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.2/64ö.e., p.154; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/18ö.e., p37; SZKL Bányász/460d./1951; *Jelentés Tatabánya IX.akna hangulatával kapcsolatban és egyes észrevételekről*, p.1

This chronic crisis in production had severe effects on norm fulfilment and thus on mineworkers' wages, though it did not affect all mineworkers equally. The degree of differentiation was indicated by the norm fulfilment statistics of workers in the mines for December 1951. 25.6% of workers paid according to piece rates fulfilled their norm by less than 79.9%, 17.6% fulfilled their by between 80 and 89.9%, and a further 18.8% were between 90 and 99.9%. On the other hand 9.8% of workers over fulfilled their norms by between 20 and 49.9%, and 3.5% between 50 and 99.9%. From the general low production and norm fulfilment low wage levels resulted, throughout 1952 workers complained that "wages are little, they can't live from them" ²³.

Behind the low wages were large differences in what could be produced at the different places at the coal face. In the Sikvölgyi Pit the mineworkers frequently complained in late 1951 that the norms remained the same wherever they worked, which was unjust given that they could be expected to work in places at the face where "however much work they put in, they can't get great results". Mine managements complained that the struggle of mineworkers to make out in the context of unachievable plans had led to the destruction of "collective spirit" between the mineworkers. The differences in earnings that opened up between different groups of workers began to lead to a marked lack of co-operation among the workforce; indeed so desperate were certain workers to make their norms at the face in Pit No. VII and so crowded were the work places at the face where coal could be cut that work groups hindered their rivals. Workers in Pit No. XII left their

²² - SZKL Bányász/460d./1951; *Bányaipari Szakszervezet Munkavédelmi osztály. Jelentés, Komárom megye, Tatabánya, 1951. szeptember 25.*, p.2; SZKL Bányász/542d./1952; *Jelentés*, p.2

²³ - KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/32ö.e., p.122; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/24ö.e., p.91; MOL XXIX-F-107-m/51d.; *II. Munkások, 1951. december*

work places in "an untidy state", forcing the next shift to clear up after them. Indeed in Pit No IX. in December 1951 a failure by one work group to take the necessary steps to secure the work place led to a fight between them and the group that took over at the end of their shift ²⁴.

Poor working conditions and wages led to labour shortage that, paradoxically given the shortage of work places at the face, was becoming a permanent feature of production in the mines. Generally poor conditions in both the mine and the city had led to the emergence of a problem of a shortage of labour even before the increase in the plan targets in 1950. Employment in the mines remained stagnant, especially amongst the crucial category of underground workers throughout the early 1950s. Although recruitment campaigns succeeded in recruiting large numbers of workers to the mines, the same kind of number of workers tended to leave escaping the poor working and living conditions. This process created monthly labour turnover of around 10% in Tatabánya throughout 1951. The problem was not one merely of the absolute shortage of labour, but of its quality. Many newly recruited miners who replaced others did not have the experience necessary to work in the mines; as one functionary pointed out in 1951 "these workers who have come 500 or 600 kilometres to increase our coal production don't yet know their tasks, and they are in conditions, where they are not clear about the demands of working in a mine" ²⁵.

²⁴ - KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/18ö.e., p.85; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.2/64ö.e., p.155; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.2/64ö.e., p.154; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.2/64ö.e., p.155; SZKL Bányász/460d./1951; *Jelentés Tatabánya IX. akna hangulatával kapcsolatban és egyes észrevételekről*, p.1

²⁵ - SZKL Bányász/422d./1950; *Kimutatás Tatabánya kerületről a minisztertanács jan. 8.-i határozata szempontjából lehetséges munkaerő átcsoportosításokról*; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/15ö.e., pp.66-8; for useful statistics on labour turnover see MOL XXIX-F-107-m/52d.; *Törzskönyvi (Állományi) Létszámkimutatások*; SZKL Komárom SZMT/96d./1951; *Jegyzőkönyv felvéve 1951. október 26-án a Bányász Szakszervezet Területi bizottságán megtartott elnökségi értekezletén*, p.2

The mixture of labour shortage, turnover, work intensity and the demands of the plan began during 1951 to force management to seek to retain a core of the most experienced workers to cope with production in the climate of shortage. The preferential treatment of the core was achieved at the expense of the majority of the workforce who were cast to the periphery, intensifying the tensions that had grown among the workforce. One way of doing this was preferential treatment in the distribution of work places at the face. Sometimes where there was a shortage of "good" work places more than one work group that was part of the core was allocated the same work place, creating a bizarre situation of labour shortage, where some work places were left without workers. This meant that some work groups found themselves in a detrimental situation, indeed in Pit No. VIII where some miners complained that "there are work groups who always get bad work places, and never change them", if such groups could be found places to work at all. In 1951 one party functionary blamed poor work discipline among workers new to the mines on the fact that "they are switched without any work here and there in the mine" ²⁶.

Mines were beginning to use a wide range of informal compromises with core workers through subversion of official wage systems in order to retain labour and secure the consent of core workers to work flexibly in order to respond to the demands of the shortage economy. In 1952 one union inspector discovered that in three pits mineworkers were given their paid holiday, and during it worked in the mines where they were paid not only their normal pay, but an additional wage that contained a further 75% overtime supplement. When challenged the mine management were clear;

²⁶ - KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.2/64ö.e., p.155; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.2/64ö.e., p.154; SZKL Komárom SZMT/95d./1951; *Jegyzőkönyv felvéve 1951. április 17-én a Bányaiipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete Komárom m. területi bizottságán megtartott felelős harmadbizottsági és körzeti üzemi bizottság tagjai részére megtartott értekezleten*, p.10

"of course it's not legal, but without it we can't make the plan, we just don't have the workers". In this environment the nature of Stakhanovism changed, originally conceived as an attempt by management to legitimise increases in work intensity it had become by 1953 a prisoner of the need of management to bargain to retain its core workforce. Becoming and remaining a Stakhanovite even according to the authorities was not dependent on an individual's effort but the quality of the work place at the coal face that a worker got. In order to ensure that Stakhanovites remained "heroes of labour" management was forced to grant such workers the best positions at the coal face ²⁷.

Such informal compromises did not solve the problem of labour shortage in the mines, and still less the crisis of production. They did have several important consequences that will be examined in much greater depth later. Firstly they created a link between lower and middle mine management and a core of experienced workers that blunted the impact of the more despotic state policies of labour control for this small group. As such they created a small core and a large periphery within the mine labour force, both with very different experiences of managerial and state authority. Secondly this was to create a basis for a particularisation of social identity in the mines, which was profoundly subversive both of a general worker identity and of managerial authority.

Manufacture in a Shortage Economy: Making Machines for the Mines

Many planners recognised that the increased production targets for coal could be achieved only if "mechanisation of the mines can be increased

²⁷ - SZKL Bányász/541d./1952; *Jelentés Komárom megyei kiszállásomról, 1952.V.26-31-ig*, p.1; SZKL Komárom SZMT/128d./1953; *Jelentés a Tatabányai Szénbányászati Tröszt sztahanovmozgalmáról*

to a high level". This in turn could only be achieved if the domestic manufacture of mine equipment could be increased in turn. This was a policy priority; huge sums were invested in boosting capacity. The manufacture of mechanised mine equipment had a role other than mechanising Hungary's mines. It was to earn money for the Hungarian state to finance industrialisation at home through the export of machinery, especially to the Soviet Union and Poland, and was therefore prioritised by the economic planners. It was also to suffer precisely the same problems as the rest of the machine manufacturing sector, namely the shortage of raw materials ²⁸.

The task of manufacturing the machinery for mechanising the mines was to be concentrated on one Budapest factory; the BAMERT, which was to be renamed the Duclós Mining Machinery Factory in 1952. In both the original and revised versions of the First Five Plan the factory was to be responsible for the manufacture of metal shells, the conveyors for coal and other equipment. This programme entailed a major transformation of both the plant and its production. In late 1946 and early 1947 the plant had been small, employing only 97 workers and conducting small repair jobs for the Soviet army, or making machinery to order for export to Yugoslavia. By early 1951 the factory was ordered to produce 4 millions Forints worth of goods in one month alone and to do this employed almost 1,200. Furthermore its production was to increase by 50% each year until 1954. In order to make its plan targets the plant was to be transformed physically through a massive construction programme. This envisaged gradually shifting production to a

²⁸ - *Bányászati Lapok*, May 1951, p.320; on the role of the plant in the export plan see MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/65ö.e., p.30; for the emergence of shortage see Birta "A Szocialista Iparosítási Politika Néhány Kérdése", pp.140-1

new larger site that would contain a completely new assembly hall and large separate workshops ²⁹.

Even prior to the intensification of the problem of shortage the plant was scarcely able to cope with the rapid expansion it underwent during the early 1950s. As the plan was continually increased the construction of the new factory site fell ever more behind schedule. In 1952 construction was severely hampered by a combination of a severe shortage of cement and a shortage of labour. In this situation the factory had to produce without the physical capacity to do so. This directly affected both plan fulfilment and the norm fulfillments of individual workers. In 1952 one party functionary blamed problems of production on the "overcrowding" of the plant "workers cannot simply get the kind of percentage, that they could in a more comfortable place" ³⁰.

The process of expansion throughout the early 1950s was dogged by bottlenecks in the rest of the economy. The failure of other enterprises to deliver promised machinery resulted in a lack of capacity that severely hindered the ability of the plant to make its plan. A large number of ordered lathes were not delivered at all, and of those that were all were installed several months behind schedule. As a result there were considerable differences between the capacities of different machines on the shop floor, with those allocated to the newer machines easily able to make out but

²⁹ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/65ö.e., p.43; for the figures on employment in the BAMERT in early 1947 see BFL XI/103-e/7d.; *Fizikai munkavállalók munkaidő és bérkimutatása a 3 bérhétről*; on production in 1946 see the documents contained in BFL XI/013-e/1d.; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/65ö.e., pp.43-4; on the general expansion of the plant see *Kaparó*, 2nd April 1953; on the construction plans see MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/65ö.e., p.30

³⁰ - *Kaparó*, 20th February 1952; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.83

where the majority of machines were simply "exhausted" and consequently workers struggled to reach 100%³¹.

Expansion came up not merely against the barrier of a lack of physical capacity but also against the shortage of labour. By the end of 1950 there was a problem of absolute labour shortage as the factory was short of 200 manual workers that the plan had stipulated were needed. So short was the plant of unskilled labour that labour organisations in 1951 were securing the release of prisoners convicted of petty offences in order that they take unskilled work in the plant. Management attempted to resolve the problem of the shortage of skilled labour through extensive crash re-training schemes. In early 1951 of a workforce of around 900 152 were on re-training programmes. The quality of these skilled workers was not as high as those trained under the apprenticeship system. Consequently when "non-series production was underway in the factory and the workers who had become turners through the re-training programmes could only make 20-30% of their norms, as a result they would rather go out into the yard as unskilled workers. Of the last 36 turners taken on in this way only 3 remained in the factory" ³².

As the shortage of labour became even more pronounced the management aimed to ameliorate its effects on production by further increasing work intensity. Management aimed to increase the numbers over fulfilling their already tight norms because "if average norm fulfilment in our factory could be raised to 150% then that would mean that for every 2000 workers we would be performing the work of 3000". This formed part of a

³¹ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/59ö.e., p.173; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.83

³² - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/59ö.e., p.173; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/65ö.e., p.31; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/65ö.e., p.46; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/59ö.e., p.167

constant drive for productivity that involved ever increasing work intensity with very little improvement in workers' wages. This constant drive for cheaper, "leaner" production provoked dissent even from the factory party organisation which argued in 1952 that "the average earnings of the workers are set at an exceptionally low level. This even more seriously concerns us, as the reduction in average earnings is taking place against an increase in the value of total production. Alongside this the department has reduced the number of workers by 96. If we have to produce more on a reduced workforce, then it is only natural that average earnings are increased" ³³.

As in the mines the high intensity of work meant that workers could not make their norms through official means. Often this resulted in a neglect of basic health and safety; in 1952, for example, it was reported that workers on the grinding machines refused to wear protective goggles. Unorthodox use of tools to speed up work was blamed for frequent breakages which in turn fed tool shortages. The pressures placed on the machinery were such that huge numbers of machines simply broke down. The desire of workers in one workshop to make their norms "at any price" was said to be leading to a huge problem of quality of the finished products ³⁴.

The drive for productivity came up against real physical limits that were exacerbated by the dynamics of the expansion programme in the BAMERT/Duclós but were experienced by all plants in the sector. In 1950 managements in machine factories across Újpest expressed concern about the capacity of much of the machinery to cope with the speed at which they were increasingly forced to work. Absolute machine shortage in the turners'

³³ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.114; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.197; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/154ö.e., p.147

³⁴ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/153ö.e., p.51; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.138; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.139; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.199

workshop by late 1952 meant that all the work available could not be distributed to the workers because there was nowhere to complete it. In addition shortages of raw materials were experienced. Supply enterprises were not providing the necessary materials and the ministries and industrial directorates were failing to ameliorate the situation, "the ministry itself removes materials from the plan that are undoubtedly necessary" to production. By 1952 the situation had become so intractable that the enterprise sent a representative to the steel plants at Ózd and Diósgyőr directly to ensure that they were sent a continuous supply of materials for machine production, and to gain compensation for the substandard products they had been sent over the previous year ³⁵.

As a result of the shortage of raw materials work was often scarce during working hours "the workers wait for hours and days, there is no work, or there is a bottleneck of jobs that means they have to do all the different jobs at once, and then the level of scrap is enormous". The interaction of such shortage with the demand to make plan targets combined with the unpredictability of deliveries created a distinctive rhythm of production not at all dissimilar to that which existed in the coal mines in which monthly production would be crammed into the ten days at the end of the plan month. Despite the perception that this "end of month rush" was a negative phenomenon, especially in so far as the quality of finished products was concerned "neither the engineers, nor the party leadership have been able in this year (1952) to completely eliminate it" ³⁶. Frequent shortages of raw materials, tools and machinery combined with the pressure to make out created by high work intensity led to hoarding, pilfering and other forms of

³⁵ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/161ö.e., p.25; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.87; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/2ö.e., p.64; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.92

³⁶ - *Kapará*, 6th September 1951; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/65ö.e., p.31; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.111

theft as workers aimed to guarantee themselves the resources that would allow them to continuously produce. Theft of unattended materials from other workers was common; one worker complained of losing eight sets of materials, three of which he finally found after they had been appropriated by one of his colleagues who sought to use them to make up for scrap the colleague had produced earlier ³⁷.

Labour shortage and the need to cope with the uncertainties of socialist production, as in the mines, led to development of informal compromises between lower management and favoured sections of the workforce. Shop level management was frequently dependent on small numbers of highly experienced skilled workers to correct mistakes in production at very short notice. In order to retain such workers they had to be accommodated in some way. From 1951 onwards "good skilled workers" were selected by management and placed on a regular twelve hour shift so that the scarce skilled labour could be used more intensively. For this they were automatically paid the difference between the standard eight hour shift and their full twelve hours at an overtime rate to boost their pay. Often core workers who had difficulties making their norms were selectively given assistance through the special provision of unskilled workers to hunt for raw materials on their behalf under the cover of "the Movement for the Transfer of Work Methods". As in the coal mines attempts to protect the earnings and production of a core were mirrored by the creation of a periphery among the workforce who were denied the best machinery, or access to scarce tools. These were often the least experienced of the workers. One worker on a re-training programme stated that "we have no tools, we can only work with a trainer if we ask for tools in our own right we don't get them" ³⁸.

³⁷ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.140

The effects of the competition for scarce work, tools and materials and for preferential treatment by management shattered unity between workers on the shop floor. Indeed it sharpened tension to such an extent that one union official in one workshop stated that "the biggest problem is the lack of good relations between work mates, we should have a friendly atmosphere between work groups like that we had a year ago, when we didn't throw insults at each other" ³⁹. Furthermore the process through which the workforce was allocated either to its core or its periphery was to consist of a combination of state action and informal bargaining that was to lead to a greater particularisation of social identity.

Production at the Periphery of the Plan: Shortage and the Labour Process in the Magyar Pamutipar Cotton Factory

Even though machine manufacture was a priority sector it was by no means the only one for which the state had ambitious intentions. The new Stalinist state also sought an expansion of light industry, though at a slower rate than that declared for heavy industry. The modernisation of the country's cotton industry was to form a central component of this programme. New spinning factories were built across the country. Yet there was to be no, or very little expenditure on existing machinery, which was already old by 1949 in existing plants. The Magyar Pamutipar as one of the largest existing cotton factories in the country was expected to increase its production with little or no new investment. Its production throughout the

³⁸ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.149; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.115; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.140; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.140

³⁹ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.146

1950s was dogged by the problems of shortage that affected the rest of the economy, though these had sector-specific dynamics ⁴⁰.

Prior to nationalisation Hungary's cotton industry was integrated into an international division of labour, and with nationalisation and the intensification of the Cold War the linkages to traditional external markets in Western Europe were broken. This was felt during 1948 in the form of shortages of basic raw materials that caused frequent and sometimes lengthy production stoppages in the Magyar Pamutipar. Over the next few years the source of raw materials was to increasingly become the Soviet Union, yet the complaint was made that the new raw cotton was not as good quality as that they had been accustomed to receiving from the West. This was not a permanent solution, even as early as 1950 it was reported that "there are many unemployed within the factory" with reports that there were as many as 60 workers to whom work could not be given. These shortages and bottlenecks were reflected in fluctuating production throughout the year; in one of the spinning shops the average production of cotton thread in kilograms for every worker per hour fluctuated during 1950. In order to cover shortages in raw cotton from the Soviet Union management and the planners sought new sources of supply; by 1953 they were supplementing their supplies from the Soviet Union with Turkish cotton. Supplies were also infrequent, however, and the quality of this cotton was even worse than that of the Soviet ⁴¹.

⁴⁰ - For the state's policy towards Hungary's cotton industry see Hanák & Hanák *A Magyar Pamutipar Története*, p.312; for statistical background see *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal. A Magyar Könnyűipar Statisztikai Adatgyűjteménye*, pp.371-4, Central Statistical Office, Budapest, 1962

⁴¹ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/59ö.e., p.3; MOL-M-Bp.-95f.4/65ö.e., p.27; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/59ö.e., p.121; MOL M-Bp.-143f./9ö.e., p.309; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/152ö.e., p.114

The factory was divided into separate shops; two spinning shops and the weaving shop on one site in Újpest, a further spinning shop across the Danube in Óbuda, and a weaving factory, the HPS (Domestic Cotton Weaving Factory) also in Újpest. Another peculiar factor in the Magyar Pamutipar as in the rest of the textile sector was the continuing strength of shop consciousness, as opposed to more general factory based consciousness. The lack of integration between and the strong differentiation between the shops was reflected in the marked differences in performance of workers in the two spinning shops on the main Újpest site. As early as 1949 it was noted that the performance of Shop. 2 was far worse than that of Shop 1. Such differences in production performance were attributed to the older machinery in the second shop, which was less able to cope with the change in the quality of raw material and the sharply increasing work intensity. Yet in addition to this management had treated Shop 2. as a "place of deportation", according to the union, where all of the weaker labour could be dumped. Shop consciousness, especially of the weaving shops was strengthened by the way that profilisation was implemented in the cotton industry. Both the weaving shops on the site and the HPS increasingly received their spun cotton not merely from the spinning shops of the enterprise but from other spinning plants in the capital, thus separating them from other enterprise units and weakening their dependence on them ⁴².

Tension between the individual shops was superimposed onto the consciousness of shop identity felt by many of the workers. In general tension between the shops simply reflected the fact that the labour process was vertically integrated and that problems in one part of the production

⁴² - MOL M-Bp.-143f./3ö.e., p.67; MOL M-Bp.-143f./3ö.e., p.68; SZKL Textiles-a/107d./1949-1955; *Jelentés a terv időelőtti teljesítésének állásáról*, p.2; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/212/2ö.e., p.101

process contributed directly to bottlenecks elsewhere affecting the performance and therefore the wages of workers. Under normal circumstances the spinning shops were often hard pressed to fulfill their plan that led to the development of severe shortages in the weaving shops. The poor quality of production in the spinning shops at times was translated into work stoppages in the weaving shop, a situation that provoked furious reactions from weaving machine operatives; "it has now come out that the weaving shop doesn't work well because the spinning shop gives up poor materials. From what kind of material has it become a leading factory ?" 43.

The implementation and introduction of centralised economic planning had sector specific implications for the textile industry. The individualisation of production in the sector was decisively shaped by the mechanisation of production and the predominance of semi-skilled labour in the textile factories. It was where semi-skilled labour and mechanisation were most prominent that the formal individualisation of production was at its most pronounced, namely in the spinning and weaving shops. The most unusual aspect of this individualisation in the textile industry was that the plan conceived the basic unit of production as being the individual spinning or weaving machine, as opposed to the worker, or in this case the individual operative. The method through which the plan was broken down in textiles directly subordinated the largely female machine operatives to the rhythm of the machines and management used this to establish direct control over the pace of labour. In the Magyar Pamutipar the plan was broken down to each individual machine and for each day the worker at a given machine had a given target, expressed in kilograms. To make their norm they were expected to hit that target, and during labour competition campaigns overfulfill it 44.

43 - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/154ö.e., p.139; MOL M-Bp.-143f./6ö.e., p.49

The breaking down of the plan in textiles to the machine, as opposed to the individual had an enormous influence on the way the state attempted to increase work intensity and productivity in the plant from 1949 onwards. This developed into an obsession with reducing production costs in the plant. This was to be achieved primarily by reducing the number of workers needed to operate the total number of machines. This was to be done by basing labour competition and policy towards the norms in textiles around the multi-machine movement ⁴⁵.

The spread of the multi-machine movement occurred hand in hand with the spread of individual labour competition and the creation of Stakhanovism in the factory in late 1949 and early 1950. The aim of the movement was simply to use a mixture of persuasion and coercion so that one worker would operate an ever larger number of machines simultaneously. Spectacular fulfilment of the norms was achieved by persuading a large number of workers to operate ten machines at once during a shift. For the considerable effort that this entailed they were rewarded with norm fulfilment of around 400% and the wage levels that accompanied it. Some workers, the Stakhanovites, through preferential treatment that generally took the form of the deployment of unskilled workers to help them worked 20 machines at a time by early 1950. Whilst the multi-machine movement did lead to increased earnings it also led to bottlenecks and to declining quality, as the Stakhanovite movement did in other sectors ⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/153ö.e., p.179; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/153ö.e., p.84; MOL M-Bp.-143f./2ö.e., p.131

⁴⁵ - MOL M-Bp.-143f./5ö.e., p.17

⁴⁶ - For the variations of the multi-machine movement and Stakhanovism in the cotton industry see *Pamutipari Sztakhanovisták Élete és Munkamódszere*, Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1951; on the spread of the multi machine movement prior to the Stalin shift in

The norm revision in Summer 1950 sharply reduced earnings eliminating the material gains made by many operatives since the Stalin shift. It did not, however, destroy the work environment that had been created by the spread of the multi-machine movement. Indeed just as Stakhanovism in the broader economy had been intended as a means by which the state could identify ways of speeding up production, in textiles the norms were set on the basis of the performance of workers who operated a large number of machines at once. In the Magyar Pamutipar this provoked two reactions; the first was that Stakhanovites were ostracised by their work mates, if not subjected to intimidation at work. Secondly, workers began to emulate them to make their rate. The effect of the new norms therefore was to force workers who operated a small number of machines to operate more simply in order to survive; across the sector large numbers of workers who could not make their norms operating two spinning machines simultaneously, shifted to four in order to make out. This speeded up work right across the enterprise ⁴⁷.

The intense work rhythm that norms set on the basis of multi-machine work created was so fast, it was frequently exhausting. During the Congress Labour competition campaign in 1951 many of the machine operators were overheard making comments like "it just isn't possible to maintain this tempo for much longer" and "its a wonder that the workers can manage this". Against the high intensity were sharp inequalities between workers in terms of their norm fulfillments and their earnings. In textiles a higher proportion of

the plant see *Pamut Újság*, 15th November 1949; *Pamut Újság*, 15th December 1949; on the mutli-machine movement after the Stalin shift see MOL M-Bp.-143f./4ö.e., pp.3-4; SZKL Textiles-a/130d./1949; *Jelentés a Magyar Pamutiparból /Újpest. Erkel u./*, p.3; on the unskilled workers given Stakhanovites to help them reach their fulfilment see *Pamut Újság*, 1st February 1950; on the problems it bought in the plant see MOL M-Bp.-143f./4ö.e., p.7

⁴⁷ - MOL M-KS-276f.116/40ö.e., p.79; MOL M-KS-276f.116/40ö.e., p.74

the workforce failed to make out than almost anywhere else in industry; during July 1951 the proportion of the workforce failing to fulfill their norms in the two spinning shops were 21.7% and 46.72%, whilst in the weaving shop 31.53% of the workers failed to reach 100%. In addition the average wages in the factory stood at 645 Forints per month in October 1951; this was well under the industrial average ⁴⁸.

The attempt to make out on a constantly increasing number of machines at a faster rate led to the neglect of maintenance, and often as in other sectors to the abuse of the machinery itself. Dirty and inappropriately used machinery was regarded as a major cause of poor quality in production. Machine breakdown occurred particularly at times when work intensity increased during the period of labour competition campaigns; during the first two days of one such campaign ten machines broke down. Often the high work intensity encouraged workers to push the machinery to its limits in order to boost their production and to make the norms. In the spinning shop it was reported that the "workers when they get good materials push the machine to the absolute technical maximum so they can produce more. But the thread is not good in every case and the overused machines become exhausted as a result of the speed of spinning, the motors wear out and the gears break" ⁴⁹.

One of the problems of the machinery was its age. By August 1951 the authorities noted that ageing machinery in all parts of the factory was creaking under the pressure of increased production, and that this alone

⁴⁸ - On the increase in work intensity in the plant over the course of 1951 see *Pamut Újság*, 31st January 1952; MOL M-Bp.-143f./14ö.e., p.222; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/236/2ö.e., p.247; on low norm fulfilment in early Spring 1951 see *Pamut Újság*, 16th April 1951; for the average worker's wage in the factory in late 1951 see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/236/4ö.e., p.69

⁴⁹ - *Pamut Újság*, 26th July 1951; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/112ö.e., p.46; MOL M-Bp.-143f./8ö.e., p.210; *Pamut Újság*, 4th June 1951; MOL M-Bp.-143f./8ö.e., p.211

was frequently leading to breakdowns. Lack of investment applied to the buildings also, the roofs of the shops frequently leaked and as a result periods of heavy rain led to stoppages of machinery and of production in the plant. This in turn led to widespread jokes amongst the workforce about the need to take umbrellas with them to work so that they would be protected from the rain inside the machine halls ⁵⁰.

The problems of the supply and quality of raw materials when combined with the high work intensity, the machinery and a poor working environment led to a decline in the quality of the goods produced. When work intensity was particularly high during periods of labour competition there was a further significant decline in the quality of production. By 1953 it was admitted privately by the party committee that the Stakhanovites who produced the most, operating the largest numbers of machines, neglected quality completely and strove to produce the maximum quantity ⁵¹.

High work intensity and opposition among female machine operators to continual attempts to lengthen working time combined with low wages fed a considerable problem of labour mobility in 1951; party officials noticed that "a large number of workers quit and seek work at factories where they don't have to work Sundays or at night. Neighbouring factories are hiring those that left without permission". Labour turnover stood at around 18-20% over the course of the first five months of 1951. It did not fall, labour turnover for the whole of the year stood at 30% of the total workforce. Such labour mobility fed an absolute problem of labour shortage, party officials

⁵⁰ - On the crisis of the machinery see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/236/3ö.e., p.19; on the impact of the weather on textile production see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/152ö.e., p.21; *Pamut Újság*, 5th December 1952

⁵¹ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/236/16ö.e., p.104; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/236/16ö.e., p.105

frequently requested the recruitment of more labour whilst management replied that increasingly it could not be found ⁵².

High rates of sickness that were attributed often to exhaustion due to the high work intensity also contributed to labour shortage. Absences due to illness were above the industrial average; in the plant during 1952 in only two out of twelve months were less than 5% of the workforce off ill. It reached a high of 6.6% in May, whilst over 1953 the proportions absent due to sickness varied at between 6.4% in February, and a low of 3.9% in January. One major cause of absenteeism was the large number of industrial accidents that occurred as a result of the poor state of the machinery and the high work intensity; throughout 1953, for example, serious industrial accidents occurred at quarterly rates that varied between 36 and 69 ⁵³.

When sufficient labour could not be found for all the machines, or when workers were off ill, machines simply stood idle waiting for someone to operate them. The individualisation of production and the devolution of the plan to specific machines created a situation in which by 1951 "for the first time one spinning machine stood idle for eight hours (the length of a shift) because there was nobody who would run it". As the year wore on and labour shortage intensified the problem of unused machines worsened, by the middle of 1951 in one of the spinning shops 8 to 9% of the machines were unused during the shifts ⁵⁴.

52 - *Pamut Újság*, 2nd August 1951; MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/60ö.e., p.133; MOL M-Bp.-143f./9ö.e., p.308; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/236/4ö.e., p.130; MOL M-Bp.-143f./6ö.e., p.49

53 - *Pamut Újság*, 3rd January 1952; MOL M-Bp.-143f./8ö.e., p.211; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/236/16ö.e., p.156; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/236/16ö.e., p.159

54 - MOL M-Bp.-143f./8ö.e., p.211; MOL M-Bp.-143f./9ö.e., p.309

The labour shortage resulted in the inappropriate use of inexperienced machine operators. By 1953 management was forcing apprentices to operate as many as eight machines at a time to ameliorate the problems of labour shortage despite warnings that this would lead to further declines in the quality of production. At times of particular labour shortage management would entice workers to operate more machines simultaneously than they would normally in order to meet production targets. Workers on six machines normally were given seven to operate in such circumstances. Even here machine operatives' inexperience often led to poorer quality than would otherwise have been expected ⁵⁵.

Certain groups of workers were granted preferential treatment just as in the rest of the economy. The textile industry was different because the granting of preferential treatment among the machine operatives took place entirely within the boundaries of the labour competition and the work movements. Such preferential treatment seems never to have extended to informal bargaining about norms or wages as in the rest of industry; indeed in the Magyar Pamutipar rather unusually for a large industrial enterprise in 1952, management was able to report that "the norms are firm". Among the semi-skilled machine operatives in the weaving shop preferential treatment was granted to those multi-machine workers who operated the most machines. The quality of the cotton they received was the best ensuring that they did not have to cope with the thread snapping. This provoked tension between those who operated eight machines and those who operated sixteen machines. Normally the latter earned twice as much as the former but a decline in the quality of the cotton had led to lower earnings amongst those operating eight machines whilst preferential treatment in the distribution of the raw materials had ensured that those working sixteen

⁵⁵ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/152ö.e., p.118; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/236/7ö.e., p.148

machines had stable earnings. Such practices led sometimes to complaints, in 1951 one young worker complained that "there are materials of variable quality. The good quality ones are taken by the "good" workers its easy to work well when you have good materials" 56.

Although the large majority of semi-skilled workers were subject to the despotism of the plan, this was not the case with the male skilled workers who maintained the machinery. They were far more willing to resort to the tactics of go-slow and of non-co-operation in order to secure preferential treatment. Rumours of imminent norm revision were frequently used in order to ensure that at such times the workers did not "go too fast with their work". Such strategies were often accompanied by intimidation of norm-setters who complained that "the maintenance staff were putting pressure" on them. Increasingly as work intensity increased and the demands on the machinery with it, male skilled workers were able to translate their relative autonomy, at least when compared with the machine operatives, and management's dependence on them to their advantage. It was this small group of workers that gained countervailing power to informally bargain with management to secure better earnings 57.

The advantages that maintenance workers had in the internal division of labour of the socialist firm is described in greater depth later. In terms of the textile industry it is sufficient to note that in terms of the way shortage prompted management to deal with labour it was somewhat exceptional. The semi-skilled machine operatives had very little countervailing power and

56 - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/236/7ö.e., p.151; MOL M-Bp.-95f.3/56ö.e., p.101; SZKL Textiles-a/140d./1949-1955; *Magyar Pamutipar. Jegyzőkönyv amely készült 1951. nov 10-én az olvasó teremben megtartott Ü.B. értekezleten*, p.2

57 - MOL M-Bp.-95f.3/345ö.e.,p.8; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/236/4ö.e., p.268; MOL M-KS-276f.116/40ö.e., p.74

enterprise managers certainly did not seek informal compromise with them. In order to improve their earnings they had to participate in official institutions such as the labour competition. Even though poor working conditions led to high labour mobility and absolute labour shortage in the spinning and weaving shops this did not have the effects it had in machine manufacture and mining. This was for two reasons, firstly the separation of the workforce in the other two sectors into a core and a periphery was based on the perception that members of the core had a superior skill to those on the periphery in a climate characterised by labour shortage. Among the machine operators where all work was semi-skilled this situation simply did not arise. Secondly there was the issue of gender, and the undoubted patterns of gender discrimination that imprinted themselves onto shop floor relations in the textile industry. These two reasons complement each other as ideas of skill and appropriate work in early socialist Hungary constructed notions of gender, and vice versa. These processes formed the cultural background that opened up the possibilities for informal bargaining that allowed the core/periphery distinction within the workforce to be created. These issues, however, are examined in more depth later.

Conclusion

Social scientific investigation of socialism has come to see "shortage" and the social relations stemming from it as the defining component not only of socialist production, but of socialist societies in their entirety⁵⁸. The dynamics of "shortage" were created alongside the planned economy, and were exacerbated by its operation. The analysis offered above suggests that

⁵⁸ - See for example Michael Burawoy *The Politics of Production: Factory Regimes under Capitalism and Socialism*, p.156-64, Verso, London and New York, 1985; Verdery *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next ?*, Chapter 1; Verdery "Theorizing Socialism: A Prologue to the "Transition""; Swain *Hungary*, pp.3-4; Komai *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism*

in Hungary they were very much the products of the industrialisation drive of the early 1950s, and the contradictory economic policies that were pursued in order to facilitate it. The reduction of the country's dependence upon international trade and the pursuit of an autarchic economic strategy made Hungarian industrial expansion dependent upon a poor natural resource base. The reduction in international trade that accompanied the beginnings of the Cold War severely affected light industry that was dependent upon an international division of labour.

Against this background the state pursued a radical strategy of industrialisation in which the utopian motives of the local leadership interacted with the paranoia of the Soviet authorities to produce over-ambitious plans for expansion. The combination of such a strategy with the policy of autarchy produced an economy in which resource constraints shaped the behaviour of all economic actors and generated a specific pattern of social relations.

"Shortage" did not affect every sector in the same way and as such experiences of it, at least in the field of socialist production, differed. Textiles, crucially dependent on trade with the West experienced shortage immediately after the nationalisations of 1948 due to the deteriorating Cold War climate. In coal mining it was experienced as the clash between excessive production targets meeting the natural limits of what could be mined. In machine manufacture it took the form of a continuous series of production hold-ups and bottlenecks caused by delays in the construction of new plant, or in the delivery of machines or raw materials with which to produce.

"Shortage" decisively shaped not merely the environment in which production occurred but the nature of work itself and the social identities of

the workforce. Rapid industrialisation necessitated the greater exploitation of relatively scarce labour, and alongside "shortage", ever higher levels of work intensity were imposed with workers chasing production targets that seemed ever harder to reach. Production in a "shortage" economy in these circumstances became a frustrating process of rushes combined with constant stoppages, and consequently of uncertain, wildly fluctuating earnings. In a climate characterised by "unemployment behind the factory gate" which often resulted from shortage, competition between workers for the means to produce spread across the shop floor which when combined with the individualisation of production opened and deepened tensions between workers.

Though the all-pervasive nature of "shortage" was a phenomenon that accompanied the introduction of state socialism, the realities of large scale production and its social organisation were inherited from capitalism, and were largely unchanged as a result of systemic change. The technical organisation of production, and the skill content of work in the different sectors and the inequalities connected to these factors remained and influenced the degree to which workers could bargain in the endless competition for work that shortage entailed. In textiles the high level of mechanisation meant that machine operatives were less able to influence their conditions of work and remuneration than skilled workers in machine manufacture, or "experienced" coal hewers at the faces in Tatabánya.

This competition for work between workers was met by management dependence on certain sections of their workforces. This was due to intense labour shortage, and in particular the intense shortage of skilled labour. This was producing a sharp distinction within the workforces of most enterprises between a favoured core and a marginalised periphery. The first was successful in gaining preferential treatment in the distribution of scarce work,

raw materials or machinery. Alternatively workers in this core could bargain, albeit informally, to increase their wages as management sought to ensure a degree of co-operation from this group to cope with the realities of production. The marginalised periphery found themselves increasingly shut out of this bargaining process and subject to the despotism of both management and the state. This process was accompanied by a transformation of the industrial workforce as the state recruited workers to support the expanding industrial sector. Those new arrivals in industry and the way in which they were received shaped the Stalinist shop floor as much as shortage and central planning did.

Chapter Three

The Mobilisation of Labour: Industrialisation and Worker Recruitment

Introduction

When the First Five Plan passed into law in 1949 alongside its ambitious plans for boosting industrial production it called for a major expansion in the industrial workforce. The Plan envisaged that by 1954 480,000 new workers and employees would be employed in industry. Of these there would be 250,000 new skilled workers, 92,000 new semi-skilled workers and 85,000 new unskilled workers. The law gave no indication as to how this expansion would be achieved, and therefore there was considerable scepticism about whether an expansion of the workforce on this scale could be accomplished. When the plan was debated one worker in the Zala oil fields was overheard to say that 300,000 new workers could not possibly be absorbed by industry especially as production was to be mechanised. At the Second Congress of the MDP in 1951 these targets were raised still further; Ernő Gerő, the party economic expert, announced that over the period of the plan 600,000 to 650,000 new industrial workers and employees would be needed ¹.

Between 1949 and 1954 neither target was achieved. The numbers employed in industry only increased by just under 400,000. Furthermore by the early 1950s Hungarian industry was suffering from a serious problem of labour shortage; mining was a particularly extreme example of this phenomenon. The wage department of the National Council of Trade Unions reported in late 1953 a constant shortage of 6500-6800 workers in the

¹ - "1949. évi XXV. törvény a Magyar Népköztársaság első ötéves népgazdasági tervéről, az 1950. január 1-től az 1954. december 31-ig terjedő időszakra" in Balogh (ed.) *Nehéz esztendőkről krónikája*, p.165; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1/60ö.e., p.18; *A Szocializmus Építésének Útján*, p.217

mines. Though it reported that labour recruitment campaigns could successfully recruit 8-10,000 new workers monthly, this effort was undermined by a greater level of labour turnover as worker-peasants went back to agriculture during the summer months. In the mines the authorities deployed prison labour to make up the severe labour shortage. Shortages of unskilled workers led to disorganisation of production in the metalworking sector also ².

The questions of why this labour shortage emerged and why the labour targets for industry laid down in the First Five Year Plan were never achieved are important for a major reason. It prepared the backdrop to the transformation of the industrial workforce. This chapter analyses the relationship between state labour policy and labour shortage. It argues that labour policy was characterised by the combination of ideological utopianism and adjustment to immediate circumstance that was so peculiar to Stalinism as a whole. Firstly the expansion of the industrial labour force represented part of a policy to eliminate forms of labour which contradicted the ideological aim of creating a society based on socialist labour. Secondly the state aimed to supply its rapidly expanding industrial sector with the necessary labour to increase production. Often these two goals were in sharp conflict with each other and the society that they found themselves confronting, and it was this conflict that was both to structure the dynamics of industrial labour shortage and the re-making of the workforce.

The Work Based State and the Transformation of Society

² - *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal A Magyar Ipar Statisztikai Adatgyűjteménye*, p.34, Central Statistical Office, Budapest, 1961; SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/15d./1953; *Feljegyzés Varga Elvtársnak a NIM-ben tartott értekezletről- a munkaerőátcsoportosítás terén eddig tett intézkedésekről*, p.1; Tóth "A pocol tomácán", p.127; MOL M-KS-276f.53/145ö.e.; *Tájékoztató az üzemi dolgozók és az üzemi vezetők által felvetett szociális és kulturális problémákról*, p.15

The transformation of the shop floor formed part of an attempt to transform the role of labour within the economy. Whereas under capitalism labour had been regarded as a commodity to be bought and sold, under the new system socialist labour was to form the basis of the relationship between citizen and state. Furthermore it aimed to pursue a more fundamental "societal" policy of integrating all groups into socialist wage labour. This was much more than a simple drive for state control, it sought to use the state as a vehicle to transform society, and re-make it both materially and morally. It was this that formed the utopian component of state labour policy during the early years of the First Five Year Plan³.

Enshrined in the 1951 Labour Code was the notion of a general obligation to work. This principle informed the attitudes of the state to society. In capitalist society the code stated "the majority are forced into exploitative labour without legal obligation ... in socialist society the means of production are owned by society. On the basis of the social ownership of the means of production the economic, political and legal order of socialism excludes the possibility that one person may live without working on the basis of the detriment of another. From this, it follows that the person that wishes to share in the benefits of what society produces, can only do so if they participate in the work of society". On the basis of this argument the principle was established by the state that "the general obligation to work does not merely mean that every citizen who is able to should participate in the work of society, but also that they must work according to their ability"⁴.

³ - For the very concept of "societal" versus social policy see Zsuzsa Ferge *A Society in the Making: Hungarian Social and Societal Policy 1945-75*, pp.13-6, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1979; for more on this argument see the Introduction above

⁴ - Ferenc Mikos, László Nagy & Andor Weltner (eds.) *A Munka Törvénykönyve és Végrehajtási Szabályai*, pp.21-2, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1955

This notion of work as a citizenship obligation was the conceptual foundation of an attempt to integrate all those who, in the eyes of the state did not work, into the socialist labour force. This meant initially the unemployed, but also groups such as beggars, and also those members of the former ruling classes who remained in Hungary. This policy affected these target groups in different ways and it is necessary to consider state policies towards each of them in turn.

If work was to become central to socialist citizenship then a significant unemployment problem had to be overcome. On the eve of the First Five Year Plan unemployment was high, a total of 125,941 were without work according to the 1949 census, though the estimates of state agencies were lower. Unemployment had already been practically eliminated in those sectors where medium and large enterprises predominated and which were essential to heavy industrial development. In mining 69 skilled workers, and 221 unskilled workers were left without work in 1949, whilst in electricity generation the respective figures were 16 skilled workers and 24 unskilled workers. The unemployed in 1949 could be divided into two groups. The first consisted of the rural unemployed. Alongside this group could be counted the 5,536 male and 117 female unskilled construction workers who were unemployed. Taken together they formed a reserve of young, unskilled labour largely concentrated in rural areas. The second group was more heterogeneous as far as skill was concerned. The major determining factor was that they were without work as a result of the material and financial problems of small scale industry, problems that were largely caused by state policies that aimed to direct skilled labour employed in small workshops towards the state sector. Such policies are described in greater detail below ⁵.

Because the state was faced during 1949 with a shortage of both skilled and unskilled manual labour its attitudes toward the unemployed became more coercive. Commenting on the 1949 unemployment statistics one policy maker rejected them as inaccurate because "there is no unemployment among skilled workers" whilst among unskilled workers he stated that "there are many who do not want to work". Though many of the unemployed from small scale industry were quickly absorbed into expanding larger factories hungry for skilled workers there still remained an unemployment problem into 1950. The apparent paradox between an economy suffering from labour shortages, and residual unemployment amongst the unskilled was neatly illustrated by the situation in Zala county in early 1950. Unemployment in the county was a seasonal problem, searching for work, had been eliminated in the towns, yet in the countryside the unemployment registers expanded in the winter, when poor smallholders who could guarantee their existence from land in the summer entered the labour market in search of unskilled work to get them through the colder months⁶.

In spite of the expansion of industrial employment there did remain a residue of unemployment into the 1950s. Among some sections of the population such as the Roma integration into the socialist labour force was not even achieved by the end of 1950s, the expansion of industrial employment seemed to have almost completely passed them by. Despite

⁵ - 1949 évi népszámlálás 7/a munkanélküliek adatai, Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, restricted publication, Budapest, 1950; for these figures see SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/4d./1949; *Munkaerőgazdálkodásunk jelenlegi helyzete és javaslatok a munkaerőgazdálkodás irányelveire*, pp.10-12; for the various figures cited here see 1949 évi népszámlálás 7/a munkanélküliek adatai, pp.9-11, 16-18, 25, 27

⁶ - SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/4d./1949; *Munkaerőgazdálkodásunk jelenlegi helyzete és javaslatok a munkaerőgazdálkodás irányelveire*, p.10; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1/52ö.e., pp.48-9

the formal existence of full employment women and the young sometimes found it difficult to find work even in the period of the First Five Year Plan. One Protestant minister remembered in the early 1950s that "in Budapest there were many 19, 20, 23 year old young people who came from the country to the capital and didn't have a job or a flat. They slept on the park benches, or spent the nights in the twenty four hour stores until they found reasonable work" ⁷.

In the early 1950s an individual who was unemployed for a given period of time could be prosecuted under the criminal law for work avoidance. Work avoidance was a serious offence, punishable by a minimum prison sentence of eight days and a maximum of two months. Many of those actually unemployed did fear that the state would take action against them; one skilled worker in Sopron who gave up work in 1952 stated that "the worker who leaves the factory has to be clear that he can only regard himself as being safe for a maximum of two months if he remains unemployed". Many of the young unemployed in the capital were subject to routine police harassment, and if caught were often offered work as an alternative to prosecution, "for the homeless and the unemployed" according to one Protestant minister "the most dangerous places were the third class waiting rooms at the railway stations where the police often organised raids and the homeless were often mercilessly forced into work. In such cases there was no choice or selection of the work which was often in coal mining, one just had to take it on". Under the terms of this law the state did not merely take action against the unemployed and homeless but, in the capital

⁷ - On the Roma population see "A Cigánylakosság Helyzetének Megjavításával Kapcsolatos Egyes Feladatokról" reprinted in Bama Mezey (ed.) *A magyarországi cigánykérdés dokumentumokban 1422-1985*, p.240, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986; for the problems of women finding employment see personal interview with T.J.-né, Dunaújváros, 5th May 1996; on unemployment among the young see OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/Item No. 6911/54, p.1

especially, it was used to launch police campaigns against beggars. In the capital a plan to round up the street beggars and put them to work in their "original trade" was attempted in 1951, though it met with very little success, and was followed up with similar, equally unsuccessful campaigns throughout the decade ⁸.

The state did not only use the work avoidance laws as a means of forcing individuals into socialist labour. Underpinning them was a strongly puritanical moral code about the appropriate means of earning money. Behind much of this regulation was an attempt to draw a line between what the state regarded as "honest labour" that was to be encouraged, and other forms of earning money that were not. This could be seen in the way the law was used against gambling. Under the terms of the work avoidance laws opening a "public or common place in order to earn income through gambling, or through the exploitation for business purposes of any passion, comfort, inexperience or mental weakness" was punishable by up to six months imprisonment. Such attitudes also shaped policies towards prostitution, which was also covered by the work avoidance laws. Living from the incomes of prostitutes or through the sale of sex was also punishable with six months imprisonment under the same section of the law that dealt with gambling ⁹.

The 1951 Labour Code rhetorically asked whether "it could be said, that in our country we have in all respects managed to realise the general obligation to work". It answered this in the negative because many of the

⁸ - For the offence of work avoidance and its legal regulation see Mikos, Nagy & Weltner (eds.) *A Munka Törvénykönyve és Végrehajtási Szabályai*, pp.812-3; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 05193/53, p.4; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 6911/54, p.3; for the campaign against beggars see Gyarmati et al. *Magyar Hétköznapiak*, p.139

⁹ - Mikos, Nagy & Weltner (eds.) *A Munka Törvénykönyve és Végrehajtási Szabályai*, p.813

"means of production remain in private hands. This situation always leaves open the possibility that some can exempt themselves from the general obligation to work". By 1951 capitalism had already been eliminated. The power of the former aristocracy was smashed by land reform following World War Two. Capitalism had been effectively eliminated by successive waves of radical nationalisation ¹⁰.

Given the confiscation of their property by the state and high taxation of their remaining assets members of the former ruling classes who did not flee Hungary after 1948 were left with no real alternatives to participation in the socialist labour force. They and their families were to experience the class based discrimination instituted by the Stalinist state, which was both fearful of the influence of their ideas on the new society and suspicious of their political reliability. Members of these groups were denied any access to employment in white collar positions whilst their children were excluded from higher education. This discrimination was to colour their integration into socialist labour in a number of ways depending on individual circumstances. Many were recruited as unskilled labour for construction sites and for mines and quarries across the country. This was often seen by the authorities as a negative phenomenon; on the Dunapentele site in 1950 the local party complained that "oppositional elements always find their way onto the construction site" as a result of large numbers of the former ruling class working there. In May 1951 the county party committee complained that "sacked Horthy era notaries, declared fascists, local kulaks and various other class enemies" were strongly represented among the workforce of the site. It was an indication of Stalinist era paranoia that they believed that "the

¹⁰ - Mikos, Nagy & Weltner (eds.) *A Munka Törvénykönyve és Végrehajtási Szabályai*, p.21; on the various measures which eliminated the power of the pre-war "ruling classes" see Somlyai "Az 1945-ös Földreform"; Donáth *Demokratikus földreform Magyarországon*; Orbán *Két Agrárforradalom Magyarországon*, pp.22-45; Donáth *Reform és Forradalom*; on nationalisation see Swain *Hungary*, pp. 38-9; Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, p.113

smaller and greater acts of sabotage occur because of the large number of reactionaries who work there" 11.

Often members of the former "ruling classes" found themselves performing forced labour in the various internment and concentration camps established during the period. Many aristocrats, former factory owners, political leaders as well as senior civil servants and army officers were interned in the popular front period for the political crimes of having served either the inter-war counter revolutionary or the brief Arrow Cross regime. Indeed even in the popular front period the total numbers interned exceeded 40,000. From 1949 onwards internment was modified, what had previously been a "legal preventative measure" designed to remove those considered "oppositional" from society, became much more permanent. The majority of those interned were put through the political trials process by the Stalinist regime. A considerable number found themselves sentenced to forced labour and sent either to the stone quarries attached to the concentration camp at Recsk in north eastern Hungary that contained some 1600 political prisoners by 1951, or to the state farm close to the camp at Hortobágy 12.

The experiences of other former members of the ruling class were profoundly affected by the attempts of the state to pronounce class justice

11 - Gudenus & Szentirmay *Összetört Címerek*, pp. 137-9; MOL M-KS-276f.88/306ö.e., p.24; FML MSZMP FMBA ir.9f.1/13ö.e.; *Jegyzőkönyv felvétellett Székesfehérváron 1951. május hó 15-én d.e. 9 órakor a MDP Fejérmegyei Pártbizottságán megtartott Megye Bizottsági értekezleten*, p.5

12 - On internment in the late 1940s see Sándor Szakács & Tibor Zinner "A háború megváltozott természete" - *Adatok és adalékok, tények és összefüggések*, pp.214-8, Batthyány Társaság, Budapest, 1997; Gyarmati et al. *Magyar Hétköznapiak*, pp.105-10; the phrase "legal preventative measure" is Tibor Zinner's, see his "Háborús bűnösök perjei. Internálások, kitelepítések és igazoló eljárások 1945-1949", *Történelmi Szemle*, No.1, pp.122-5, 1985; Ormos et al. *Törvénytelen Szocializmus*, pp.158-65; Berki *Az Államvédelmi Hatóság*, pp. 135-51; Fehérvári *Börtönvilág Magyarországon*. On the camp at Recsk see Böszörményi *Recsk 1950-1953* and Erdey *A Recski Tábor Rabjai*. On the Hortobágy camp see Füzes *Törvénytelen*

on them. The most notorious of these attempts was the expulsion of "class enemies" from Budapest in 1951, announced by the party newspaper in June. The aim was to free the flats of the former ruling classes for the workers, in the first place "Stakhanovites and their families". Though not intended to attack industrial workers it did affect many who had served as officers in the Horthy era army and as a result the wide net that the expulsion drew around the population caused panic even in many factories. The deportations did not make a dent in the housing shortage experienced by workers in the capital. The policy was both ineffective and had a high human cost, paid by the people expelled and their families. Many were sent to remote agricultural areas, those who were capable of work often worked on the local state farms for low wages, but those who could not suffered serious hardship. Often where they worked, as "class enemies" they were regarded with suspicion by the authorities ¹³.

The state did not merely seek to eliminate the private ownership of large scale industry but of small scale industry as well. Its policy of attacking the private sector continued well after the nationalisations of late 1949, indeed because many small scale artisans worked alone the nationalisations did not greatly affect them. The attack on them, which came from 1950 onwards, had several elements; punitive taxation was combined with a two track policy to force them to join the socialist sector. The first track was one of municipalisation in which private commerce and small scale industry were to be re-organised into locally owned enterprises. The second was the formation of co-operatives in order to integrate the private

¹³ - See *Szabad Nép*, 17th June 1951; for the expulsion themselves see Rátki "A Volt Magyar Uralkodó Osztályok"; Dessewffy & Szantó *Kitörő Éberséggel*; on the climate of panic at the expulsions see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/184/3ö.e., p.27; on the effect of the expulsions on the housing shortage see the documents contained in SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/12d./1951; see Dessewffy & Szantó *Kitörő Éberséggel*, pp.112-7; for evidence of the employment of deportees on the construction site see MOL XXIX-F-2-a/10d.; *Jelentés a miniszter úrnak*, p.2

sector into the socialist labour force in another way. This policy was crowned with general campaigns to withdraw licences to conduct private economic activity ¹⁴.

Local councils enthusiastically promoted the municipalisation of small scale industry in their towns. In June 1951 in Dunapentele, later to be re-named Sztálinváros the city council set up a local enterprise to replace small scale private industry thus preparing it for municipalisation. Alongside it a municipally owned bread factory was set up in the same year, and in order to create a monopoly for it in September 1951, two local private bakeries were municipalised, a measure that contained a punitive element as the flats of the bakers were confiscated with their businesses. Those who volunteered to take employment with the new municipally owned enterprises were spared the punitive confiscation that affected the two bakers; by the end of 1951 the locally owned small scale industry enterprise was functioning with a staff of 170, partially made up of nationalised artisans, in part of workers recruited from outside. The experience of work in municipally owned industry was similar to work in the rest of socialist sector of the economy, workers were subject to the same systems of remuneration and production organisation. Their wages were not significantly lower than in the rest of the state sector, except for those with metalworking skills ¹⁵.

¹⁴ - For central state policy towards small scale private industry see MOL M-KS-288f.25/1957/6ö.e., pp.71-3; MOL M-Bp.-1f.1957/64ö.e., pp.1-6, 27-8; MOL M-Bp.-1f.1957/64ö.e., p.29

¹⁵ - FML XXIII fond/502; *Dunapentele Városi Tanács Végrehajtóbizottság ülései jegyzőkönyvei 1951, 1 kötet*, p.19; FML XXIII fond/502; *Dunapentele Városi Tanács Végrehajtóbizottság ülései jegyzőkönyvei 1951, 2 kötet*, pp. 129, 234; on the history of the mixed enterprise see FML XXIII fond/507/2d.; *Feljegyzés a sztálinvárosi Vegyesipari Vállalat elődvállalatainak szervezéséről*; for wage determination in municipally owned industry in Sztálinváros see FML XXIII fond/507/3d.; for wage rates in the enterprises in 1951 see FML XXIII fond/502; *Dunapentele Városi Tanács Végrehajtóbizottság ülései jegyzőkönyvei 1951, 2 kötet*, p. 234

Industrial co-operatives also grew strongly after 1950 under the influence of this policy; their number increased from 373 in 1950 to 1606 in 1953, whilst the numbers employed in them rose from 12,800 to 93,300. The experience of integration into this kind of socialist labour was slightly different to that in other sectors. On entering the co-operative the former private artisan had to pay a subscription equivalent to their fee for one month's work, in exchange for which the new member gained a vote at the membership meeting. The new member also had to give their tools and property to the co-operative and their use in production would then be decided by the management of the institution. Members were paid through a profit sharing scheme, of the profit 40% had to be reinvested, 10% had to go to a mutual aid fund, and a further 10% had to go to social and cultural provision for members. The remaining 40% was to be distributed among the members according to the work they had done as measured by a labour unit scheme. Often because of the unwillingness of private artisans to join many had been forced. These recruits gave over only their worst instruments. Few who joined remained members, by 1957 only 35 to 40% of all industrial co-operative members were former artisans ¹⁶.

Many former private artisans simply left their workshops under pressure to seek jobs in the state owned sector of industry, thereby joining the largest group within the socialist industrial labour force. The process this led to can be illustrated by examining small provincial towns where the workforce had been split at the end of the 1940s between small scale industry and medium sized establishments. In Esztergom as late as 1950 around 300 people still worked in privately owned establishments employing

¹⁶ - For a sketchy account of the growth of industrial co-operatives see Rezső Nyers *Szövetkezetek a Magyar Népi Demokráciában*, pp. 63-5, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1959; for precise figures see MOL M-KS-288f.25/1957/6ö.e., p.65; for the internal operation of co-operatives see Nyers *Szövetkezetek*, p.225; MOL M-KS-288f.25/1957/6ö.e., p.68

less than 10 people, whilst artisans and their working dependants accounted for around another 500. In 1955 only 280 artisans and working dependants were left. Alongside this the town's larger factories had grown enormously; the Esztergom Machine Tool Factory employed 400 people in 1950, a figure which had risen to 1,300 by 1953 ¹⁷.

By the end of the 1950s the private sector in both commerce and industry had been significantly weakened. In spite of a limited revival from 1953 onwards the private sector was still of marginal significance to the economy as a whole. Those participating in the private sector of the economy by the late 1950s, except perhaps some artisans, could hardly be described as proto-capitalists. In the commercial sector it was reported that "the overwhelming majority of private sellers are over sixty and a high percentage are not fully fit to work, and for this reason have a shortage of capital that means their shops are extremely poor" ¹⁸.

The most radical strand of the state's drive against the private sector was the socialisation of agriculture, which was tantamount to eliminating the way of life of the smallholder majority in Hungarian society. Throughout the popular front period the Communist party had emphasised its commitment to a smallholder-based agricultural sector and its shift marked a major change in policy. Gerő himself described the policy shift in 1949; "the new element lies in the fact that we have openly raised the issue of a change in the dominant order in agricultural production, we can openly advocate the *kolhoz* (*agricultural producer co-operative*) as the most desirable production

¹⁷ - Brunszókó et al. *Esztergom Ipartörténete*, p.80

¹⁸ - MOL M-Bp.-1f.1957/64ö.e., p.2

unit in agriculture, and in practice move in the direction of commonly owned, co-operative agricultural large scale enterprises in the villages" 19.

Certain forms of "agricultural large scale enterprise" already existed in 1948. There were a small number of agricultural producer co-operatives functioning, but prior to the shift in policy it was the state farms that made up of the bulk of socialised agriculture. In many cases these were formerly state owned landed estates that had been re-named. Their role during the popular front period had been to support individual farms and to provide laboratories where state-of-the-art production methods could be devised. After the change in policy in 1948, however, they became increasingly important; the amount of arable land they covered rose from 113,000 kh in 1949 to 1,300,000 kh by 1953 20. Their share of total agricultural land furthermore rose from 25.4% to 36.6% over the same period. Between 1949 and 1953 the number of workers and employees in agriculture, a good indication of the employment of state farms, rose from 79,500 to 315,700. Workers experience of socialist labour on state farms was poor, throughout the 1950s wage levels on the state farms were significantly below those of industry, and the intensity of labour was high. On one state farm there were widespread complaints about the fact that norms for hoeing by hand were set far too high, given the physical intensity of the work 21.

19 - Ernő Gerő *Harcban a szocialista népgazdaságért*, p.404, Szikra, Budapest, 1950

20 - Kh., or hold is a Hungarian land measurement. 1 hold equals 0.57 hectares

21 - On the role of the state farms during the popular front period see Sándor Szakács *Állami gazdaságaink helyzetének alakulása 1945-1948*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1969; for a social history of a town dominated by a model farm which was transformed into a state farm during the popular front period see Vági *Mezőhegyes*; the figures on the increase in the amount of arable land covered by state farms are from Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság....*, p.188; the information on their total share of territory is taken from Orbán Két *Agrárforradalom Magyarországon*, p.89; for figures on employment see *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Statisztikai Évkönyv 1949-1955*, p.58, Central Statistical Office, Budapest, 1957; on wage levels on state farms during the early 1950s see Sándor Szakács "Az állami gazdaságok dolgozói helyzetének alakulása és helyük a hazai társadalmi

The expansion of state farms formed only a small component of the new agricultural policy. Its main thrust was an outright attack on the private farmer in agriculture ²². The process of collectivisation, that is the creation of agricultural co-operatives was the centrepiece of regime attempts to socialise the sector. The state aimed to organise agriculture into bodies which expressed the highest degree of collectivisation. This was the so-called agricultural producer co-operative, which differed from the state farm in that the members directly owned the land that they worked without the medium of the state. As a result the produce of the land was the property of the co-operative, though through compulsory deliveries the state controlled the price at which the produce could be sold. The way the land in such co-operatives was farmed depended on what type of agricultural co-operative they were. There were three types, in the first the land was sowed collectively and the produce was distributed to each individual for sale. In the second though each member was responsible for their own production they pooled the produce at the end. In the third type the land was not to be worked individually, but collectively and production was across the farm; this enabled greater economies of scale and for the efficient introduction of machinery into the labour process. The income of such a co-operative that was earmarked for the members was to be distributed not through a conventional wage, but to be shared in proportion to the work completed by

szerkezetben (1945-1975" in Károly Girus & Péter Simon (eds.) *A Mezőgazdaság Fejlődésének Szocialista Útja a Legutóbbi Két Évtized Magyarországi Tapasztalatai Tükrében*, p.219, ELTE Bölcsészettudományi Kar Tudományos Szocializmus Információs és Továbbképzési Intézet, Budapest, 1982; for norms see OSA 300/40/4/24; Item No. 14167/52, p.2

22 - On agricultural policy in general during this period see Swain *Collective Farms which work ?*, pp.25-50; Donáth *Reform és Forradalom*, pp.131-56; Orbán *Két Agrárforradalom Magyarországon*, pp.65-30; Szakács "A mezőgazdasági termelés", pp.81-90; Zsilák "A mezőgazdaság szocialista átszervezésének kezdetei"; Závada "Teljes erővel (Agrárpolitika 1949-1953)". On agricultural taxes and compulsory deliveries in Stalinist Hungary see Erdmann *Begyűjtés, Beszolgáltatás....*, pp.71-161; Szabó & Viragh "A Begyűjtés "Klasszikus" Formája Magyarországon"

each member measured through a complex labour unit (*munkaegység*) system. Furthermore, in theory if not in practice management was accountable to the membership through the institution of the annual general meeting of members. The producer co-operative had a duty to employ its members, and furthermore gave the family of a member a private plot for the purpose of individual production ²³.

Whilst other essentially weaker forms of agricultural co-operative did receive legal recognition it was the producer co-operative that was promoted most aggressively by the regime. Initially campaigns were conducted by local party cells to persuade local peasants to set up groups that would eventually form agricultural producer co-operatives, then beginning in 1949 came the campaigns to consolidate the holdings of the co-operatives. This meant that land would be confiscated in order that new co-operatives could operate on a unified area, the smallholders whose land was taken away were compensated, normally with poorer quality land at the edge of the village. These campaigns were to continue with a considerable degree of intensity throughout the early 1950s ²⁴.

The result of these campaigns was a large increase in the number of co-operatives and the numbers of people who were members of them. In June 1949 there were 584 agricultural producer co-operatives with a total of

²³ - This account of the nature and operation of an agricultural producer co-operative is heavily based on Donáth *Reform és Forradalom*, pp.112-25; the clearest explanation of the differences between the three types of agricultural co-operatives, however, is Swain *Collective Farms Which Work ?*, pp.35-6; a more nuanced explanation is provided in Béla Fazekas *A mezőgazdasági termelőségvetkezeti mozgalom Magyarországon*, pp.57-8, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1976

²⁴ - On these campaigns see Donáth *Reform és Forradalom*, pp.133-6; Orbán *Két Agrárforradalom Magyarországon*, pp.65-87; Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, pp.179-83; on the original campaigns to consolidate the holdings of the producer co-operatives see "A Politikai Bizottság Határozata a Részleges Tagosítási Kampányról" in *A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja határozatai, 1948-1956*, pp.78-82, Napvilág Kiadó, Budapest, 1998

13,000 members. By the end of June 1953 there were 5,224 co-operatives together with 376,000 members. Initially the members came from the ranks of former agricultural labourers and from the rural unemployed, who had been given small amounts of land in 1945. In June 1949 of those who had joined producer co-operatives around 70% had been agricultural labourers, whilst another 29% had possessed properties of less than 4 hectares prior to 1949. Right up to 1953 the majority of those joining the agricultural co-operatives previously had farmed on less than 8.5 kh of land ²⁵.

Many of the early agricultural co-operatives were extremely disorganised and their production levels were low. One president of a newly founded co-operative remembered that "among the members there was neither a horse nor a cow". Gradually with the help of the authorities this problem was solved as the co-operative managed to acquire for itself four horses and oxen, whilst the cows "were got from the county authorities that came from animals confiscated from one kulak in Jászboldogház because he hadn't paid his taxes". The first year was extraordinarily difficult given that "in the first year the land was not properly ready for growing sugar beat, and the labour force was weak. The co-operative couldn't pay them, and so they all went to get casual work". This situation was not unusual and the disorganisation continued in subsequent years, furthermore it was intensified by the problems caused by the need to meet state imposed compulsory deliveries. One former member of another collective farm remembered that in 1952 taxes ate into the low earnings of the agricultural co-operative creating a situation "where the older members would not have had a fillér for pocket money or a cigarette had their children not gone out and found some other work". In one village in spite of punitive taxation and

²⁵ - For these figures see Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, p.181; on the importance of the agricultural poor in the early days of the producer co-operatives see Donáth *Reform és Forradalom*, p.142

compulsory deliveries levied on smallholders the incomes in the local co-operatives were so low that it was possible to believe that they were better off outside. Production in another agricultural co-operative was so low in 1952 that the management bought eggs from local individual smallholders simply so that the co-operative would fulfill its compulsory delivery quota ²⁶.

Given the punitive measures directed against individual farmers, the poor wages available on state farms and the disastrous situation of many agricultural producer co-operatives many chose to leave agriculture altogether. The precise dynamics of this process are discussed later. Between the census of 1949 and the census of 1960 the proportion of the population reliant on agriculture fell from 49.1% to 35.5% ²⁷. Many people left agriculture for industrial employment providing one of the sources the state tapped to provide the industrial workforce in order to satisfy the needs of the industrialisation drive proclaimed by the First Five Year Plan.

Mobilising the Sources of Labour: the Politics of Labour Recruitment, 1948-1953

The policies devised to solve the problems of recruiting the labour force demanded by the First Five Year Plan must be set within the framework of the utopian drive to integrate the whole of the population into socialist wage labour. A policy of labour exchange, based on an understanding of labour as a commodity had to be replaced with a policy of

²⁶ - Árpád Balázs *A Lenin Tsz Tiszaföldváron*, pp. 57-8, Damjanich Múzeum, Szolnok, 1970; OSA 300/40/4/23; Item No. 267/54, p.3; OSA 300/40/4/41; Item No. 12232/53, p.3; OSA 300/40/4/52; Item No. 03916/53, p.2

²⁷ - 1960. évi népszámlálás 6. Foglalkozási adatok, p.36, Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, Budapest, 1961

direct state-led labour recruitment designed to ensure that labour was efficiently allocated to work based on its ability.

This drive required not merely an attack on the neo-corporatist institutions built up to control the labour market in the popular front period, but a determined offensive against the culture of the trade unions and large sections of the labour movement. In the pre-war period many of the trade unions in industry had been craft unions seeking to defend what they had seen as appropriate wages for workers of particular skill. The pre-war Metalworkers union, for example, was dominated by skilled workers, of its 17,000 members in 1940, one study estimated, that some 60-65% were skilled workers, and only 20-25% were semi-skilled. It operated essentially as a federation of different trades' clubs (*szakosztályok*) which bound together to provide social benefits and to control external labour markets. The control of the external labour market by maintaining a monopoly of labour exchange for workers in particular skills was the centrepiece of its strategy for defending its members ²⁸.

In 1945 the new popular front government sought to strengthen the unions and give them a central role in the new political system. The state gave the newly formed National Council for Trade Unions the task of re-organising the system of state labour exchanges that had existed in the pre-war years, in August 1945 they were given the monopoly of the exchange of all manual labour, a monopoly that was further extended with stabilisation in

²⁸ - These figures are quoted by Rudolf Nötel "A vas-, fém-, és gépipari munkásság" in Gyula Rézler (ed.) *Magyar Gyári Munkásság: Szociális Helyzetkép*, p.64, Magyar Közgazdasági Társaság, Budapest, 1940; for an excellent discussion of the role of the unions see the second chapter of Tóth *Civil társadalom és szakszervezetek*, pp. 49-83; for a general discussion of this aspect of union work see Péter Sipos *A szociáldemokrata szakszervezetek története Magyarországon*, pp.98-105, MTA Történettudományi Intézet, Budapest, 1997; for a more institutional description of the Metalworkers Union itself in this period see Péter Sipos et al. *A Magyar Vas- és Fémmunkások Központi Szövetségének Története*, pp.316-42, privately published, Budapest, 1990

1946. Furthermore all the old labour exchanges were transferred to union ownership, measures that gave the trade unions substantial power to regulate the "price" of labour in a market situation ²⁹.

After 1948 when the state began to change the relations of production it moved to eliminate the notion of labour as a commodity, and attempted to transform it into a citizenship relation. The market was to be dispensed with entirely in this system as the state attempted to shift towards an economic system based on a notion of labour as the source of value. Union strategy, which relied on the notion of labour as a commodity and the exercise of monopoly power to control its price, came under attack. In 1948 the National Labour Planning Office (*Országos Munkaerőgazdálkodási Hivatal - OMH*) was established. It gained direct responsibility for managing labour in the economy. In May 1949 it was given control of labour exchange and the whole area was removed from union influence in the interests of comprehensive economic planning. The OMH simply concentrated on vocational training and anti-unemployment measures. By 1950 the state required an institution that was much more ambitious in its intentions and scope. It was in this context that it created the Manpower Office (*Munkaerőtartékok Hivatala -MTH*). It had three major tasks; the first was to ensure adequate training for all sections of the workforce, the second was to ensure the full utilisation of potential labour power and the third was to ensure the planned use of labour in the economy ³⁰.

²⁹ - The best overall view of the role of unions in labour exchange during the immediate post-war period is Ifj. Gyula Borisza "Szakszervezeti munkaerőközvetítés Magyarországon 1945-1947 között", *Ipar-Gazdaság*, No.2, pp.29-37, 1991; see also Baksay *A Munkaerőhelyzet Alakulása*, pp.67-8

³⁰ - On changes the architecture of the institutions of labour planning the best overview is Belényi *A Szállíni Iparosítás Emberi Ára*, pp. 15-8; Baksay *A Munkaerőhelyzet Alakulása*, p.116; Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, pp.172-3

The broad directions of state labour policy were set down by the National Planning Office (*Országos Tervhivatal -OT*) during 1949 and 1950, in its plan for labour during the First Five Year Plan. The plan seems to have undergone a series of drafts during which the precise numbers fluctuated, in spite of this the broad outline of the policy remained largely constant. In order to translate the utopian aims of the state into policy practice the OT decided on a set of seven priorities. The first was to radically increase the numbers of skilled workers within the economy, the second to increase the number of technically trained white collar staff, the third to re-direct workers from small scale industry into the state sector, the fourth to integrate women into the industrial labour force to a greater degree, the fifth to integrate youth into the labour force, the sixth to use rural labour power in industry to a greater degree and the seventh to eliminate unemployment ³¹.

Prior to the official start of the First Five Year Plan on the 1st January 1950 it was becoming very clear that industry was affected by severe shortages of skilled workers. In the second half of 1949 the county party committee in Zala complained that recruiters from Budapest factories had been active among the skilled workers on the oil fields poaching them in an attempt to solve their own labour problems. In April 1949 312 jobs for skilled workers in heavy engineering could not be filled, a figure that rose to 13,224 by July. In anticipation of the growth of such a shortage the state had prepared a policy in order to increase the number of skilled workers in September 1948. The authorities used three strategies to recruit skilled workers; firstly they saw considerable potential in training semi-skilled workers and thus turning them into skilled workers, the second strand was to shift the skilled workers employed in small scale industry and larger state

³¹ - For the various plans see MOL XIX-A-16-a/148d.; *Az ötéves munkaerőterv*; Belényi A *Sztálini Iparosítás Emberi Ára*, pp. 13-4; Baksay A *Munkaerőhelyzet Alakulása*, p.124

run establishments, whilst the third strand was to overhaul general training to enable more young people to become skilled workers ³².

Plans to improve the general skill level of the existing workforce began with the introduction of new training and re-training schemes for the workforce. Four different kinds of on-the-job training programme were launched; the first, to become a technician was to give skilled workers detailed theoretical knowledge of a given production process, the second was to train new foremen, the third was a re-training programme for skilled workers to update their skills with new machinery. Last and most important were those programmes designed to train unskilled and semi-skilled workers as skilled workers. In their first year of operation some 20,000 unskilled and semi-skilled workers were enrolled on courses designed to turn them into skilled workers. The state, however, was worried that they were not giving proper training, and that, furthermore the new training was occurring in sectors the regime was seeking to eliminate; of the nearly 20,000 enrolled a large proportion were in private small scale industry, of these some were on "household-based industry programmes" which were evening classes held only in winter for the rural population. Though many of these initial problems were eliminated those of quality were not. The content of the courses was poor whilst the understanding of the trainees was low; one official of the Manpower Office recalled asking an apprentice what he was doing, it was clear that "he had no idea". This

³² - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1/52ö.e., p.47; SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/7d./1949; *A munkaerőgazdálkodásról és a szakképzésről a gyáriparban*, p.1; for these policies see MOL M-KS-276f.115/90ö.e., p.1; SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/7d./1949; *Országos Munkaerőgazdálkodási Hivatal Előterjesztés a Szakszervezeti Tanács Elnöksége részére*, p.6

official argued that such programmes were often monotonous and taught without enthusiasm ³³.

Such on the job training and re-training programmes were plainly not having the desired effect even by 1950. For the aims of the labour section of the First Five Year Plan to be fulfilled, the number of skilled workers had to rise at a faster rate as the number of workers as a whole. The state began to realise this was not happening; in the Mátyás Rákosi Works the proportion of skilled workers fell from 39.6% in 1949 to 33.8% in the following year. Such alarming signs led the authorities to examine the weaknesses of the training programmes established in 1949, which was the perceived lack of integration between the wage system and training programmes. The proposed solution was to establish the so-called technical minimum (*technikai minimum*) system, which stated that a worker had to accomplish a minimum amount of training before (s)he could take work of a higher category within the piece rate system. When the system was first mooted in 1949 the piece rate system did not exist, and it was not until 1951 that the "technical minimum" and the training schemes connected with it started. In spite of this system, which was tantamount to building an incentive within the wage system for workers to improve their skill level, it was less than successful in helping the state mitigate the shortage of skilled labour. The system was hardly popular among workers and many of those targeted by the regime failed to enter the examinations at the end of course because "they (the workers) do not see any worth in the exam, because they can do

³³ - On the different kinds of training scheme introduced in industry in 1949 see SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/4d./1949; *Munkaerőgazdálkodásunk jelenlegi helyzete és javaslatok a munkaerőgazdálkodás irányelveire*, p.5; for the numbers on 1949 enrolments see *Munkaerőtartalék*, March 1951, p.93; SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/13d./1949; *Jelentés szakoktatásunk jelenlegi helyzetéről*, p.4; *Munkaerőtartalék*, May 1951, pp.160-1; on the last point for a factory case SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/31d./1953; *Budapesti Szerszámgyár Feljegyzés*, p.2; for the more general picture see SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/15d./1953; *Információ a vasipari gyakorló szakmunkásokkal kapcsolatos néhány problémáról*, p.1

higher category work anyway", and the climate of labour shortage management gave workers such work anyway if they could complete it. As a result only some 20 to 30% of those starting training courses satisfactorily completed their examinations ³⁴.

The second strand of the programme was more successful but did not make a good deal of impact on the labour shortage either. The nationalisation wave of December 1949 in which all enterprises employing more than 10 people were nationalised effectively smashed the private sector. As a result the number of workers in private small scale industry fell from 131,066 in October 1948 to just 16,963 in October 1950. The question of where workers from small scale industry and construction went can only be answered by examining state economic policy towards restructuring the enterprises after nationalisation. The dominant policy was one of "profilisation"; the elimination of smaller enterprises and their concentration into larger ones. This entailed a major process of rationalisation in light industry; between 1948 and 1950 most work in the leather industry was concentrated in three factories, in the fur industry the number of plants was reduced from 36 to 14, in textiles smaller establishments were absorbed by larger factories; the number of factories spinning yarn was reduced from over 100 to just 20. In motor vehicle manufacture, production was centralised on the Csepel Engine Factory, whilst the number of enterprises manufacturing agricultural machinery was cut by half. The aim was to direct scarce skilled labour towards work which would contribute toward the

³⁴ - *Munkaerőtartálék*, April 1951, p.122; on the problems of some training programmes see SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/63d./1950; *Feljegyzés a szakoktatás helyzetéről*; on the discussion of the "technical minimum" system in 1949 see SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/13d./1949; *Javaslat a technikai minimumok megállapítása és bevezetésére*; SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/13d./1949; *Feljegyzés a technikai minimumok rendszerének bevezetéséről*; for the final beginnings of the "technical minimum" in 1951 see MOL M-KS-276f.116/55ö.e., pp.1-4; *Munkaerőtartálék*, June 1951, pp.182-5; MOL M-KS-276f.116/55ö.e., p.67; MOL M-KS-276f.116/55ö.e., p.74

fulfilment of the plan, and further improve labour productivity by replacing craft based forms of production with assembly line based plants and a "scientifically managed" labour process producing a standardised product range³⁵.

The third strand in state policy towards the provision of skilled workers was an overhaul of vocational training. In 1948 and 1949 the state began to realise that the system of on the job apprenticeship was incapable of producing skilled workers at a sufficient rate to meet the demands of the new planned economy. The authorities saw several problems with the system as it existed in 1949. The first was that the 80% of apprentices were training in small scale establishments and as such would gain no experience of large scale industry. Whilst 80% of apprenticeships in large establishments were concentrated in the capital, 40,000 of the 58,000 apprentices were to be found in the provinces. Given the bias of the plan in favour of heavy industry many of the wrong kinds of skilled workers were being produced through apprenticeship, around 18,000 apprentices were training in sectors like shoemaking, clothing and food processing. Lastly and most importantly the system was simply not producing a large enough number of skilled workers; the authorities estimated that the economy's

³⁵ - For the figures on the numbers employed in private small scale industry in October 1948 and October 1950 see *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Statisztikai Évkönyv 1952*, p.103, Central Statistical Office, restricted publication, Budapest, 1953; for an introduction to the concept of "profilisation" see Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, pp.112-4; the examples of profilisation are taken from Berend *Gazdaság politika az első ...*, pp.17-8; Károly Döbrentei, the secretary of the Textile and Clothing Workers' Union saw the transformation of the clothing industry in large scale industry as being an especially significant development during this period, see the life history interview made with him in the 1980s for more details, see PIL 867f.1/d.-150,p.71; Berend uses the example of the reduced product ranges of certain machine tool factories to emphasise this shift, see Berend *Gazdaság politika az első ...*, p.18, whilst István Kemény, through sociological research conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the Csepel Motorkerékpárgyár, was able to document the elimination of craft based production methods and the introduction of a production line based system during the early 1950's in the factory, see Kemény *Velük nevelkedett a gép*, especially pp.40-2

demand for new skilled workers would be between 35 and 46,000 whilst the apprenticeship system would only guarantee 12,400 ³⁶.

The state began to plan a major reform of the system in 1949 and 1950, strengthening the role of classroom education in the training of skilled workers and thus reducing the time that apprentices practised their skill on the shop floor under a master. Despite considerable debate within the apparatus the system was centralised with vocational training placed not under the administration of the enterprises, but under state bodies. The OMH gained 350 schools, the Ministry of Heavy Industry 31, the Ministry of Mining and Energy 24, and other industrial ministries a further 13. Alongside this the time taken to train a skilled worker was cut by the state. The methods that the state resorted to led to predictable problems. The state was highly successful in increasing the absolute numbers and the proportion of skilled workers in the industrial labour force, but very much at the expense of quality. Indeed the Central Statistical Office estimated that in 1953 35% of turners, 34% of welders, 32% of foundry men, 24% of precision engineers, 19% of fitters and 15% of smiths did not have sufficient training to adequately do their job ³⁷.

Even before the failings of the regime's flawed policy towards increasing the provision of skilled workers had become apparent the state

³⁶ - On the overhaul of apprenticeship and vocational training the best introduction is Péter Darvas "Oktatás és tervgazdálkodás", *Medvetánc*, Nos 4 & 1, pp. 59-75, 1983-4; for the figures on the number being trained in small scale industry in 1949 see SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/7d./1949; *A munkaerőgazdálkodásról és szakképzésről a gyáriparban*, p.4; for the other figures on the apprenticeship system see SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/4d./1949; *Munkaerőgazdálkodásunk jelenlegi helyzete és javaslatok a munkaerőgazdálkodás irányelveire*, p.4

³⁷ - Darvas "Oktatás és tervgazdálkodás", pp. 60-2; on the policy of reducing the apprenticeship period see MOL XIX-A-16-b/248d.; *Előterjesztés a népgazdasági Tanácshoz a szakmunkásképzés szabályozásáról*; SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *Könnyűipari és Mezőgazdasági Osztály Jelentés*, p.5; "A magyar munkásosztály fejlődése", pp.17-8; *Társadalmi Szemle*, March 1951, pp. 379-94

was preparing plans for the next stage in its radical expansion of the labour force. During 1950 upward revisions to the 1951 yearly plan were discussed and decided upon. The planned increase of the industrial workforce was set at the level of 600 to 650,000. With such increases in plan targets for industry, labour planners were seeking ways of finding 150,000 new workers for 1951 alone. Although 1951 was to be an important year, provisions also had to be made for increasing the number of workers into 1952 and 1953 as the new planned industrial establishments came on stream. At the centre of the proposals to cope with this expansion was a renewed emphasis on two elements of the original five year labour plan that had been discussed in 1949, namely to increase the proportion of women in workforce, and to introduce well-organised labour recruitment drives to persuade "surplus labour" in agriculture to join the industrial workforce ³⁸.

It was without doubt when the state attempted to integrate women into the industrial workforce that the strange mixture of socialist utopianism and economic expediency was at its most clear. The Stalinist state believed that what it defined as the "emancipation" of women formed one of the centrepieces of its social policy. Above all this "emancipation" meant that women were to escape oppression in the home by taking work in industry, in other words accepting the socialist obligation of labour. This would, according to the ideologists, give them ""honour" as well as "equal pay for equal work"". Yet the state failed to deliver on its objective of delivering a parallel transformation of gender roles. The result of this failure was to leave working women responsible for maintaining the private sphere and for

³⁸ - Birta "A szocialista iparositási politika néhány kérdése", pp. 138-46; Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság*, pp.155-61; the aim of increasing the size of the industrial workforce to this extent was made public in Mátyás Rákosi's address to the MDP II Congress in February 1951, see *A Szocializmus Építésének Útján ...*, p.29; for the view of the labour planners see MOL XIX-A-16-b/138d.; *Munkaerőtartalék Hivatala Szigoruan bizalmas Feljegyzés, Budapest 1950. november 29.*, p.1

raising the family, as Joanna Goven has correctly stated "emancipation" in practice, at least, consisted "not of the transformation of women's, let alone men's roles, but of the addition of new ones" ³⁹.

This programme informed plans for increasing the number of women in the industrial workforce. The OT believed that the number of women in industry could be rapidly increased without explicitly challenging the explicitly gendered notion of women's' work, in which the woman retained exclusive responsibility for work in the private sphere. The OT planned to introduce 123,000 new women employees into work within the socialist sector, of these 40,000 were to be young women, 43,000 were to come from agriculture and 40,000 from urban households. 54,000 were to go into industry and 22,000 into construction. Of this 76,000 20,000 were to be directed to the machine industry, and 1,500 to the mines with only 7,000 to be employed in clothing. The National Planning Office was very clear that if the mobilisation of women into industry was to have an impact on labour shortage an egalitarian policy within the workplace would have to be pursued. On training schemes for skilled workers it called for a policy of affirmative action so that a minimum of 30-50% of the training places be filled by young women. To this end it explicitly called for a "reorganisation of male labour" to facilitate the entrance of women into previously male dominated occupations, and explicitly instructed the enterprises "not to place women into only those occupations, which up until now have generally been filled by women, but they have to take the line, that women should be directed to every occupation" with the important caveat of "except those which their physical strength prevents them filling". Despite this apparent egalitarianism in some respects the plan aimed to strengthen certain

³⁹ - This section draws heavily upon the work of Joanna Goven, see her *The Gendered Foundations of Hungarian Socialism*, pp. 30-108, the quote is from *ibid.*, p.42; for the second quote see *ibid.*, p.45

aspects of the gender division of labour in place at the time, the planners sought to protect women administrative employees in the case of lay offs, suggesting that young males take the brunt of such redundancies in order to aid their re-deployment as skilled manual workers in view of their greater physical capabilities ⁴⁰.

In order to allow women to participate in industry it envisaged "freeing women from their domestic duties" through the expansion of crèches and day care centres for children, the growth of factory and communal eating facilities. Furthermore the regime envisaged the growth in the availability of labour saving devices such as washing machines and most ambitiously the industrialisation of housework through, for example, the creation of an enterprise to clean flats. The regime's failure to challenge established gender roles, except in so far as they imposed constraints on state attempts to overcome labour shortage, and on top of this their failure to deliver on such policies has led one historian of the role that gender played in labour policy in Hungary throughout the socialist period to comment that the regime simply came to equate women's' liberation with "wage work plus day care centres" ⁴¹.

Even though policy makers were aware in 1950 that in the field of social policy provision it was not merely "greater or smaller changes, but a real turnaround" that was necessary this was never delivered. This formed merely one important dimension of the general failure in the Stalinist state to improve social provision for the population as a whole, one that had a

⁴⁰ - MOL M-KS-276f.116/43ö.e., pp.15-6; MOL M-KS-276f.116/43ö.e.,p. 17; MOL M-KS-276f.116/43 ö.e., p.16; MOL M-KS-276f.116/43 ö.e., p.17

⁴¹ - The documents contained in the dossier MOL M-KS-276f.116/43ö.e. are full of plans to industrialise housework; the quote at the end of the paragraph is from Susan Zimmermann "A szabad munkaerő nyomában, "Utolérő" fejlődés és női munka Magyarországon", *Eszmélet*, No.25, p.166, 1995

particular impact on "new" women workers. The supply of day care places was wholly inadequate to cope with the demand; in the Danube Shoe Factory day care places could not be found for 40 children. Much of the available child care had been built quickly and cheaply and was inadequate for its purpose; one factory day care centre that was "a converted pub where the children were just dumped where the equipment was just inadequate" was much more the norm than the exception. The day care centre in the Magyar Pamutipar cotton factory in 1951 only operated during the morning shift causing considerable problems for those seeking to work on other shifts. The state expected working women to perform both a role in the socialist labour force and within the domestic sphere, and failed to make allowances in the factory if their obligations in the household interceded. Indeed in some sections of heavy industry women workers, who remained at home to look after sick children because the factory day care centre would not admit them, were labelled infringers of work discipline. Ultimately state labour policy increased the pressures on working women, in the workplace and in the household ⁴².

The state did recruit more women to work in industry but in contrast to the more utopian aims of the planners a clear gender difference in the kinds of labour performed persisted. During the popular front period the proportion of women workers in industry excluding construction had slowly increased from 23.1% in 1946 to 25.9% by the end of September 1949; an increase achieved in the context of a substantial growth in the size of the workforce. In the period from June 1949 to June 1950 in most sectors of the economy

⁴² - MOL XIX-A-16-b/138d.; *Munkaerőtartálékok Hivatala Szigoruan bizalmas Feljegyzés, 1950. november 29, p.2*; *Goven The Gendered Foundations of Hungarian Socialism, p.24*; SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/18d./1951; *Jelentés a Titkárságnak a dolgozó nők gyermekeinek ellátásáról, p.1*; SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/19d./1951; *Társadalombiztosítási és Üdítési Osztály Jelentés az építőipar területén lévő napköziotthonok és bölcsődék munkájáról, p.2*; MOL M-KS-276f.116/7ö.e, p.122; MOL M-KS-276f.116/7ö.e., p.101

the proportion of women in the workforce had steadily risen; the proportion of women among total employees in mining jumped from 3.6% to 7.3% over the period, and in construction materials production from 21.5% to 26.3%⁴³.

There were however marked gender differences between certain occupations in industry. Over the year 1949 to 1950 the number of women recruited into industry fell below that planned making up a total of 24.2% over that period compared to the planned proportion of 38.7%. Of those in all sectors except for textiles, chemicals, leather and fur, and food processing the proportion of women among those recruited fell below that planned. In heavy industrial sectors the difference was at its most clear; the plan had envisaged that 37.1% of all recruits to the metalworking sector be women, they only made up 14.7% in practice. This could be even more clearly seen in the changes of proportion of women employees in industry by sector; though in some sectors that had traditionally been characterised by high female employment such as food processing, clothing, and rubber production the proportion of women among the workforce fell, in others it rose; in textiles from 58.5% in June 1949 to 64.6% in June 1950. More striking was an increase of less than 2% over the period in the traditional heavy industrial sectors. Furthermore even when the participation of young women in training schemes was considered there seemed to be little sign of an imminent erosion of the male monopoly over well-paid skilled work in heavy industry. In the 1950-1 teaching year, women made up 18.8% of construction industry apprentices, 16.7% of mining apprentices and only 11% of apprentices in metalworking. Despite this the OT noted that the number of women apprentices training to become skilled workers in the metalworking sector that dropped out was enormous; of the 30 women who

⁴³ - MOL M-KS-276f.116/43ö.e., p.11; MOL M-KS-276f.116/43ö.e., p.3

undertook the training programme to become turners in the Mátyás Rákosi Works only one completed. Women were excluded from highly paid positions in heavy industry; in November 1950 of 9,807 turners only 249, of 1,068 shavers 11, of 22,547 fitters 69, of 2,206 crane operators 218, of 5,092 precision engineers 211 and of 14,022 stone masons only 509 were women ⁴⁴.

The 1951 campaigns failed to improve this situation. During the course of the year, the Mining and Energy Ministry over-fulfilled its plan integrating 7,879 women into production as opposed to the target of 4,000, the Light Industry Ministry further succeeded in fulfilling its plan integrating 7,145 women into production as opposed to the 7,000 set out. In traditional heavy industry egalitarian policies made few inroads. In the sector covered by the Steel and Machine Industry Ministry only 18,740 new female employees had been taken on, as opposed to the target of 29,000. In another priority sector, that covered by the Construction Ministry, only 17,964 new women had been recruited to training programmes to become skilled workers, by the end of 1951 they were only able to make up 24% of the total ⁴⁵.

Whilst the measures to increase the number of skilled workers and women in industry had substantial implications for the composition of the industrial workforce, it was the attempt to substantially shift labour from agriculture to industry that was to be decisive. Beginning in 1951 the state aimed to use a new device, that of the labour recruitment campaign (*munkaerő toborzási kampány*) to guarantee "for developing factories the adequate number of skilled workers who cannot be secured through other

⁴⁴ - MOL M-KS-276f.116/43ö.e., pp.1,3,8,13

⁴⁵ - MOL M-KS-276f.116/43ö.e., pp.70-1

forms of mobilising labour power from the workers who are being freed from agriculture". Recruiting staff from each individual enterprise seeking labour were to go to given target counties and attempt to recruit labour. The worker who was to be recruited would sign a written contract with their new employer that would last for a minimum of a year. In exchange for signing their contract the worker would be able to claim a one off payment for taking work in the socialist sector ⁴⁶.

Labour recruitment campaigns were designed to facilitate an orderly transfer of labour from poorer agricultural regions to rapidly developing industrial areas. As such they were as much tools of regional development as they were of labour policy. Regional development policy strongly prioritised industrial settlements and regions of the country and directed investment towards them, whilst it aimed to restrict the development of those areas which in the plan were to remain agricultural. Settlements were placed into three categories, the first was filled by those settlements of decisive importance to the national economy and the third was filled by those of least importance, with the second category occupying an intermediate position. Small village settlements were denied funds for investment in infrastructure, at one point the "liquidation" of village communities was mooted by the planners. Together with this policy towards settlements a broader regional policy was developed which divided Hungary into thirteen districts for the purposes of economic development. Settlement policy promoted the development of infrastructure in places where industrial investment was to take place. Regional development policy switched investment from the poor agricultural regions in the Great Plain and Southern Transdanubia to the

⁴⁶ - MOL XIX-A-16b/138d.; *Tervezet a munkakerőtoborzás szabályozásáról*, p.1; for the legal regulation of labour recruitment see *Törvények és rendeletek hivatalos gyűjteménye I. Törvények, törvényerejű rendeletek és minisztertanácsi rendeletek, 1951*, pp.173-5, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1952; for a sample contract see MOL XIX-A-16b/138d.; *Tervezet a toborzott munkavállalókkal kötendő szerződésre*

capital and industrial north of the country. It was in this context that the initial plans for the labour recruitment campaigns were drawn up; counties and two individual cities, Budapest and Dunapentele, that were marked for rapid industrial development were twinned with poorer agricultural counties in regions not marked for development which would supply them with "surplus" labour. The final plan for labour recruitment in 1951 envisaged that 62,100 new workers would need to be recruited by the 30th June of which 38,000 would go into the construction industry, 8,100 into heavy industry and 3,200 into mining. The overwhelming majority of this new labour was to come from the poorer agricultural counties ⁴⁷.

Organised labour recruitment campaigns were far from successful; by the 30th June the campaign had only recruited 58.2% of the number of workers originally envisaged, worse still the plan had been raised from the original 62,100 to 121,355 and this modified target had only been fulfilled by 29.8%. The state continued the drive over the course of the summer with very similar results, between the 1st July and 31st August the labour planners had originally envisaged recruiting 8,010 new workers, instead they recruited 4,221. This however meant that they could only fulfill their modified target of 9,690 by 43.6%. Furthermore the figures demonstrated that the majority of the total of 40,387 recruited by the end of August had entered the labour force between the 22nd February and the end of March. The regional breakdown of the fulfilment figures showed that the campaigns were failing to re-allocate labour as intended across the regions; the numbers recruited tended to be disproportionately high when a recruiting

⁴⁷ - On regional development and settlement policy during the First Five Year Plan the best account is Belényi *Az Alföldi Városok és a Településpolitika*, pp. 83-107; see also Belényi *A Sztálini Iparosítás Emberi Ára*, pp.127-48; Mária Gyenei "Munkás-paraszt szövetség és településpolitika (1950-1956). II. rész", *Szociológia*, Nos.1-2, pp.29-66, 1990; for the labour plans see MOL M-KS-276f.116/4ö.e., p.2; for the final decision see MOL M-KS-276f.116/4ö.e., pp.12-3, published in *Munkaerőtartálék*, February 1951, pp.23-4

enterprise lay within easy reach. Recruitment tended to be strong in traditionally poor agricultural counties on the north of the Great Plain where there was no smallholder tradition, and extremely low in the target counties in the south of Transdanubia where a tradition of private land holding remained strong ⁴⁸.

The reasons for this failure are examined in the following chapter, but its first major effect was to intensify the problems of labour shortage, especially in construction. The precise impact of these problems is illustrated by the labour problems of the Dunapentele-Sztálinváros construction site, then the country's largest during its first year of operation. The crucial year for the site was 1951. Over 3,000 flats were to be built during the year according to the site plan, alongside much of the basic infrastructure of a new town. Alongside this the construction of the servicing factories like the machine plant and the preparation of the site for the steel plant were to be completed. In order to achieve such ambitious targets a huge increase in the workforce of the site was envisaged; the workforce of around 1500 at the end of 1950 was planned to rise to 8,700 by the end of the first quarter of 1951, to 18,000 by the end of the second quarter, to 22,000 by the end of the third quarter finally reaching 24,000 by the end of the year. The state tacitly admitted that an increase of such a magnitude was unachievable when it agreed to find only 5,450 unskilled workers through organised labour recruitment in three agricultural counties over the first half of 1951. The number of manual workers on the site rose from 2,125 in January 1951 to 5,202 in June. A total of 8,388 new workers took up work on the site during the first half of 1951, but 5,252 left their jobs over the same period. Over the half year labour shortage became extremely evident

⁴⁸ - For the fulfilment of the plan in the first eight months of 1951 see MOL M-KS-276f.116/4ö.e., p.163; on the regional breakdown in terms of labour recruitment see MOL M-KS-276f.116/4ö.e., p.94

on the site, a problem that firstly manifested itself as a skilled labour shortage and very quickly became general ⁴⁹.

The phenomenon of labour shortage was felt more generally. Increasingly the state was to resort to other means in an attempt to mitigate the growing problems. The first method was to mobilise party members and others to participate in labour on the various construction sites. In August 1951, for example, on the Sztálinváros-Dunapentele site some four hundred members of the official youth organisation were working. Largely the state was to use more coercive methods to supply unskilled labour to enterprises, especially in construction and mining. In early 1951 the state established an enterprise under the control of the Ministry of the Interior to employ condemned political prisoners or those kept under secret police detention in the construction sector. The enterprise was to concentrate on those parts of road, sewer and railway construction that involved the movement of large amounts of earth. In mining it was to supply labour to quarries also. Workers in this enterprise were employed on certain road building projects connected with the construction of the Sztálin Steel Works, but attempts made in August 1951 to bring them onto the construction site itself were unsuccessful ⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ - MOL M-KS-276f.116/vegyes/4ö.e., pp.42-6; on the role of Dunapentele in the state labour plan see MOL M-KS-276f.116/4ö.e., p.2; the figures on employment during the first half of 1951 are adapted from MOL XXIX-F-2-a/22d.; *Kimutatás, Dunapentele, 1951. július 4.*; MOL M-KS-276f.116/vegyes/5ö.e., p.76; MOL XXIX-F-2-a/45d.; *Jelentés a dunapentelei gyártelep 1951.évi III.negyedévi állásáról*, p.3

⁵⁰ - For members of the official youth organisation working on the Dunapentele-Sztálinváros site in August 1951 see MOL XXIX-F-2-a/45d.; *Jelentés a dunapentelei gyártelep 1951.évi III.negyedévi állásáról*, p.3; on the beginnings of the widespread institutional employment of forced labour in industry and construction see MOL XIX-A-16-b/250d.; *Előterjesztés a népgazdasági tanácshoz az elítéltek és rendőrhatalósági őrizeteselek foglalkoztatására vállalat alapításáról*; MOL XXIX-F-2-a/42d.; *Jegyzőkönyv az 1951 november 13-án tartott Beruházás Vezetőségi ülésről*, p.6

Given the intractability of the problem of labour shortage by the end of 1951 the authorities were moving towards a more radical policy involving greater use of prison labour in the economy as a whole. An organisation called the Public Interest Works Directorate (*Közérdekű Munkák Igazgatósága - KÖMI*) was set up and given the job of integrating, in co-operation with enterprises, imprisoned labour into the national economy. In addition to managing the enterprises that already existed and were based on forced labour, it was given the responsibility for organising camps close to the enterprises. Unlike the proposals to put political prisoners to work mooted earlier in the year, the new plan was much more comprehensive. Ordinary prisoners were put to work in areas of the national economy where labour shortages were especially severe and in jobs that were unpopular with free labourers ⁵¹.

It was in coal mining that the use of prisoners was to become general, as a result of the failure of more traditional forms of labour recruitment. By early 1952 it was reported nationally that the mines were in a crisis situation as far as labour supply was concerned; in January 1952 the total number of underground workers in the mines was only 10% higher than it had been in 1950, and much of this increase could be accounted for simply through the way in which administrators working in pit offices were classified together with underground workers ⁵². It was in this context that the use of forced labour in mines like those at Tatabánya was dramatically extended. Preparations for using prisoners in the mines were made in June 1952, rules

⁵¹ - On the creation and the role of the KÖMI see MOL XIX-A-16-b/250d.; *Előterjesztés a Népgazdasági Tanácshoz letartóztatottak termelőmunkában foglalkoztatásának egységes megszervezése*

⁵² - For the general picture see MOL M-KS-276f.88/254ö.e., pp.5-8; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/15ö.e., p.49; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/15ö.e., pp.47-8; on exaggerated promises made by labour recruiters see *Harc a Szénért*, 29th November 1951; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/15ö.e., p.66

were laid down setting down minimal training that they had to receive before they started work. What was especially extraordinary is that they were expected to fill all labour shortages wherever appropriate, even of skilled labour. If, for example, a prisoner was a trained coal hewer he could have expected to be allocated a position at the coal face. In Tatabánya forced labour was already employed in the quarries in the city in 1951, but it was only as labour shortage intensified late in the following year that the mine management seriously contemplated the use of forced labour to mine coal. Throughout 1953 the mining management came increasingly to rely on the labour of prisoners to secure a workforce of adequate size to maintain planned production; in February 405 prisoners were working the mines but with labour problems in the summer months as worker-peasants returned to agriculture for the harvest season the figure rose, reaching 633 in September. In spite of the New Course the employment of prison labour in coal mining continued up until 1956 ⁵³.

The prisoners were placed in those parts of the mines where working conditions were regarded as exceptionally dangerous. One former prisoner who worked in the Tatabánya mines in 1953 and 1954 described the conditions in the parts of Pit No. XIV where he worked. "More than a half" he recalled "were wet or flooded, in some places the temperature reached 35 to 40 centigrade. The improvised pit-props broke to such a degree, that a cartman could only walk with difficulty underneath them. The carts themselves were not lubricated and only went with difficulty mine

⁵³ - On the regulations relating to the employment of prisoners in the Tatabánya mines see MOL XXIX-F-107-e/34d.; *Körrendelet szénbányászati trösztök, vállalatok és a bányarendészeti felügyelőségek részére*; on the beginnings of the employment of prison labour in the mines see MOL XXIX-F-107-o/51d.; *Mérlegbeszámoló jelentés 1952 évről*, p.1; on the growth of prison labour in the mines see MOL XXIX-F-107-o/51d.; *Mérlegbeszámoló 1953 II.évnegyedről*, pp.24-30; Tóth "A pokol tomácán", p.127; TMA 728-89 Kézirat Gyűjtemény; Zoltán Lánosz *Adatok a tatabányai VIII és XIV aknák történetéhez*, pp.10-1

maintenance was non-existent". The same former prisoner was to recall that "the political prisoners were often concentrated into the most dangerous places" including part of the mine known as the Karst cave, an area where a large underground lake lay next to the coal face and where consequently cutting coal brought a significant risk of flooding the whole face ⁵⁴.

Despite the naked exploitation of prisoners by the management of the coal mines, the mixture of social utopianism and economic expediency that characterised so many different fields of labour policy also could be found in the employment of forced labour. This was seen in the policies that were pursued in the Tatabánya mines towards wages and vocational training. They seemed in part at least to be motivated by a desire to reform prisoners through participation in socialist labour. Given the exploitation of labour by management and state, however, there was little hope that the regime would be remotely successful in achieving this goal. Prisoners received the same monetary reward for their work as did free labourers, the norms and wage systems were the same as were the rates of pay. The imprisoned coal hewers earned 1,500 to 3,000 Forints per month, as did their free colleagues, whilst the cartmen likewise earned over 1,000 Forints per month. Prison labour paid the state 260 Forints monthly for their "accommodation", though in some respects they were better off than their free colleagues as they were neither expected to pay the childlessness tax nor sign up for peace loans. For excessive norm-fulfilment or exceptional results achieved in the labour competition over a long period of time the prisoners were able to claim that their good performance at work showed they had reformed. They could gain considerable reductions in their sentences as a result. Vocational training had been extended to the

⁵⁴ - On the policy of the mine management towards placing prisoners in the worst parts of the mines see MOL XXIX-F-107-o/51d.; *Mérlegbeszámoló 1953 II. évnegyedről*, pp.1-3; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 10040/55, p.3; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 10040/55, p.5

prisoners in the hope that once they were freed they would become coal hewers. When a significant number of the political prisoners working in the mines were freed in 1953 the vocational training programmes were thrown into crisis as the prisoners, rather than remain in Tatabánya as free miners, sought to return to their homes ⁵⁵.

The widespread employment of prisoners in the national economy was not even a permanent solution to the problem of labour shortage in the mines, let alone in the economy as a whole. It functioned more as a sticking plaster to cover the considerable problems that existed with labour supply. Hungarian sociologists have argued that during the 1950s an expansion of industry occurred which was not based on any innovation in the technological aspects of labour process. This expansion was made possible by the existence of a large reserve of unskilled labour, which was exhausted by the mid-1960s. The argument presented here has been that the attempts to mobilise the reserves of unskilled labour ran into the sand almost as soon as they had begun, simply because the state was not able to attract sufficient labour to work in the industrial sector it sought to create. The reliance of industrial labour policy on integrating unskilled agricultural labour into the world of the factory ended not in 1965, but in 1953. From then on the debate shifted towards the issue of how labour shortage could be alleviated through productivity improvements that could be secured by more rational utilisation of labour. After 1953 labour mobilisation campaigns were replaced by a discussion of different kinds of wage system, reform of the labour competition, and the improved organisation of production ⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ - On the wage rates in the Tatabánya labour camps see OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 10040/55, p.6; on sentence reductions see OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 10040/55, p.10; on the vocational training of prisoners in the mines see MOL XXIX-F-107-e/3d.; *T. Tatabányai Szénbányászati Trósz, Jogi Titkárság, Helyben címzett levél, 1953. november 4, p.1*

Conclusion

The state had essentially two goals that sometimes overlapped and frequently conflicted in expanding the industrial workforce. On the one hand the state sought to extend participation in socialist labour to the whole of society by eliminating private enterprise and the notion of labour as a commodity across all sectors of the economy. This formed the fundamentally utopian part of its programme. Cold War pressures were, however, forcing it to expand industry at a rapid pace and for that it needed labour. Economic expediency and socialist utopianism therefore interacted to form a policy which aimed to "emancipate" women through integrating them into the industrial labour force, whilst on the other hand it increased the employment of prisoners in industry to an unprecedented degree. Often the strange mixture of utopian rhetoric and exploitative practice undermined popular belief in the regime's socialist intentions.

In the field of labour policy it was the regime's socialist utopianism that fatally undermined it. Labour shortage was largely the result of the state's failure to mobilise sufficient labour from agriculture to meet the needs of the industrial sector it sought to create. The state's targets were

⁵⁶ - For this argument see István Kemény "Technika, szakmastruktúra és munkahelystruktúra" reprinted in his *Szociológiai Írások*, p.175, Replika, Szeged, 1992; it is no accident that Imre Nagy regarded the Rákosi leadership's reliance on "extensive" strategies in labour policy, rather than on those which aimed to improve productivity as one of its central mistakes, see Imre Nagy *On Communism: In Defence of the New Course*, pp. 113-21, Thames & Hudson, London, 1957; for the debates on economic reform during the period see György Péter "A gazdaságosság jelentőségéről és szerepéről a népgazdaság tervszerű irányításában" reprinted in László Szamuely (ed.) *A Magyar Közgazdasági Gondolat Fejlődése 1954-1978; A szocialista gazdaság mechanizmusának kutatása*, pp.74-91, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1986 and Komai *Overcentralisation in Economic Administration*. The best general overview of economic policy problems and debates in this period is György Földes "Egyszerűsítés, Mechanizmus és Iparirányítás, 1953-1956", *Párttörténeti Közlemények*, No.2, pp.72-108, 1984; on the reform of wages see András Hegedűs *A Munkásbérezés Rendszere Iparunkban*, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1960

certainly unrealistic but a concentration on this fact obscures as much as it reveals in terms of exploring the key dynamics of the attempt to mobilise agricultural labour for industry, and the consequences that had for the re-making of the industrial workforce.

Prior to 1950 a large section of the young rural population sought escape from agriculture through integration into the industrial workforce. With the expansion of industrial employment it seems probable that such desires might have been realised. The collectivisation drive combined with the increase of burdens on individual smallholders was perceived as a general attack on way of life of the smallholders and it promoted enormous popular fear and hatred of the regime in rural areas. As a result many smallholders came to see work in industry as work for "them", and as giving up their identity. For this reason it was only those who forced to do so by crippling taxation and other methods that sent family members to work. As these "new" workers entered industry and construction this legacy would profoundly shape how many of them saw their work, their new bosses and their new environment. These are however the issues the next chapter considers.

Chapter Four

Making "New" Workers: Proletarianisation, Social Mobility and Work Discipline

Introduction

By the mid-1950s the industrial workforce had changed beyond recognition. In October 1953 the workforces of three factories in the capital were surveyed by the Central Statistical Office, the Chinoin Pharmaceuticals Factory, the Magyar Pamutipar cotton factory and the MÁVAG Machine Factory, and it was discovered that 39.2% of the workforce had worked in their job for three years or less. Outside the capital the degree of migration from agriculture to industry was underlined by surveys conducted in the provinces. In the MASZOBAL Aluminium Smelter 50% of the workers had been engaged in agriculture in 1949, in the Zalaegerszeg Clothing Factory the figure was 35%, in the Kecskemét Conserves Plant 32% and in the Lenin Steel Works 20%. Proletarianisation produced considerable social mobility, of men who were skilled workers in the early 1960's 41.5% had a father who had been employed in agriculture in 1938, among semi-skilled workers the percentage was 61.1%, and for male unskilled workers the figure stood at 68.3%. Amongst women the equivalent figures were 32.4%, 43.7% and 54.2% ¹.

The best estimates of the social origins of the industrial workforce that existed in 1953 were those produced by the Central Statistical Office in its 1954 survey. It stated that to cover the growth of the workforce in industry and construction 460,000 new workers must have entered the workforce in the five years between 1949 and 1954. Of those 460,000 some 75,000 came from natural growth, a further 110,000 from the ranks of those who had not worked

¹ - "A magyar munkásosztály fejlődése", pp.14-5; the figures on social mobility are taken from Rudolf Andorka *A Társadalmi Mobilitás Változásai Magyarországon*, pp.75-6, Gondolat, Budapest, 1982

beforehand, 75,000 had previously worked in small scale industry and the largest group, around 200,000 had come from agriculture ².

Almost of half of the "new" workers came from agriculture and this group was the only one of the groups above that was totally new to the industrial workforce. This chapter examines how the industrial workforce changed as a result of the influx of those formerly employed in agriculture. It argues that they left their agricultural livelihoods primarily because of state coercion. The distrust of the state that this experience left ensured that many of these "new" workers were not easily integrated into the industrial workforce. Patterns of mobility within the workforce ensured that some of these workers succeeded in becoming skilled workers, though generally in sectors where working conditions were poor. The vast majority were cast to the periphery of the workforce and met the despotism of the socialist state in industry.

The chapter begins by identifying the main characteristics of the industrial workforce as it had emerged by 1953. It then steps back to examine the process of transformation examining the situation in agriculture that forced many "new" workers to leave. Afterwards it moves on to consider the social mobility which enabled some of these workers to join the ranks of the skilled and examines the experiences of those left on the periphery.

Remaking the "Working Class", 1949-1953

Though labour recruitment was only partially successful in directing labour into industry in the numbers the state required between 1949 and 1953 the industrial workforce expanded substantially as a result, as can be seen from

² - There appears to be some dispute over the figures, the ones I have used come from "A magyar munkásosztály fejlődése", p.12; the published version of the report indicates a lower figure see *Közgazdasági Szemle*, February 1955, p.124

Table 1. The number of workers in industry excluding construction rose from 412,590 in 1949 to 616,544 in 1953. This meant that in 1953 the number of workers in industry excluding construction was substantially higher than its 1938 level; most of the increase took place after 1949. The most dramatic increases were in heavy industry, especially in the engineering and metalworking sector; in 1953 the number of workers in precision engineering was almost seven times greater than in 1938, the workforce in machine manufacture was over three times larger than in 1938, and those employed in the manufacture of high powered electrical machinery were over four times more numerous in 1953 than they had been in 1938³.

³ - For these figures see *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Statisztikai Évkönyv 1953*, p.14, Central Statistical Office, restricted publication, Budapest, 1954

Table 1 - Workers in industry and construction by sector, 1949-1953

Sector	1949 ⁴	1950 ⁵	1951 ⁶	1952 ⁷	1953 ⁸
Mining	67,048	71,027	75,600	81,602	93,547
Steel Production	32,106	35,956	41,160	39,736	44,914
Machine manufacture	66,069	68,935	83,936	94,877	104,653
Power goods production	10,284	13,789	16,274	18,723	17,971
Low-power electrical goods production	10,092	11,222	13,929	13,657	15,082
Precision engineering	1,572	3,422	5,951	7,698	9,694
Mass production	12,956	16,985	23,898	26,304	27,009
Transport repair yards	16,430	17,140	16,035	16,846	19,105
Electrical production	3,583	4,970	5,353	6,124	7,372
Construction material production	22,538	31,805	34,978	38,216	46,408
Chemicals	15,745	13,314	14,580	18,202	19,273
Rubber production	3,017	2,623	2,837	-	-
Heavy industry (total)	261,440	291,188	334,531	361,985	405,028
Wood industry	10,965	12,610	15,049	15,968	17,737
Paper manufacture	5,217	4,887	4,661	4,502	5,064
Printing	10,066	10,891	9,386	8,390	7,770
Textiles	67,529	73,644	78,912	81,939	79,496
Leather and fur products	3,945	4,133	3,759	3,881	4,136
Clothing	10,278	15,799	21,562	24,692	26,626
Light industry excl food processing (total)	108,000	121,964	133,339	139,372	140,829
Food processing	43,150	43,580	46,181	52,049	62,628
Industry excluding construction (total)	412,590	456,732	46,181	554,024⁹	616,544¹⁰
Ministerial owned construction	-	121,888	150,566	195,681 ¹¹	194,827 ¹²

4 - 1949 figures (which exclude construction) are based on those provided in the *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Statisztikai Évkönyv 1950*, p.13, Central Statistical Office, restricted publication, Budapest, 1951

5 - These which include construction are also based on *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Statisztikai Évkönyv 1950*, p.13

6 - These are based on the *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Statisztikai Évkönyv 1951*, p.21 & p.131, Central Statistical Office, restricted publication, Budapest, 1952

7 - The 1952 figures are based on the *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Statisztikai Évkönyv 1952*, p.22 & p.118

8 - The 1953 figures are based on the *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Statisztikai Évkönyv 1953*, p.27 & 90,

9 - These figures include so-called local industry, which was left out of the sector based figures

10 - The same applies as to note number 9

11 - These is a total figure for both Ministerial and Local owned construction, no breakdown is available for either 1952 or 1953

Socialist industrialisation changed the balance between sectors in terms of industrial employment. The number of workers employed in heavy industry was nearly two and a half as great in 1953 as it had been in 1938. In light industry the workforce was only just over 25% larger than it had been 1938, whilst there were fewer workers employed in paper manufacture and the leather industry in 1953 than in 1938. There were exceptions to this rule, in the clothing industry the number of workers grew spectacularly reaching three times its 1938 in 1953, and the wood industry where the workforce doubled in size between 1949 and 1953. Though the somewhat confused and incomplete nature of the figures for construction prevents the calculation of similar figures its workforce also experienced considerable growth. The importance of industrial labour in the economy grew, the proportion of workers among total active earners increased from 23.6% in 1949 to 28.6% in 1953 ¹³.

The sectoral stratification of the industrial workforce was consequently considerably different in 1953 to that which existed in 1949. When construction was excluded from the industrial workforce those who worked in heavy industry made up 64.1% of industrial workers in 1949, a figure that rose to 68.5% in 1953. The proportion of industrial workers in light industry fell from 24.5% in 1949 to 21.1% in 1953, and likewise the proportion working in food processing fell from 11.4% in 1949 to 10.4% in 1953. A substantially higher proportion of the industrial workforce outside construction in 1953 worked in larger establishments than before the beginning of the First Five Year Plan. In 1948 15.7% of all workers in this group worked in enterprises employing under 100; by 1953 this

¹² - The same applies as in note number 9 above

¹³ - For these figures see *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Statisztikai Évkönyv 1953*, p.14; "A magyar munkásosztály fejlődése", p.3; see also the publication which came from the results of the 1954 Central Statistical Office survey; *Közgazdasági Szemle*, February 1955, p.123

figure was only 4.5%. The extent to which nationalisation and socialist industrialisation had produced a workforce concentrated in large factories was clear from the 1953 statistical data; 13.5% worked in enterprises employing between 100 and 300, 11.7% in establishments employing between 300 and 500, and 70.3% in factories employing over 500. The geographical location of the industrial workforce had changed, as Budapest's traditional predominance as the major industrial centre weakened. In 1938 the proportion of industrial workers working outside the capital had been 37.7%, by January 1954 workers in the provinces constituted 53.5% of the total. Particularly notable was the growth of provincial industrial centres such as Miskolc and Tatabánya. A workforce was forged in those years that worked in large scale industry, one much more concentrated in heavy industry than in the pre-socialist era, and one in which the Budapest workforce, was more balanced by the workforces of the provincial industrial centres ¹⁴.

The new state apparatus was largely recruited from the pre-socialist industrial workforce. This was clearly visible in a survey conducted by the Central Statistical Office in January 1954 of the social origins of this group. The survey was based on a representative sample of 20 large factories, 8 ministries, and 3 local councils. Of the 8500 people employed in managerial positions in the 20 factories, 33.2% had been workers, 3% peasants, 41.2% were of worker origin and 11.5% were from an agricultural background. Among the managing directors of the enterprises around three quarters had been workers. Of the workers who had worked in these 20 enterprises in 1949 some 3000 had been promoted to various positions in public administration, the military or in management. A further survey in 1958 confirmed that there had been massive promotion out of the industrial workforce into the elite; 45% of members of

14 - "A magyar munkásosztály fejlődése", p.8; The 1948 figure is taken from *ibid.* p.5; the 1953 figure from the *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Statisztikai Évkönyv 1953*, p.82; *Közgazdasági Szemle*, February 1955, p.126

parliament, 51% of ministerial and senior policy making officials, and 65% of enterprise directors had been industrial workers at the beginning of their careers. The combination of these factors led the Central Statistical Office to estimate that by 1954 about one half of the industrial workforce consisted of new workers, recruited to industry since 1949 ¹⁵. Of these one half came from agriculture and left in the circumstances of the state's offensive against private agricultural activity.

Proletarianisation, Collectivisation and Labour Recruitment

At the turn of the 1970s two sociologists researching the past and present of workers in Csepel noted the large number who came from agriculture in the 1950s to take industrial employment. They retrospectively identified two motivating factors as causes; the first was the pull factor of a rapidly expanding industrial sector, yet more important was the push factor of the radical anti-smallholder policies pursued by the regime during those years ¹⁶. Agricultural policies and the degree of force associated with their implementation were not an unambiguous "push" factor. The opposition they engendered hindered labour recruitment and created enormous distrust of the state. The rural population's experience of the Stalinist state dissuaded many of them from joining the industrial workforce as much as it persuaded others. The utopian goal of a socialised agricultural sector came up against the economic aim of redistributing labour from agriculture into industry.

¹⁵ - A brief and useful introduction to the social dynamics of this process is given by sociologist Antal Örkeny *Social Mobility and the New Elite in Hungary*, unpublished manuscript, Budapest, 1990; *Közgazdasági Szemle*, February 1955, p.136; MOL M-KS-288f.5/1958/96 ö.e., p.21; *Közgazdasági Szemle*, February 1955, p.124

¹⁶ - See István Kemény & Gyula Kozák *A Csepel Vas- és Fémművek Munkásai*, p.34, Társadalomtudományi Intézet, Budapest, 1970

The experience in rural communities' of the various strands of Stalinist agricultural policy formed the backdrop against which the labour recruiters began to attempt to enlist labour from the villages. From 1948 onward the intensification of "class war" politics by the state, increases in taxation and compulsory deliveries, as well as the attempts to socialise agriculture transformed rural life. The combination of high taxation of land as well as the sharp increases in compulsory deliveries severely squeezed the incomes of individual landholders by 1951. Even before compulsory deliveries, amounts of goods that had to be sold to the state at fixed prices were levied, taxation of smallholders was high. The son of one remembered that in the early 1950s "tax was under normal circumstances was 250 Forints per month, but in many cases rose to 300 Forints, because if we couldn't give anything to the state it was put into tax" 17.

Compulsory deliveries were often punitive whilst the arbitrary methods used to enforce them were bitterly resented. One young farmer remembered that the local supervisor of agricultural procurement "strictly ensured that the correct amount was collected at the latest milk had to be brought to them (the authorities) by quarter past six in the morning. The calculation took place monthly the yearly delivery of milk was 660 litres from our first cow, 380 litres from the second one. They didn't take into account that we also used them as beasts of burden and so the poor, tired animals hardly produced any milk on the days we worked with them. For this reason we were happy if a single cup of milk was left for us in a day". During the 1952 harvest a son of another farmer recalled that he "only slept four hours, and I had to do the work of two. The corn was only half ripe but we had to cut it because the president of the (local) council told us we had to we went home with empty baskets I only know of the penalty we got for being behind with out taxes and compulsory deliveries, in

17 - OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 8027/55, p.2

1952 our tax demand was 9,400 Forints, and because we couldn't give a single litre of milk to the state in 1952 our fine was another 1,500 Forints". In the face of such circumstances many smallholders resorted to the blatant avoidance of regulations legitimised by commonly held beliefs such as "whatever is the state's it is right to obtain. This isn't theft, because they say what is the state's property is ours. The state steals from the farmer, we are just getting it back" 18.

The taxation and compulsory deliveries had pushed many small farmers close to starvation by late 1952 and early 1953. As a result of the bad harvest in 1952 there was a general lack of fodder in much of western Hungary. This coincided with an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease and the combination led to the death of large numbers of farm animals in Spring 1953. As a result of compulsory deliveries during the Spring "the farmer got less for his produce, than his seed had cost him", as a result "there was general hunger in western Hungarian villages. The rural population had to wait in long queues for bread and flour, whilst the family who could get hold of half a kilo of flour was delighted". This turned into strong covert resistance "if someone had some corn, he strongly resisted the attempts of the state to take it" 19.

In addition to taxation and compulsory deliveries elements of the collectivisation campaign itself directly affected the capacity of many individual landholders to survive. This was particularly the case with the campaigns of consolidate the holdings of the new agricultural producer co-operatives. One former smallholder remembered that "when in Spring 1951 the agricultural producer co-operative group was set up in Fertőd, 6 hold of our land fell within its designated area, some of our best quality land. They compensated us, but

18 - OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 04759/53, p.3; OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 02695/53, p.3; OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 8501/55, p.1

19 - For livestock in western Hungary in early 1953 see OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 1761/54, p.1; OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 3242/54, p.1

with four hold of poor quality land, far away (from the village), and we protested against it in vain". An anti-Communist ethnic German told the story of a neighbour caught up in the consolidation of holdings campaign in his local village "M.K. worked for decades on the manor he liked the "liberation", he got five hold from the best land on the estate. He worked the land with two cows, was fifty years of age, had a younger wife, son and two daughters then in 1950 came the consolidation of holdings he was compensated with land seven kilometres from his home. The distance was bad for both the cows, and he had to sell both of them for a horse. Milk disappeared from the family diet and on the poor quality land his compulsory deliveries were higher" 20.

Many refused to join the agricultural producer co-operatives out of a feeling that their membership came from an inferior class. One escapee simply stated that of the members in his local co-operative "one half hardly care about their work, the other half are incapable of it". Despite state coercion there was considerable resistance to joining the agricultural producer co-operatives. This was in part because of the considerable poverty of many of their members that was brought about by the poor organisation of the co-operatives. Stories about the discontent of members spread like wildfire through the villages, in one a story spread about a confrontation between a former domestic servant and the co-operative president. She was alleged to have said, in disgust "the president criticises the old Baron, but I served him, I always had a set of best clothes, I never went hungry, and against the set down 2,20 *mázsa* (quintals) of corn, I now get nothing" 21.

Rather than join the co-operatives the younger members of many smallholder families were sent out to work in order to give the peasant

20 - OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 02695/53, p.1; OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 14271/52, p.8

21 - OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 4154/55, p.8; OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 14271/52, p.11

household a regular income. The way this worked was illustrated by the experience of one smallholder family in predominantly rural Tolna county; "M.K. could not maintain his independence any longer, and his daughter Ilonka went to work for the post office, she helped at home in the morning, and collected and delivered letters in the afternoon. She gave her money to her father, couldn't buy herself clothes from it, and stole food from work so that her mother and younger sister could have something decent to eat". Often the needs of family members led to changes in the gender division of labour in smallholder households, one escapee from a south western Hungarian village stated that "the women have never worked as much as they do now. No-one employs anyone else in the village because there aren't applicants, and it's impossible to accept them anyway. Women have to leave the housework to work in the fields." 22.

The result of such poverty was generalised hatred of the state in rural areas. In the village of Felsőrajk in south-western Hungary the relationship between the local council, as the representative of the state in the community, and the local population was characterised by "open opposition". The regime had created a climate of considerable opposition in the village to the state, one elderly couple told their son who escaped to the West that "there has never been as much unity among the villagers as now". Many perceived state policies as a direct attack on their way of life, one farmer's son interpreted such policies as an attempt to wipe out what he considered to be the "traditional peasant way of life" by "forcing us into agricultural producer co-operatives" 23.

It was against the background of hatred and fear generated by agricultural policies that the labour recruiters entered the villages seeking labour for faraway construction sites and mines in 1951. Hardly surprisingly the recruitment drive

22 - OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 14271/52, pp.8-9; OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 4154/55, p.7

23 - OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 4154/55, p.6; OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 3242/54, p.1

caused near hysteria in many villages. This was fed by the fear of the regime that had been created as a result of the implementation of its agricultural policies; in one village in south western Hungary an army officer addressed the meeting to announce the labour recruitment drive. For this reason many of the smallholders who had been gathered together by the agitators refused to enter, fearing that they would be forcibly deported. As the agitators dispersed across Zala county a rumour was spread that the recruiters had come to take away the young to forced labour camps in Siberia and Korea. In eastern Hungary a rumour was spread that for every 7 kh one man would be allowed to stay, whilst the remainder would be deported to the Soviet Union ²⁴.

A large proportion of the agricultural population were fearful of leaving the village. In one area rumours spread that the weekly earnings of new workers would not exceed 30 Forints, that women and men would be forced to sleep in the same barracks and that those who chose mining would no longer be allowed to see the sun. Many of these rumours related to perceptions of industrial labour, which were informed to some extent by reality. Often rumours would relate to concrete places and factories, with the case of Sztálinváros-Dunapentele as an especial focus of such rumour mongering. One prospective worker had heard that from there "a worker could only get out through weakness, illness or internment. Its well known that there the controls are very great; for example after nine or ten at night its not possible to even walk the streets. There are police raids daily. The many cheated people work without real heart" ²⁵.

²⁴ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.2/par/33ö.e.; *Szakszervezetek Zalamegyei Tanácsa 392/II levélre. Munkaerőtoborzásról*; MOL M-KS-276f.116/4ö.e., p.17; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.2/par/33ö.e.; *Jelentés a munkaerőtoborzás eddigi eredményeiről, Zalaegerszeg, 1951 február 27*; MOL M-KS-276f.116/4ö.e., p.19; MOL M-KS-276f.116/4ö.e., p.82

²⁵ - MOL M-KS-276f.116/4ö.e., p.81; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6, Item No. 05193/53, p.2

Given the suspicion of the state in rural areas it was only poor rural youth who took jobs in industry. Poor rural youth, especially male youth, had provided a source of industrial labour during the late 1940s; in November 1948 some 40-45% of apprentices training to become industrial skilled workers were of rural origin. Their aim was essentially to escape what they saw as the physically demanding nature of agricultural work on a smallholding and the lack of opportunities in the village, and go to seek a better life in the town. Whilst such a motivation was present into the 1950s the dynamics of why young men of rural origin took industrial jobs was entirely different to the 1940s. The lack of any security of income for the rural poor was the major motivation for such young people. This forced families to send one or more of its young members out to earn a secure income that the family unit could use as a hedge against the failure of the agricultural producer co-operative to pay out at the end of the year, a bad harvest or a severe tax or compulsory delivery collector. One such worker who took up employment in Sztálinváros-Dunapentele lived on a farm of 8 kh, as a result of the farm's inability to guarantee an income for the family he had to go to work. He remembered that "twice a month he could go home for one and a half days and had to spend half a day of free time travelling. He gave his family 200 Forints of his monthly earnings and had to live from the rest". In some cases where there was no child of working age it was the head of the household who went to work; "the private farmers were attached to their small amounts of land and were not willing to enter the co-operative. The majority of private farmers couldn't live from their land and were forced to go and work away. The peasants in general went to the construction sites to get work, the women and children farmed the land". Many were driven by the notion that for work the wages "were paid in cash which you receive in your hand. Furthermore in the town they take the effort to provide bread to the people" ²⁶.

²⁶ - MOL M-KS-276f.115/88ö.e., p.35; István Márkus "Egyszerû Feljegyzések 1947-ből" in his *Az Ismeretlen Pöszereplő*, pp. 109-11; for reports of similar motivations in the late 1950s see Nándor Pálfalvi *Mint Fához az Ág*, pp.149-55, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1958; OSA RFE

Complete departure from the land was frowned on in much of rural Hungary, one escapee recalled that "there were many cases in Békéssamson also of peasants who just escaped from the land and went to the towns to work. The people didn't do this with great enthusiasm, because the person is tied to the land, it was only misery that took it from them". Even if the son of a smallholder went to work in industry, often the parents were reluctant fearing a change in the attitudes of youth, fuelled by the feeling that "since there has been democracy, they (the young) do not do as their parents tell them, but want to go to the town to continue to study, where they will be turned fully into Communists", even though in the same breath they often accepted that "perhaps they will have a better fate in the town, than if they remain a land holding peasant with taxes and compulsory deliveries in their necks" ²⁷.

The fact that those who took up industrial employment came from the ranks of poorer villagers was broadly confirmed by the earliest reliable evidence compiled in 1957. Of agricultural households with less than 1 kh of land, 51% had one or more family members working industry, with 15% having 2 or more members. For households with between 1 and 3 kh the respective proportions were 37.6% and 9.1%. Among households with more property the phenomenon was virtually non-existent, of those farming between 20 and 25 kh of land the proportions stood at 8.8% and 0.9%. For poor households industrial labour took the role of a family survival strategy; in the Zalaegerszeg Clothing Factory many young worker-peasants many handed over part of their income to support their farming parents during the winter months ²⁸.

Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 06852/53, p.5; OSA 300/40/4/42, Item No. 7929/54, p.1; OSA 300/40/4/41, Item No. 12232/53, p.3

²⁷ - OSA 300/40/4/41, Item No. 12232/53, p.3; OSA 300/40/4/41, Item No. 2843/54, pp.1-2; OSA 300/40/4/22, Item No. 14271/52, p.8

²⁸ - MOL M-KS-288f/23/1958/27ö.e., p.54; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.1f.1958/12ö.e.; *A tapasztalatok összefoglalása*, p. 9

Rumours however dissuaded younger members of poorer, smallholder households from taking work far away from home. In areas where there were significant job opportunities, or where there was a tradition of a worker-peasant existence there was likely to be a greater willingness to take up industrial employment. This was particularly the case in coal mining; in Komárom county in early 1951 about half of all who went into the mines were recruited from within the county rather than from outside it. In August recruiters for the Tatabánya mines found many willing potential recruits in the villages, but only when agricultural work was over. Many of the prospective recruits were busy seeding and stated that only when these tasks were completed would they sign a contract telling the recruiters to return on 1st October. It was also the case in areas where there was no worker-peasant tradition but where new employment opportunities were opened by industrialisation in the vicinity. This could be observed close to Dunapentele-Sztálinváros where the construction site management employed a policy of recruiting labour from the agricultural county of Bács-Kiskun just across the Danube from the site, a policy that met with considerable success. By 1951 in one village twenty kilometres south of the site, with no worker-peasant tradition, many younger members of poor smallholder families were also taking work there ²⁹.

In spite of the preference for taking work close to home, labour recruitment was partially successful in that it did persuade large numbers of young people to move away from home to live in the workers' hostels of new industrial enterprises, mines and construction sites. Labour recruitment may not have

²⁹ - For this aspect of mining in the inter-war years see Imre Bán "Szénbányászok" in Rézler (ed.) *Magyar Gyári Munkásság: Szociális Helyzetkép*, pp.224-5; Zoltán Szabó *Cifra Nyomorúság. A Cserhát, Mátra, Bükk Földje és Népe*, pp.132-9, Cserépfalvi Kiadása, Budapest, 1938; MOL M-KS-276f.116/4ö.e., p. 90; for recruitment campaigns in the mines see KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/15ö.e., p.32; for the policies of the Dunapentele site management to labour recruitment see MOL XXIX-F-2-a/45d.; *Másolat*; see Sándor *Hiradás a Pusztáról*, pp.212-3

persuaded as many people to do this as the regime ~~needed~~ it would, but nevertheless it did give birth to the phenomenon of long ~~distance~~ commuting from poor agricultural areas to the industrial centres. Many of these came from poor agricultural counties in the east of the country characterised by large numbers of new landholders and few local opportunities for industrial employment. The motives of the new recruits were plainly economic, in order to persuade them to move a considerable distance from their homes' labour recruiters had promised them considerable material benefits. Among those recruited to the Tatabánya mines a small criminal element could be found who "came to the mine to get the clothes, to live for a few days out of the workers' hostel kitchen and then to disappear with the clothes" ³⁰.

"Old" Workers, "New" Workers and Industrial Trainees: the State and Social Mobility in the Factories

New industrial workers recruited from agriculture were promised promotion and full integration into the industrial workforce. Many were initially shut out of training programmes that allowed them to become skilled workers. Furthermore large numbers were actively discriminated against in the workplace. They were often the last to be considered for housing in urban areas or promotion. Even on the "new" frontier of socialist industrialisation, in "new" towns such as Dunapentele-Sztálinváros where former rural dwellers provided the labour on the construction sites, such "new" workers were often denied residence permits and jobs in the steel works of the new town. Propaganda on the construction site during the early 1950s promised the unskilled construction workers a future, not merely as the builders of the "first socialist new town", but the opportunity to re-train and work as a skilled worker in the factory, to gain a

³⁰ - MOL M-KS-276f.116/4ö.e., pp.90, 94; on exaggerated promises made by labour recruiters see *Harc a Szénért*, 29th November 1951; on the criminal elements see KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/15ö.e., p.42

modern flat in the centre of the new town and thus to participate fully in the new urban society that they were creating ³¹.

In spite of such promises to the majority of construction workers the gate to residence in the town was firmly closed. This can be demonstrated through an analysis of a sample of the successful applications for settlement permits (*letelepedési engedélyek*) which prospective residents of the new town had to acquire to live there until 1954. Of those economically active who became residents during this period only 13.1% had been initially employed in the town on the construction site, compared with a figure of 58.1% whose first place of work in Sztálinváros-Dunapentele had been at the steelworks. Of those granted settlement permits who had begun work in the future town in its first year in 1950 54.5% were employed in construction. Of these however, only 40% had begun as manual workers, 13.3% had been in managerial positions whilst 16.7% had enjoyed posts that could be considered to be middle or lower managerial positions. In 1951 employment on the construction site rapidly expanded and the first unit of the steel works, a machine factory opened. Of those recruited in that year it was the relatively smaller number who began work in the machine factory who would find themselves as residents of the town, of those who started work in 1951 in the town who subsequently gained settlement permits only 24.6% had their first job on the construction site, whilst 42.8% worked in the steel works. Likewise of those who began work in construction managerial personnel were over represented among those who finally became residents accounting for 21.7% of those who finally gained permits. Over subsequent years as the management of the steel plant recruited directly from other factories the

³¹ - MOL XXIX-F-2-a/22 d.; *Előterjesztés a Sztálin Vasmű munkaerőellátásáról különös tekintettel az 1953. évben beinduló üzemekre*; FML MSZMP FMBA ir. 17f. 1/27ö.e.; *Előterjesztés a sztálinvárosi Pártbizottság elé a Sztálin Vasmű Tröszt Munkaerő és Szakkádér ellátásával kapcsolatban az 1952-es helyzetkép és az irányelvek*; MOL XXIX-F-2-a/22d.; *A Sztálin Vasmű munkaerő és szakkádér szükséglete és annak biztosítása*; MOL XXIX-F-2-a/22d.; *Szerszödések felbontás miniszteriumi engedély nélkül*; *Dunai Vasmű Építője*, 3rd January 1951; *Dunai Vasmű Építője*, 24th July 1951

proportions employed in construction gaining residence permits fell even further
32.

Yet state policy did not push all workers who were new to industry during the 1950s to the margins of the labour force. When the workforce of the Sztálin Steel Works was examined this was very clear. Whilst no precise information on the social origins of the total workforce of the plant exists, the information contained in the settlement permit applications for those who secured the right of residence in the town between 1951 and 1954 gives a clear indication. Among skilled workers who came directly to work at the steel plant only 54% had been skilled workers at the beginning of the First Five Year Plan, another 13.9% had been economically inactive, these were largely children, whilst 11.4% had been engaged in agriculture. The occupation of the fathers of skilled workers in the steel works provided substantial evidence of inter-generational social mobility; only 25.7% of the skilled workers had a father who had also worked as a skilled worker, 39.7% had a father who was employed in agriculture, 20.4% had a father who was an unskilled worker whilst other categories stood at well below 10%³³.

The percentages of those who could be considered "new" workers were even higher the lower down the skill scale they were. Of semi-skilled workers in the sample only 30.8% had been semi-skilled workers at the beginning of the First Five Year Plan, 25.6% had been economically inactive, largely because they had been too young to work, and 12.8% in each case had come from agriculture, the ranks of skilled or unskilled workers. When the occupations of the fathers of semi-skilled workers were taken into account some 40.8% of the

³² - The statistics are drawn from a database of a sample of 1426 successful applications for settlement permits in the town out of a total of about 6000 which have survived in Fejér County Archives, which was assembled in Spring and Summer 1996 by the author; for the source of the permits see FML XXIII/506 fond/1-14d.

³³ - These figures have been generated through analysis of the author's database drawn from FML XXIII/506 fond/1-14d.

fathers had been engaged in agriculture, 29.6% had been unskilled workers, 18.5% had been skilled workers, only 3.8% had been semi-skilled workers with the remainder divided between various other categories ³⁴.

Of those in the sample who were unskilled and worked at the steel works 31.6% had worked in agriculture at the start of the First Five Year Plan, 29.6% had been unskilled workers, 21.4% had been economically inactive, largely because of their youth, and 9.2% of had been skilled workers with small numbers falling into various other categories. The fathers of 52.3% of them were employed in agriculture, 27.7% had themselves been unskilled workers and 13.9% had been skilled workers with small numbers falling into various other categories ³⁵.

When the social origin of individual skill-groups are considered it can be seen that opportunities did exist for some "new" workers to advance. In the high paying traditional heavy engineering skills individuals who had been skilled workers in 1949 predominated. These were essentially the skills of machine construction which required considerable experience and on the job training. Of engine fitters whose first work in Sztálinváros was at the steel plant and who successfully applied for a settlement permit between 1951 and 1954, for example, 66.7% had been skilled workers at the beginning of the plan compared with 54.0% for skilled workers as a whole. This pattern was repeated across other skills, 77.8% of smiths had been skilled workers in 1949, as had 62.2% of general fitters and 62.5% of iron tuners.

The proportion of those who had been skilled workers in 1949 tended to decline and the proportion of those who had been employed in agriculture

³⁴ - These figures have been generated as in *ibid*.

³⁵ - These figures have been generated as in *ibid*.

tended to increase in two cases. The first were in skills where the work was regarded as heavy, difficult and dangerous. This was especially marked in those skills that required work at the furnaces rather than in the machine shops. Of furnace men only 45.5% had been skilled workers in 1949, whilst 36.4% had been employed in agriculture. Of iron foundry workers whilst around one half had been skilled workers at the beginning of the plan, around a third had still been employed in agriculture. The second case was in skills where the degree of on the job practice and training required was not so high and wages were consequently lower. Among machinists, who were sometimes classified as semi-skilled depending on the sector in which they worked, some 40% had been employed in agriculture in 1949 whilst only one fifth had been skilled workers³⁶.

Sztálinváros was not unusual in that it opened opportunities to those previously engaged in agriculture to take, albeit heavy, dangerous and dirty, skilled jobs and thus migrate into industry. The traces of this form of migration from agriculture into industry were uncovered by sociologists working some fifteen to twenty years after the end of Stalinist industrialisation at the turn of the 1970s in heavy industrial establishments across the country. Kozák and Kemény in their examination of the workforce of the Csepel works at the end of 1960s demonstrated that a similar process of mobility from agriculture into various skilled positions had occurred during the 1950s in their subject plant, a plant not dissimilar to the one described above³⁷. The point that needs to be made, however, is that there were limited opportunities open to "new" workers recruited from agriculture to advance into skilled jobs.

³⁶ - These statistics have been generated from the database compiled from FML XXIII fond /506/1-14d.

³⁷ - Kozák & Kemény *A Csepel Vas- és Fémművek Munkásai*, pp. 32-6

Sztálinváros was an investment that drew resources from elsewhere, the factors which made the workforce in the first socialist new town had different effects in established provincial industrial centres, and in the capital. Of the skilled workers whose first job in Sztálinváros was in the steel plant who successfully became residents in the town three distinct and significant groups could be identified in terms of their geographical origin. The first group came from the capital representing 35.3% of the total and its environs (Pest) representing another 6.4%, the second group came from the industrial northern counties (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplen, Heves and Nógrád) representing a further 27.5%, and the third group came from the two counties immediately surrounding Sztálinváros (Bács-Kiskun, Fejér and Tolna) representing 14.3%. Whilst the third group's representation could be explained simply by its proximity to the site, it seems that in the cases of the first two identifiable groups that the skilled workers were migrating from industrial areas and jobs. This impression is strengthened by the fact that within the second group the settlements from which the skilled workers came were predominantly industrial. Of those from Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplen for example 45.4% came from the steel making town of Ózd and its satellite town of Hodócsépány, whilst 40.5% came from the economically similar background of Miskolc-Diósgyőr ³⁸.

The first major characteristic of the group of skilled workers that came from industrial areas was their youth; of those skilled workers who came from Ózd to take work in the steel works and were to successfully gain a settlement permit 66.8% were under 30 in 1954. Many of these workers were clearly migrating from their poor earnings possibilities in the firm for which they worked, something that was frequently commented on by labour recruiters from the steel plants in 1953 concerned that they were been given "the weakest labour" of the factories with whom they had signed contracts for skilled workers. The second

³⁸ - These statistics have been generated from the database compiled from FML XXIIIfond/506/1-14d.

major factor for such migrants was the abominable housing shortage in industrial areas both in the capital and the provinces, which was exacerbated by the state's neglect of house building in favour of investment in heavy industry³⁹.

There were many such industrial areas and outward migration from them re-composed the workforce locally. The mining town of Tatabánya was one example of this trend. Housing conditions were poor and increasingly young miners eager to set up families sought ways out to seek employment that would guarantee them better housing conditions. As the First Five Year Plan began miners increasingly began to leave the sector as a result of improved employment opportunities. An increasing number of miners sought to leave requesting that management agree to their departure on the grounds that "in Tatabánya they could not start a family". Many did leave for precisely this reason, whilst 1,672 underground workers left during the whole of 1949, 1,264 left during the first half of 1950 alone. At the same time the mines were having to struggle to retain labour they were compelled to prepare to shoulder their part of the burden of increasing national coal production. Whilst an increase in work intensity was to provide some of this target an expansion of production through the opening of new pits was attempted and this required labour. In spite of this no spectacular expansion of the labour force in the mines occurred between 1950 and 1955; in 1950 there were 9,343 manual workers employed by the Tatabánya mines enterprise, a figure that rose to 10,244 in 1955. Furthermore between

³⁹ - This statistic has been generated from the database compiled from FML XXIII fond/506/1-14d.; on the apparent "poor earnings possibilities" of many of the skilled workers recruited from the factory see FML MSZMP FMBA ir.17f.1/27ö.e.; *Előterjesztés a Sztálin Vasmű munkaerőellátásáról, különös tekintettel az 1953 évben beinduló üzemekre*, pp.1-2; for poor housing in the older industrial areas see SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/19d./1953; *Jegyzőkönyv készült 1953. október 29.-én a SZOT munkásellátási osztálya által egyes üzemek részére tartott megbeszélésről*, pp.2-6; for a specific case see SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/15d./1953; *Feljegyzés a Diósgyőri Lenin Kohászati Műveknél és a DIMÁVAG-nál 1953. IX. 9-10.-én munkásellátási ügyben végzett látogatásról*, p.2

1950 and 1951 despite huge increases in plan targets the number of manual workers in the mines actually fell ⁴⁰.

Unlike in construction the labour shortage these processes generated was not merely one of a shortage of unskilled workers that could be solved only through organised labour recruitment. In the mines nationally whilst the employment of the unskilled carriers and semi-skilled cart men increased as did the number of those employed outside the mine the number of coal hewers fell back dramatically as the younger ones left Tatabánya. The situation in Tatabánya was not as dramatic as the total number of workers remained largely unchanged throughout the year; this was however worrying given the need to increase coal production as the plan demanded. As a result alongside campaigns to recruit unskilled labour for coal transportation in the mines, the state began to introduce crash courses to train coal hewers. Whilst traditionally coal hewers had to undergo an apprenticeship alongside a more experienced hewer for six to eight years, "new" workers would be able to work as hewers at the coal face after a years training ⁴¹.

The result of these policies was that not all workers new to industry, only those who began as unskilled workers, remained on the periphery of the workforce in the mines. In 1957 when the coal hewers were surveyed in the

⁴⁰ - KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/17ö.e., p.214; Sándor Rozsnyói "A város nagyüzemei", p. 87; Private papers of Samuel Droppa; *Munkavállalók Létszáma, Létszámváltozásai, Évi Munkanapok, Műszakok és Tejesítmények*

⁴¹ - For the national trends see KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/15ö.e., p.66; for a statistical view of the local situation see MOL XXIX-F-107-m/51d.; *Tb. Alsó Szénbányák Dolgozó Létszámkimutatása 1951 év dec. hó*; MOL XXIX-F-107-m/51d.; *Törzskönyvi (Állományi) Létszámkimutatása Tb. Szénbányák, 1951. június hó*; MOL XXIX-F-107-m/51d.; *Törzskönyvi (Állományi) Létszámkimutatása Tb. Szénbányák, 1951. április hó*; MOL XXIX-F-107-m/51d.; *Törzskönyvi (Állományi) Létszámkimutatása Tb. Szénbányák, 1951. február hó*; MOL XXIX-F-107-m/52d.; *Törzskönyvi (Állományi) Létszámkimutatása Tb. Felső Szénbányák, 1951. október hó*; MOL XXIX-F-107-m/52d.; *Törzskönyvi (Állományi) Létszámkimutatása Tb. Felső Szénbányák, 1951. augusztus hó*; on crash training courses for coal hewers see KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/15ö.e., p.26

mines by management it was found that only 35% had been working in the mines for ten years or over, in other words that they had worked in the job prior to the First Five Year Plan. A larger group, 39.2% had begun work between 1947 and 1954. Workers in the mines remembered the changes to the town as children of older miners left and the coal hewers were replaced by new residents, largely the children of those employed in agriculture from the Great Plain regions in the east of the country. There was little improvement in housing conditions, the company flats remained overcrowded. There was little investment in housing in the town during the early 1950s, and the plans for new housing investment in the town were consistently left unfulfilled. The company flats remained in a poor state repair and during the early 1950s conditions in them had deteriorated even further. In spite of this continual overcrowding essentially meant that "new" workers from agriculture who wished to settle permanently in the town had nowhere to go but the workers' hostels. As a result of the influx of "new" workers in a climate of housing shortage the percentage of the workforce resident in workers' hostels grew rapidly; in 1950 the State Supervision Agency calculated that 5.1% of the workforce lived in such hostels. By 1953 this proportion had risen to 30%⁴².

Many of these "new" workers despite their life in the hostels increasingly began to occupy positions at all skill levels within the mines largely as a result of the interaction of the desire to leave on the part of the children of older mineworkers, labour shortage and the crash training programmes. By 1953 and 1954 this process was becoming visible enabling the trade union secretary of the all-enterprise level organisation to comment that "in terms of education

42 - MOL XXIX-F-107-m/54d.; *Kimutatás az 1957. október 1-i állapotnak megfelelő adatokról*; Personal interview with T.J., Tatabányai Múzeum, 10th August 1995; on housing see SZKL, SZOT Szociálpolitika/16d./1952; *Feljegyzés a Komárom megyei lakásépítkezésekről, Tatabánya-újváros, Oroszlány, és Eterniti építkezések ellenőrzése alapján*, p.1; *Harc a Szénért*, 17th July 1953; for overcrowded housing in the town in 1954 see *Komárom Megye Fontosabb Statisztikai Adatok 1952-1955*, pp. 120-46, KSH Komárommegyei Igazgatósága, Tatabánya, 1956; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.1/17ö.e., p.213; MOL M-KS-276f.88/249ö.e., p.13

particularly in the training of "new" workers we have achieved considerable results, which shows itself, in the fact that the number of "new" workers who are becoming coal hewers is constantly increasing and among these there are those who are becoming Stakhanovites". "New" workers in the mines were not treated by their more experienced colleagues as equals, even though they had come to occupy similar positions within the workforce. That, however, is another story, workers new to mining did have the opportunity to advance and that accounts which rely on an oversimplified version of events which posit a rigid division between "old" and "new" workers misrepresent reality. The process was infinitely more complex⁴³.

"New" Workers on the Permanent Periphery of the Workforce

Many "new" workers did not progress to skilled employment. For the construction workers denied access to a residence permit and a job in the town they had helped to build, or to many unskilled workers there was little progress. Labelled by the state as "undisciplined" and untrustworthy and cast by their more experienced work mates to the periphery of bifurcated workforces in the factories where they worked, socialist labour was a deeply alienating experience for many "new" workers. Often living far from their homes, and exploited at work their protests invited little more than state repression.

In Tatabánya during the early 1950s newly recruited young workers living far from their homes formed a large part of the workforce. Whilst 44% of the total workforce lived in the miner's flats (*kolóniák*) by 1953, 30% lived in the workers' hostels, a further 10-15% commuted from neighbouring villages on a daily basis, whilst the remaining 10-15% lived in private housing within the town boundary.

⁴³ - MOL XXIX-F-107-e/3d.; *Jegyzőkönyv készült Tatabányán az 1954. évi január hó 20-án a Tatabányai Szénbányászati Tröszt kollektív szerződésének 1953.IV. negyedévi beszámoló értekezletéről*, p.6

The proportion of younger workers living in the workers' hostels was reported to be high, however, some 40-50% according to the official youth organisation. For workers living in the Tatabánya hostels conditions were poor; in September 1951 it was reported that one of the hostels was constantly "dirty, the reason being, that there is often no water, as a result the workers cannot bathe and go to sleep dirty there is no water, cold or hot. There are no furnishings in the rooms, nowhere to put either food or clothes". Doctors came to believe that the condition of the workers' hostels was responsible for a significant proportion of illness among the mineworkers. Many of the hostels were originally intended to be temporary. They were originally buildings with other uses and had been quickly converted for the purpose of accommodating "new" workers. As a result of the lack of investment in housing in the town such "temporary" accommodation had become semi-permanent. They were reported to be "messy, they are cleaned rarely, the beds are changed only every 6 to 8 weeks". In addition theft was reported to be a major problem ⁴⁴.

On the new construction sites like that at Sztálinváros-Dunapentele the conditions greeting "new" workers were if anything worse. On the site there was a serious shortage of space, forcing many of the "new" workers not to be housed in hostels at all but in makeshift barracks. These barracks, made up of large rooms, in which often fifty or so people would sleep were often dirty and badly kept. Furthermore it was not only single workers who were expected to stay in them, often married couples and children were lodged together. Given that many of the "new" workers were recruited from the rural poor and lived close together

⁴⁴ - For the figures on the proportion of the workforce living in the *kolóniák* in the town see László István Bárdos *Egy bányászváros a szocialista fejlődés útján. Tatabánya 1945-1960*, p.81, Tatabánya Városi Tanács V.B., Tatabánya, 1960; on the proportion living in workers' hostels see MOL M-KS-276f.88/249ö.e., p.13; for the estimate of the number of commuters see MOL M-KS-276f.88/249ö.e., p.125; for the estimates of the number of young workers living in hostels see MOL M-KS-276f.88/249ö.e., p.125; SZKL Bányász/460d./1951; *Jelentés Tatabánya női- és legényszálló: Budapest, 1951. szeptember 18.*; SZKL Bányász/542d./1952; *Jelentés a tatabányai ankétről és a tatabányai Bányagépgyártó Vállalat Szakszervezeti munkájáról*, p.1; *Harc a Szénért*, 22nd November 1951; SZKL Bányász/460d./1951; *Jelentés, 1951 július 11*, p.2

illness was common, and when it spread through the barracks it assumed epidemic proportions. It was only later as the town was gradually built that workers' hostels became more numerous, yet these were also inadequate, and like the barracks were plagued by a problem of theft. Barracks provided accommodation for construction workers well into the mid-1950s ⁴⁵.

For residents of the workers' hostels life in the industrial centres was one of relative isolation from the world around them, punctuated only by weekend visits to their families and mitigated by the temporary community of the hostel residents. In Sztálinváros-Dunapentele in the early years of the town there were possibilities for entertainment and according to one former resident "my colleagues went rarely to the Peoples' Buffet (*Népbüfé*), the only place for workers to relax". Instead whatever opportunities for association were available to workers were within the confines of the hostel. A former resident recalled that "when the radio played an anthem to Rákosi describing him as a good father and teacher for the nation, one colleague commented "our teacher doesn't earn his crust with such hard work, but through this kind of theft"". In Tatabánya opportunities for leisure were better, though "after a hard days work people didn't really go out". One resident described his leisure activities as being walking "to the cinema. If I had enough money I went into the cinema, but most of the time I didn't have enough for a ticket" or reading "forbidden paperback westerns" published in the 1930s and 1940s. Alongside this a solidarity built up between most of the hostel residents, "the residents would not have betrayed their neighbours" remembered one. Often they spent their spare time listening to

⁴⁵ - On conditions in the barracks see MOL XXIX-F-4/3d.; *III. negyedévi helyzetkép a dunapentelei szociális viszonyokról*; MOL XXIX-F-2-a/45d.; *Feljegyzés Borovszky elvtársnak*; on the problem of epidemics in the barracks see MOL M-KS-276f.88/307ö.e., pp.11-3; on theft in barracks and workers' hostels see FML MSZMP FMBA ir. 17f.1/29ö.e.; *Jelentés a sztálinvárosi dolgozók személyi tulajdon védelmének biztosítása*; on the large proportion still living in barracks in 1953 see SZKL Építő/939d./1953; *Jegyzőkönyv felvétel 1953. október 23-án a 33/5 Szállásellátó Vállalat irodahelyiségben*

western radio stations "if they could find the station". Listening to western radio often formed a kind of initiation into the culture of the hostel "the guys watched each other to see how they all reacted to the things they heard, how they behaved. To those who had just arrived we warned them that if they told anybody, there would be problems made for them" ⁴⁶.

The sense of community of the hostel and the solidarities and friendships built up there often formed a hedge against the alienating experience of being a "new" worker in Stalinist Hungary. For many the world of socialist labour in industry and construction was a deeply alienating place. They often found themselves poorly treated by their direct superiors and their more experienced colleagues. The workers themselves were inexperienced; one "new" worker on the Sztálinváros-Dunapentele construction site described his colleagues in a ten man brigade on the site thus; "one part of the brigade were former agricultural producer co-operative members from Hajdu and Békés counties, who when the co-op paid out didn't get enough money to live on. They were forced then to go to Sztálinváros. With them there were various "job quitters" and people who had lost their previous jobs. One kulak-boy was there with us, at one time his family had 60 kh of land, but they'd destroyed it (the family farm) so much that he had to take work there". These inexperienced workers were the victims of the corruption of their immediate superior who collected money for the workers' "meal tickets, gave out the tickets, and spent the money himself. Then they (the management) sought to deduct this money from our wages". Furthermore faced with poor conditions the construction workers frequently were not given appropriate working clothes; "in our work place we had to work in water and our wellingtons were in such poor condition that we had water in our boots", despite protests to the management, union and party organisation their broken boots were never replaced ⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 06852/53, p.13; OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 06687/53, pp.3-6

Often this fed through into concerns about work and pay. Systems of payment were never explained to "new" workers and they consequently felt cheated by the low wages they received. This was illustrated by the case of a brigade of navvies (*kubikusok*) recruited from a village in eastern Hungary to work on the Sztálinváros-Dunapentele site at the end of 1950. Upon arriving they paid 40 Forints for collectively provided food, and in return contrary to the promises of management they were only guaranteed one meal a day. In consequence they had to spend more of their money on other meals. No work clothes were provided by management and they were expected to work knee deep in mud for much of the day destroying their own clothes and boots. Management refused to tell them whether they were paid by the hour, or according to a work norm and were unwilling to tell them the rate at which they were paid. They refused to give in a time-sheet and consequently in the second week they went unpaid. As a result of this they decided to leave immediately, simply because they "were unable to work without money, without clothes and hungry" 48.

Whilst this was an extreme example it illustrated phenomena that were by no means uncommon in other sectors of the economy. In the Tatabánya coal mines not all "new" workers were given work clothes before they were expected to start. Even if they felt they had become accustomed to mine labour, they felt that management actively discriminated against them. One former worker who first went down the mine in 1952 felt that his wages were low simply because "the Stakhanovites and Communist workers were given all the best places at the coal face". New recruits had often been promised a particular level of earnings . As a result they quickly became disillusioned with mine work as their

47 - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 06852/53, p.5; OSA RFE Magyar Gy./ Item No. 06852/53, pp.7-8

48 - MOL M-KS-276f.88/306ö.e., pp.263-4

expectations were never met in reality. Many "new" miners simply left in 1951 because they were unable to make their desired monthly wage that tended to be around 900 Forints. New recruits to the mines were often baffled by the time sheets that they had to fill in to claim their monthly wages, indeed even management admitted that "only workers with exceptional mathematical ability could calculate their wages or check whether they were paid correctly or not" 49.

Inexperience and neglect by management not merely placed such "new" workers in a weak position within the informal division of labour of many enterprises, it also rendered them particularly vulnerable to industrial accidents. The inexperience of many "new" workers was demonstrated by the fact that often they came into industry and construction with little idea of appropriate clothing or behaviour in their new workplace. On the Sztálinváros-Dunapentele construction site in its first year of operation many workers turned up for work in clothing that was wholly inappropriate for outdoor work in poor weather. Among many "new" workers on the site heavy drinking was reported to be a problem. The lack of attention to the concerns of "new" workers by the authorities was indicated by the fact that in one pit in Tatabánya there were workers who did not know that the trade union existed after having worked there for five months. Promised training for "new" workers in either the content of the job or in basic health and safety procedures simply did not materialise, handbooks on safe working methods were kept in factory libraries and read by no-one but the engineers. This was certainly the case in the Tatabánya mines, where the tutor of the health and safety course in one of the pits could not guarantee training because he himself was required to work at the coal face. Hardly surprisingly the majority of accidents in the mines injured or killed "new" workers. The greater likelihood of

49 - SZKL Bányász/460d./1951; *Jelentés, hogy Tatabányán az új dolgozók létszáma és a legényszállítás a következőképpen néz ki*, p.2; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 11727/53, p.4; SZKL Bányász/460d./1951; *Jelentés, hogy Tatabányán az új dolgozók létszáma és a legényszállítás a következőképpen néz ki*, p.1; MOL M-KS-276f.53/145ö.e.; *Tájékoztató az üzemi dolgozók és üzemi vezetők által felvett szociális és kulturális problémákról*, p.35

"new" workers to suffer accidents was not a tendency restricted to the mines, however. One former worker in the Danube Shoe Factory remembered that "in the factory there were many accidents among the inexperienced and poorly trained workers, because the management paid them no attention they would often replace a worker who was leaving with someone else, if he only had the slightest of ideas of what the job involved" ⁵⁰.

It has been commonplace to argue since the 1950s that many of the "new" workers were less likely to protest and more likely to react passively to their adverse circumstances than their older colleagues. It is absolutely untrue that peripheral "new" workers in the 1950s were passive in the face of their adversity ⁵¹. Many "new" workers showed a marked propensity to resort to open protest against the poor working conditions and wages to which they were subjected. On the Sztálinváros-Dunapentele construction site in late 1950 and early 1951 there was a problem of frequent, though small, work stoppages in protest at the non-payment or mis-payment of wages. The kind of work stoppage that could occur on the site was described by a former worker who joined one. When management consistently refused to guarantee the worker's brigade adequate boots to work in water and a premium for performing dangerous work, the brigade laid down their tools and refused to work. After being accused of sabotage by the site manager the brigade stated "that they didn't want to go down to work because the enterprise is not fulfilling its obligations as laid down

⁵⁰ - MOL XXIX-F-4/1d.; *Jelentés a Dunamenti Vasmű építkezéséről*, p.2; on alcoholism see MOL M-KS-276f.88/307ö.e., p.12; SZKL Bányász/460d./1951; *Jelentés Tatabányán, 1951 július 11*, p.4; on health and safety procedures in the mines see *Bányabalesetek Elhárítása. A Bányász Biztonságának Kiskátéja*, Nehézipari Minisztérium Bányarendészeti Osztálya, Budapest, 1950; on ignored training courses for "new" workers in the Tatabánya coal mines see SZKL Bányász/460d./1951; *Bányaipari Szakszervezet Jelentés Komárom megye, Tatabánya*, p.1; SZKL Bányász/460d./1951; *Jelentés az üzemeknél, ahol jártam a munkavédelmi bizottság munkája a következőképpen halad*, p.1; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 3677/56, p.2

⁵¹ - This assumption is strong among most critical sociology written since the early 1970s, the most notorious example of this kind of argument, in reality a synthesis of different Hungarian works is Völgyes "Hungary: the Lumpenproletarianisation of the Working Class"

in the collective agreement". Such stoppages were not restricted to the Sztálinváros-Dunapentele site, however. Small-scale strikes in construction among "new" workers appear to have been common into mid-1951⁵².

Whilst management accusations of "sabotage" directed against strikers backed by considerable state repression were effective in controlling recourse to open collective action, it was far less able to contain the more individual acts that were closely related to worker discontent about working conditions and wages. Persistent absenteeism, the quitting of jobs and various forms of behaviour within the work-place from time-wasting down to organised go-slows were common throughout the early 1950s and proved very difficult to control. The quitting of jobs as an expression of discontent led to huge labour turnover in 1951; in ministry-controlled industry of those recruited some 65.8% left, whilst in state owned construction almost one and half times the number of those recruited left in 1951. Absenteeism was also a problem; the proportion of the workforce who went absent without an official reason was small, in textiles it stood at 1.7% in the first quarter of 1951. There was a greater problem of absenteeism due to sickness that hovered at around 5% throughout the year in light industry. In some establishments in mining, machine manufacture and construction materials manufacture rates of absenteeism due to sickness reached 10%. The state came to believe that worker action was creating frequent work stoppages across industry. In one Szeged clothing factory a party investigator concluded that "the workers on the conveyor eat at different times, walk about and talk to each other. It often happens that because of this the whole conveyor stops, with one section of workforce waiting impatiently for the conveyor to be re-started"⁵³.

⁵² - MOL M-KS-276f.88/306ö.e., p.34; OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 06852/53, p.8; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1/73ö.e., pp. 41-3

⁵³ - MOL XIX-A-16-b/403d.; *A munkafegyelem kérdése*, p.1; in order to interpret exactly what these statistics mean it is necessary to compare them with those in MOL M-KS-276f.116/7ö.e.,

The state became convinced that it was predominantly "new" workers who were responsible for what they saw as this "indiscipline" on the shop floor. Consequently the authorities at national and local level quickly came to the conclusion that the problem was one of insufficient integration of "new" workers into the industrial workforce, and patterns of behaviour among the "new" workers that demonstrated their "indiscipline". From this they came to the conclusion that the tighter regulation of the daily lives of many "new" workers was part of the solution to this problem ⁵⁴.

The result was pressure on enterprises to take draconian measures against those who went left their job or went absent without permission. Often "new" workers felt these measures to be unjust, excessively draconian and extremely arbitrary. One described them recalling that "for one time absent without permission one had to take a 10% cut on that whole months pay. If someone went off work for more than a day they were put before a disciplinary committee where they would be given a fine and a their paid holidays and other benefits would be withdrawn. That meant that in the event of a family birth or death no help would be given at all". Sometimes campaigns against offenders turned in practice into generalised attacks on "new" workers who were absent, which went beyond either the spirit or the letter of the Labour Code. In the Tatabánya coal mines to combat what was seen as "absenteeism and indiscipline" one pit set up a five-member committee of party members and Stakhanovites to target the "notorious absentees and sickness fakers, and deal with them individually using political education to make them aware of the drops in production absenteeism causes". Whilst the plans of other mines in the coal

p.137; for absenteeism see MOL M-KS-276f.116/7ö.e., p.123; MOL M-KS-276f.116/7ö.e., p.125; MOL XIX-A-16-b/403d.; *Kulturális és Szociális Főosztály*, p.1; MOL M-KS-276f.116/7ö.e., p.125

⁵⁴ - For an example of such a view see SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/13d./1952; *Jegyzőkönyv felvétel 1952. okt. 11.-i munkásellátási értekezetről*, p.5

fields were not as directly threatening as this, their implementation undoubtedly was. The factory newspaper sought to name and shame those who were consistently absent from work, not a policy unique to Tatabánya. Campaigns to punish as many miners who went absent from work without permission as possible were zealously pursued, culminating in October 1951 with the sacking of two miners for missing eleven shifts each as an example to bring others into line ⁵⁵.

The authorities' implementation of disciplinary measures was inconsistent. In Tatabánya one "disciplinary committee" was criticised at the turn of 1952 for failing to remove benefits from two people who had gone absent without permission. During the year the criminal law was applied as an instrument to reduce job quitting and unauthorised absenteeism. Almost as soon as the campaign to use the criminal law against absentees began in Sztálinváros five "undisciplined" workers described in the local press as "scroungers", were convicted of unauthorised absenteeism before a court convened in the style of a show trial in the newly built local cinema. The drive against absenteeism continued with all workers who had gone absent for more than three days at a time put before specially convened social courts in the Tatabánya mines during the course of 1952 ⁵⁶.

The law seems to have been of limited effectiveness as an instrument in reducing unauthorised absenteeism. Certainly the numbers denounced to prosecutors offices by enterprises and convictions for both absenteeism and job

⁵⁵ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 06852/53, p.8; for this plan see KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/9ö.e., p.40; for examples of naming and shaming Stalinist style in Tatabánya see *Harc a Szénért*, 29th November 1951; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/18ö.e., p.67

⁵⁶ - *Harc a Szénért*, 27th December 1951; *Sztálin Vasmű Építője*, 11th January 1952; for the various campaigns in the mines in Tatabánya see *Harc a Szénért*, 15th February 1952; SZKL Komárom SZMT/111d./1952; *Bányaipari Dologozók Szakszervezete Komárommegyei Területi Bizottsága Tatabánya Jelentés*, p.2; FML XXIX fond/17/1d.; *Hírdetmény az adonyi járásbiróság ítéletei a gépgyári munkafegyelmet megsértő munkavállalók ügyében*

quitting fell between August 1952 and February 1953. In August 4371 workers were reported to the authorities for both the offences of which 893 were successfully convicted. By February the following year these figures had fallen to 1197 and 389. An examination of what lay behind this fall found that for those likely to take time off the convictions had a deterrent effect though this did not work entirely in the way the regime had intended. Those conducting the examination concluded that many workers were conscious that an absence of four days or more days consecutively would provoke a denunciation. Taking this into account many only absented themselves in such a way as to avoid denunciation, taking only an odd day off work. Furthermore endemic absenteeism had become impossible to eliminate. In Sztálinváros in 1952 it was noted that absenteeism among "new" workers was endemic on Mondays. Given the fact that nearly all "new" workers spent the weekend at their homes, and that public transport was highly unreliable it was virtually impossible to crack down on Monday absenteeism. As a result the local party complained that the public transport enterprises were guilty of creating a "paradise for the lazy" in the town 57.

The use of the criminal law to enforce "socialist work discipline" disproportionately affected the poorest and most alienated among the "new" workers. Sociologist Tamás Gyekiczky has convincingly demonstrated this through an examination of the social origins of a representative sample of those convicted of either unauthorised absenteeism or leaving their job without permission in 1952. His analysis of the social origins of those convicted revealed them to be overwhelmingly "new" workers. Most of those convicted were born in rural areas. Of Gyekiczky's sample 67% were born in villages, 84% owned no property of their own, though significantly he did not examine whether immediate

⁵⁷ - MOL MFKS-276f.94/596ö.e., pp.362-4; FML MSZMP FMBA ir.17f.1/26ö.e.; *Sztálinvárosi Pártbizottság, Jelentés a Munkaidő Kihasznlásáról 1952. okt. 24.*, p.1

family members held land or not, 86% were unskilled, 83% were male, 49% lived alone and 66% of those convicted were aged between 19 and 30 ⁵⁸.

Regulations against unauthorised absenteeism and leaving a job without prior authorisation may have been ineffective, but their role in conditioning peripheral "new" workers' experiences of the state was very important. The role of the less precise drives to maintain "socialist work discipline" were even less effective and felt to be even more arbitrary. These drives can be broadly classified as attempts to ensure the "full use" of working time. Whilst at certain points these consisted of campaigns against going to the toilet excessively during working hours, engaging in fruitless conversation and forms of behaviour that the authorities saw as the inefficient use of working time their main focus was to combat lateness in coming to work, and leaving work early at the end of a shift.

Large numbers of "new" workers were targeted for perpetrating such minor offences against "socialist work discipline". Often their treatment resembled that of Anna Máté and Ilona Nagy, two spinning machine operatives in the Magyar Pamutipar Cotton Factory, who on several occasions started work ten minutes late. In response their names and work performances were publicised in the factory newspaper, where the editors blamed their lateness for their poor norm fulfilments. Indeed peripheral "new" workers bore the brunt of considerable state repression and suffered disproportionately from it. It can be said that the experience of arbitrary and autocratic factory management and political authority fundamentally characterised peripheral "new" workers' experiences of proletarianisation as much as did shortage and low wages ⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ - For Gyekiczky's conclusion see his *A Munkafegyelem Jogi Szabályozásának Társadalmi Háttéré az 1952-es Év Magyarországon*, pp.29-33; Gyekiczky *A Fegyelem Csapdájában*, pp. 63-9

⁵⁹ - *Pamut Újság*, 27th June 1952; OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 08794, p.2

"New" workers plainly bore the brunt of campaigns to maintain work discipline. Furthermore the perception that "new" workers were undisciplined, were less than real workers, not only shaped such campaigns, but was strengthened by them. These impressions and prejudices against those unskilled labourers recruited to fill the mines and the construction sites were to spread to many more experienced workers. This would thus shape the particularisation of worker identity that occurred during the decade.

Conclusion

Industrialisation and proletarianisation re-made the industrial workforce. Firstly the early 1950s was a period of mobility out of industrial workforce for some skilled workers and their children. More importantly for the children of many pre-socialist manual workers new employment opportunities gave them new the possibility to earn more and above all to escape poor conditions in older industrial areas. On the other hand industrialisation and collectivisation forced large sections of the agricultural poor into the industrial labour force. Many workers new to industry or construction faced low wages, despotic management, poor living conditions, long distance commuting and disorganised, heavy and dangerous work; they were condemned to the periphery of the labour force. For others there were greater possibilities through training to become a skilled worker in mining, heavy engineering or chemicals.

These processes re-made the industrial labour force. The 1950s was a period characterised by its considerable re-composition. The processes that drove it have been described above. The re-making of the workforce was not without consequences for how individuals, and groups of workers, responded to the process of the transformation of production that has been described in this Part. The reactions and the assumption of the identities on which they were

based were dependent on the interaction of several factors that had radically changed the realm of production. The individualisation of wages interacted in turn with the work environment created by endemic shortage and the cultural legacies and tension generated by proletarianisation in society and the transformation of the workforce to produce these outcomes. Precisely how these factors played out are examined in Part Two of this thesis.

Part Two

Workers in a New Society

Introduction

During the years of "high" Stalinism both the Hungarian workplace and the industrial workforce were re-made. The question that remains unanswered is that of how workers reacted to the various processes of proletarianisation and shop floor transformation that occurred during the years of socialist industrialisation. In short, inspite of their divisions did Hungarian Stalinism lead to a "re-making" of a "working class" ? Most scholarship has stressed the way in which the pursuit of "excessive" forced industrialisation led to the swamping of a traditional workforce with new marginal recruits from agriculture, whose experience and culture was essentially different from the pre-1949 working class. This had various effects, according to some commentators it led explicitly to the creation of a "new socialist working class", to some the atomisation of the industrial workers, and to others its "lumpenproletarianisation" ¹.

Such approaches are contradicted by the explanations of extensive worker participation in the Revolution of 1956 that have been offered by Bill Lomax. For Lomax the combination of the Stalinist transformation of the

¹ - The first variant of this view was expressed in the early 1960s by Lackó "Szerkezeti változások a magyar munkásosztály összetételében"; the framework was also developed by sociologist István Kemény in the 1970s, his variant is perhaps the most nuanced and sophisticated version of this view, see both his *Ouvriers Hongrois 1956-1985*, pp.193-201 and his "A magyar munkásosztály rétegződése" in Kemény *Velük nevelkedett a gép*, pp.7-20; it was further developed in a sociological study of workers in Salgotárjan in the late 1970s, which had a strong historical dimension, led by his pupil János Dávid, for this variant see János Dávid "A gyári társadalom társadalmi integráció?" in Szalai, Lányi, Miszlivetz, Radnóti & Vajda (eds.) *Arat a Magyar*, pp. 137-51 and János Dávid *Néhány gondolat a munkásság rétegződéséről*, unpublished manuscript, Budapest, 1978. It has recently been used by a historian of 1950s labour policy; Gyula Belényi, see his *A Sztálini Iparosítás Emberi Ára (1948-1956)* and Belényi "Az extenzív iparosítás politikája és a fizikai dolgozók foglalkozási átrétegződése"; in English a somewhat crude account is provided by Völgyes "Hungary: the Lumpenproletarianisation of the Working Class"

shop floor with the process of proletarianisation that followed the industrialisation drive led to the formation of a coherent "working class" in the classical sense. This was formed in a situation where the "skilled workers enjoyed the respect of the less skilled, while they no longer enjoyed the privileges of higher remuneration, helped generate unity among the workers". This view, however, of a general solidarity between workers does not fit easily with the picture of disunity and differentiation between workers that has been presented earlier in the discussion of the transformation of the workplace ².

In order to address these contradictions some model of the circumstances in which class formation occurs is required which can then be compared, or contrasted with the experience of early Hungarian socialism. Labour and working-class history as it has developed since the middle of 1960s has left us only with models for examining the process of working class formation under industrial capitalism, not under state socialism. Often social theorists have assumed parallels between class formation in the late industrialising capitalist states during the last half of the Twentieth Century and state socialist societies; namely that the consequences of industrialisation and proletarianisation made regimes in East-Central Europe vulnerable to "major working class insurgencies" ³.

² - Lomax "The Rise and Fall of the Hungarian Working Class", p.50

³ - A stimulating theoretical attempt to overcome this problem is Lewis H. Siegelbaum & Ronald Grigor Suny "Class Backwards ? In Search of the Soviet Working Class" in Lewis H. Siegelbaum & Ronald Grigor Suny (eds.) *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class and Identity*, pp. 1-26, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1994; for one account which suggests that similarity of post-war processes of class formation see J. Craig Jenkins & Kevin Leicht "Class Analysis and Social Movements: A Critique and a Reformulation" in John R. Hall (ed.) *Reworking Class*, with a foreword by Patrick Joyce, pp. 369-97, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1997

The investigation of working class formation in industrial capitalism by social historians has been profoundly shaped by the contribution of E.P. Thompson. For Thompson class was "a historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw materials of experience and in consciousness". He "did not see class as a "structure", nor even as a "category", but as something which in fact happens in human relationships". Class, for Thompson, was an experience, and one which was "largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born - or enter involuntarily. Class consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms Consciousness of class arises in the same way in different times and places, but never in just the same way" ⁴.

Thompson's concept of class formation as an experience suggests that close attention should be paid not to class structures, but to the subjective experiences of class. Such an approach to class formation "by denying that class exists apart from real peoples' consciousness, radically shifted the problematic of class-formation by pushing to the fore the question of how this awareness came about historically". Such an approach revolutionised the practice of labour and working-class history leading to an explosion of scholarship which investigated the history of class formation in Europe, North America and the wider world. Alongside this it led to an expansion of knowledge that resulted from the sympathetic investigation of the experiences and cultures of working people in many different contexts. This approach led to accounts that had several common elements. The twin processes of the re-organisation of work and the transformation of the economy resulted in proletarianisation during the Nineteenth Century, and

⁴ - E.P. Thompson *The Making of the English Working Class*, reprinted with new preface, pp.8-9, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1980

furthermore the transformation of production in the Twentieth led to "de-Skilling". During the initial wave of industrialisation in the early part of the Nineteenth Century artisans, and later skilled workers drew on specific cultural attributes, ideas and beliefs to resist these processes. From these transformations workers became conscious as a class, and explicitly class based political movements were forged upon the basis of this newly formed common identity⁵.

This account has been subjected to two major lines of serious and sustained attack during the past two decades. The first line of attack has been to question the degree to which actual proletarianisation resulted from the transformation of the economy in the early Nineteenth Century, and the extent to which mass production in large factories was typical of the Twentieth. Often drawing upon the work of sociologists who have argued that capitalist production has been characterised by a wide range of different forms of labour organisation, increasingly historians have presented the spread of factory units and of proletarianisation as a discontinuous and varied process. It has been increasingly argued that the workshop, out-working or other forms of labour were as typical throughout the Nineteenth and even into the Twentieth Century as was factory based labour. Thompsonian labour history has been attacked for ignoring the

⁵ - The first quote is from William H. Sewell, Jr. "How Classes are Made: Critical Reflections on E.P. Thompson's Theory of Working-Class Formation" in Harvey J. Kaye & Keith McClelland (eds.) *E.P. Thompson. Critical Perspectives*, p.54, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1990; the literature inspired by Thompson's experience based approach to class formation is vast, instead of citing a range of examples useful and sometimes critical reviews of this literature in various contexts are provided by Ronald Aminzade "Class Analysis, Politics and French Labor History" in Lenard R. Berlanstein (ed.) *Rethinking Labor History*, pp. 90-113, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1993; Leon Fink "Culture's Last Stand ? Gender and the Search for the Synthesis in American Labor History", *Labor History*, Vol.34, pp.178-89, 1993; Sonya O. Rose "Class Formation and the Quintessential Worker" in Hall (ed.) *Reworking Class*, pp. 133-66; Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose "Introduction: Gender and the Reconstruction of European Working-Class History" in Laura L. Frader & Sonya O. Rose (eds.) *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, pp. 1-33, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1996

domestic sphere and the household. The survival of home-based production throughout much of early industrialising Europe has been noted. Furthermore in regions like Saxony and the Friuli the existence of households combining agriculture and industry existed, a situation familiar to any student of the unevenness of Hungarian proletarianisation ⁶.

The other major line of attack has come from those who have fundamentally attacked the theoretical assumptions of the class formation thesis itself, arguing that it has closed out differing workers' experiences of other kinds of social inequality and the identities that shape and have been connected to them. This attack has come largely, though not exclusively from feminist historians seeking to transcend the limits of women's history and instead examine working peoples' experiences by employing gender as a "category of historical analysis" in order to "yield a history that will provide new perspectives on old questions" ⁷. Such studies have revealed how the

⁶ - The best example of such sociological work is Charles F. Sabel *Work and Politics. The division of labor in industry*, Cambridge Studies in Modern Political Economies, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1982; for examples of the new approach to "proletarianisation" see Christopher H. Johnson "Patterns of Proletarianisation" in Lenard R. Berlanstein (ed.) *The Industrial Revolution and Work in Nineteenth Century Europe*, pp. 81-101, Routledge, London and New York, 1992; William H. Sewell, Jr "Uneven Development, the Autonomy of Politics and the Radicalization of Workers" in Lenard R. Berlanstein (ed.) *The Industrial Revolution and Work in Nineteenth Century Europe*, pp. 148-62, Routledge, London and New York, 1992; Jonathan Zeitlin "Historical alternatives to mass production: politics, markets and technology in nineteenth century industrialisation", *Past & Present*, No. 108, pp.133-74, 1985; on the continuing integration of the domestic sphere see the excellent Judith G. Coffin "Consumption, Production, and Gender: The Sewing Machine in Nineteenth Century France" in Frader & Rose (eds.) *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, pp. 111-41; see also Tessie P. Liu "What Price a Weaver's Dignity ? Gender Inequality and the Survival of Home-Based Production in Industrial France" in Frader & Rose (eds.) *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, pp. 57-76; on the worker-peasant phenomenon in Saxony and the Friuli see Douglas R. Holmes & Jean M. Quartaert "An Approach to Modern Labor: Worker Peasantries in Historic Saxony and the Friuli Region over Three Centuries", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 28, pp. 191-216, 1986; Jean M. Quartaert "Combining Agrarian and Industrial Livelihoods: Rural Households in the Saxon Oberlausitz in the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of Family History*, Vol.10, pp. 145-62, 1985

⁷ - The terminology and the quote is from Joan Wallach Scott "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" reprinted in her *Gender and the Politics of History*, especially p.50, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988; for a survey on the work which reviews and contributes to this shift in the field of labour and working-class history see Elsa Barkley

experience of the workplace, community, the home and the political have been shaped as much by experiences of gender, and by ideas of masculinity and femininity, as much as by the experience of class. Notions of skill, of work, of worker identity, and of class identity have shown in different contexts to have been shaped in a variety of ways by the experience of gender⁸. In addition to the attack of gender historians others

"Polyrhythms and Improvization: Lessons for Women's History", *History Workshop: a journal of socialist and feminist historians*, Issue 31, pp. 85-90, 1991; Gisela Bock "Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate", *Gender & History*, Vol.1, pp. 7-30, 1989; Elizabeth Faue "Gender and the Reconstruction of Labor History: An Introduction", *Labor History*, Vol. 34, pp.169-77, 1993; for the debate on how to integrate gender analysis into social history for the post-modernist contribution of Joan Wallach Scott, see her *Gender and the Politics of History*, for criticisms of her approach see the responses of Bryan Palmer, Christine Stansell and Anson Rabinbach published in *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No.31, pp. 14-29, 1987; Catherine Hall "Politics, Post-structuralism and Feminist History", *Gender & History*, Vol.3, pp. 204-10, 1991; for some alternative ways of using gender as "a useful category of historical analysis" see Cynthia Cockburn "Introduction: Forum: Formations of Masculinity", *Gender & History*, Vol.1, pp.159-63, 1989; Alice Kessler-Harris "Treating the Male as "Other"": Redefining the Parameters of Labor History", *Labor History*, Vol.34, pp.190-204, 1993; Keith McClelland "Some Thoughts on Masculinity and the "Representative Artisan" in Britain, 1850-1880", *Gender & History*, Vol.1, pp. 164-77, 1989; Judith Newton "Family Fortunes: "New History" and "New Historicism"", *Radical History Review*, Vol. 43, pp.5-22, 1989; Nancy Grey Osterud "Gender and Industrialisation", *Gender & History*, Vol.3, pp.97-103, 1991

⁸ - The historical literature on the interaction between gender and class in the shaping of work and "working-class" identities is vast, for a sample see Sally Alexander "Women, Class and Sexual Difference in the 1830s and 1840s: Some Reflections on the Writing of a Feminist History", *History Workshop: a journal of socialist and feminist historians*, Issue No. 17, pp. 125-49, 1984; Ava Baron "Questions of Gender: Deskillling and Demasculinization in the U.S. Printing Industry, 1830-1915", *Gender & History*, Vol.2, pp.178-99, 1989; Ida Blom "Changing Gender Identities in an Industrializing Society: the Case of Norway c. 1870-c.1914", *Gender & History*, Vol.2, pp.131-47, 1990; Helen Harden Chenut "The Gendering of Skill as Historical Process: The Case of French Knitters in Industrial Troyes, 1880-1939" in Frader & Rose (eds.) *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, pp. 77-107; Elizabeth Faue "'The Dynamo of Change": Gender and Solidarity in the American Labour Movement of the 1930s", *Gender & History*, Vol.1, pp.138-58, 1989; Lisa M. Fine "'Our Big Factory Family" Masculinity and Paternalism at the Reo Motor Car Company of Lansing, Michigan", *Labor History*, Vol.34, pp.274-91, 1993; Mary Freifeld "Technological change and the "self-acting" mule: a study of skill and the sexual division of labour", *Social History*, Vol.11, pp.319-43, 1986; Jane Gray "Gender and Uneven Working-Class Formation in the Irish Linen Industry" in Frader & Rose (eds.) *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, pp.37-56; Susan E. Hirsch "Rethinking the Sexual Division of Labor: Pullman Repair Shops, 1900-1969", *Radical History Review*, Vol.35, pp.26-48, 1986; Susan Levine "Workers' Wives: Gender, Class and Consumerism in the 1920s United States", *Gender & History*, Vol.3, pp. 45-64, 1991; Carol E. Morgan "Women, work and consciousness in the mid-nineteenth-century English cotton industry", *Social History*, Vol.17, pp.23-41, 1992; Sonya O.Rose "'Gender at Work": Sex, Class and Industrial Capitalism", *History Workshop: a journal of socialist and feminist historians*, Issue 21, pp.113-31, 1986

have stressed the centrality of notions of race and ethnicity in the constitution of proletarian social identities. They have demonstrated the impact that this process had in blunting and profoundly re-shaping class experience and identity ⁹.

These attacks have profoundly undermined the model of working class formation devised by Thompson, and developed by those historians working under his influence. Perspectives that have stressed the unevenness of proletarianisation suggest the need for close investigation of the nature of labour organisation and the conditions of production. The need to incorporate and to give gender, and race as central a place as class in the analysis of the circumstances in which working people lived has prompted a major theoretical re-consideration of how classes are/were made. Increasingly class based collectivities such as the "working class" have ceased to be the subject of labour histories, as opposed to workers. Factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, race, and in some accounts sexuality, have come to be defined as forces and social relationships that have shaped worker social identities to differing degrees, and in differing ways in different contexts. Leonore Davidoff, for example, has argued that society needs to be seen as divided into various "status groups" defined through the interactions of class, gender, race and ethnicity. Without wishing to endorse the use of the term status groups, it is important to define class, gender and ethnicity as social relationships that are separate from the

⁹ - Much of this work has been done on the experience of class-formation in the United States, the seminal work in this regard is David R. Roediger *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Verso, London and New York, 1991; for a sample of other examples see Lawrence Glickman "Inventing the "American Standard of Living": Gender, Race and Working-Class Identity, 1880-1925", *Labor History*, Vol.34, pp.221-35, 1993; Colleen O'Neill "Domesticity Deployed: Gender, Race and the Construction of Class Struggle in the Bisbee Deportation", *Labor History*, Vol.34, pp.256-73, 1993

people they affect, yet having crucial determining roles in affecting their life chances and identities ¹⁰.

Such an approach radically re-defines the central questions of labour history. It demands that the historian investigates not only the circumstances in which proletarianisation and industrialisation led to the formation of working class consciousness. It rather asks how differing economic, political and cultural contexts interact with the forces of class, gender, race, and ethnicity to produce certain worker identities which in turn shape how workers as a group(s) behave in relation to those who hold either political or economic power. This highly conditional, discursive approach to the history of the formation of worker identity may contribute to "labour history's loss of élan, directionality, and intellectual purpose", that has been much lamented by labour historians, yet it brings essential tools to those who seek to investigate the variety of processes of class and social identity formation among working people in a huge range of historical contexts ¹¹.

This approach reveals a series of paradoxes in the responses of industrial workers to the creation of a socialist economy and society during the early 1950s. Class, gender, generation, kin and social origin interacted with the political practice of the socialist state and the circumstances of production and consumption in a shortage economy. These processes re-made worker identity and structured the patterns of integration into, accommodation with and resistance to the environment that was created by

¹⁰ - For the various factors which she regards as shaping class-formation see Rose "Class Formation and the Quintessential Worker", p.136; Leonore Davidoff "Regarding Some "Old Husbands' Tales": Public and Private in Feminist History" published in her *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender & Class*, especially pp. 249-55, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995

¹¹ - On labour history's perceived loss of intellectual direction, the quote is taken from Ira Katznelson "The "Bourgeois" Dimension: A Provocation About Institutions, Politics and the Future of Labor History", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No.46, p.7, 1994

the new state. Whilst the forces of kin, generation and social origin seem relatively unproblematic, the questions of class and gender deserve a little more precise definition. Class here is taken to mean the relationship that structures the "constraints and opportunities" open to people that stem "from how they are economically situated". Gender is defined as "a complex set of relations and processes" a "sociocultural relation" that structures relations between the sexes in their social, political, economic and cultural senses ¹².

Part Two argues that the dynamics of class were central to the creation of worker identity, but that they were mediated by the Stalinist state and the experience of the shortage economy to produce paradoxical effects. The politicisation of production described in the introduction to Part One led to the transparency of the mechanisms of exploitation that structured the "constraints and opportunities" open to industrial workers as a group, and to sub-groups within the industrial workforce. This enabled the linkage to be made in workers' own minds between the declining wage levels, poor living conditions, repression and high work intensity on the one hand with the policies of the state on the other. It could be argued that the transparency of class relations that the politicisation of production created should have led to the development of a strong class identity among the workforce that ought to have facilitated general working-class political mobilisation. A phenomenon to this could be observed in states characterised by an authoritarian political system that pursued and underpinned a strategy of rapid industrialisation in the capitalist world during the post-war period. In such cases the role of the state played in the proletarianisation process encouraged the development of explicitly political trade unionism ¹³.

¹² - My definition of class is adapted from Rose "Class Formation and the Quintessential Worker" p.150; my understanding of gender is adapted from Bock " Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate", p.15

This did not happen in Stalinist Hungary, however. This was in part because the experience of exploitation by the state and of considerable repression was not merely confined to industrial workers. Often such repression was accompanied by the deployment by the state of the rhetoric of "class struggle", a kind of official ideology of class relations. The most numerous social group in Hungary at the dawn of state socialism, individual smallholders found the constraints dependent on their economic situation dramatically increased by high taxation and compulsory deliveries backed up by considerable state repression. Members of the former ruling elites found their property confiscated by the state and their social situation transformed by the its brutal intervention. Proletarianisation as it occurred during the 1950s entailed the increased participation of members of smallholder households in industry, and often of members of the former middle classes also. This contributed to a situation, the consequences of which are explored in greater depth in Chapter 3, in which a feeling of class exploitation was subsumed under a perception of the more general exploitation and oppression of society by a state that was distinctly alien to it.

The argument, however, that society felt itself to be both oppressed and distinct from the state seems to be contradicted at a superficial level by the lack of open collective opposition prior to the outbreak of popular revolution in October 1956. Chapter 3 however argues that this was at a deeper level far from contradictory; the radicalisation of the 1956 events and the rapidity of the collapse of the state was in part because of the depth and breadth of this antagonism between society and state. Furthermore it argues that the reluctance of workers and by extension, other groups to resort to

¹³ - For an example of this kind of analysis in the capitalist world see Gay W. Seidman *Manufacturing Militance: Workers' Movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970-1985*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1994

open collective action, was in part due to the climate of fear created by the efficient and brutal organs of repression that the state deployed. As anthropologists like James C. Scott have reminded us, all resistance or opposition of the subordinate to the dominant need not be either open or collective in its nature. With his concept of "infra-political" resistance he has shown how individual or concealed group acts such as theft, labour mobility, even daubing buildings with dissident graffiti beyond the eyes of the powerful can be seen as forms of resistance. As Part Two shows the concept of "infra-political" resistance is particularly useful in demonstrating the ways in which opposition to the goals of the regime manifested itself in 1950s Hungary ¹⁴.

In using the concept of "infra-political" or hidden resistance two issues arise both of which point in a similar direction. "Infra-political" action tends to be individual, or based around very particular solidarities, indeed the pervasiveness of such kinds of action have been noted throughout socialist Eastern Europe and were promoted by the local consequences of the operation of the state socialist system itself. This has led one anthropologist writing about socialist Romania to explore the paradox inherent in the degree of social atomisation that existed in a formally collectivist society, a paradox he describes as "the solitude of collectivism" ¹⁵. The first issue is that of the relationship between individual and collective action, and from that of particular and general identities; to what extent did one prevent or alternatively lead to the other. The second issue that relates to "infra-political" resistance is whether it encourages all acts which subverted the state to be seen as resistance, in other words that it

¹⁴ - See James C. Scott *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1990

¹⁵ - David A. Kideckel *The Solitude of Collectivism: Romanian Villagers to the Revolution and Beyond*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1993

encourages too broad a definition. If particularistic, hidden forms of resistance were encouraged by the operation of the shortage economy, to what extent are they to be seen as survival strategies or as resistance to the state.

The answer to this second question is that to some degree they were both. Informal bargaining over remuneration in the workplace that is described in Chapter 1 was a survival strategy, but in pursuing such an approach workers were motivated by the perception that they were exploited by the state through the existing wage system. The case of the theft of raw materials from factories by workers described in Chapter 2 can be treated in much the same way. Certainly the use of materials and preferential positions to participate in an informal economy was undoubtedly a survival strategy, but the perception that workers were exploited by the state made theft from the state, and by extension the factory that it owned, appear legitimate. Perceptions of class relations therefore shaped worker behaviour and resistance, but the a discussion of the forms that this took requires a return to the first issue arising from the use of the concept of "infra-political" resistance; namely the relationship between it and more general forms of resistance.

Part Two as a whole, and especially Chapters 1 and 2 argue that the nature of socialist production and the conditions of socialist proletarianisation that were described in Part One had a powerful determining impact on the strategies of survival and resistance open to workers in early socialist Hungary. Whilst until 1956 pervasive state repression ruled out recourse to collective action, the economy of the 1950s was one of pervasive shortages and bottlenecks. Labour, raw materials, goods and services were all in short supply during the period. An individual or group that possessed a given thing or attribute was in a favourable

bargaining position. It was the exploitation of such shortages that opened the space for workers to pursue strategies of informal bargaining or secondary economic activity, described in Chapters 1 and 2. The bottlenecks and shortages they were able to exploit were so particular that they could be only exploited by small groups of workers.

The subsumption of class under the broader antagonism between society and state ensured that when the barriers to open collective action were lifted in 1956, though class grievances played an enormous role in the Revolution, they were not its primary focus. Indeed this goes some way to explaining why the major demand of the 1956 Revolution was to demand a state subordinated to society through the mechanisms of representative democracy. The subsumption of class into society furthermore helped disconnect micro-struggle in the workplace from macro-struggle in society. The perception therefore that the exploitation of workers resulted from state intervention did not sharpen workers' perceptions of themselves as a members of a class, precisely the reverse occurred. Furthermore the fall in the standard of living, shortage and informal economic activity de-centred the focus of worker identity, a worker's position in production. Informal bargaining led to a third element, the effective particularisation of worker identity.

This process of particularisation was aided by the de-centring of socialist production, and the failure of Hungarian workers to develop a class identity, but the extraordinary individualisation of remuneration, as well as the interaction of shortage and the labour process was fundamental to it. The particularisation of worker identity, Chapter 1, argues refers to the process by which groups of workers drew on certain cultural resources; skills, ideas of work, of gender, generation and social origin to gain for themselves a favourable position within the informal division of labour of

their workplace. In many ways this process of particularisation resembles many of the methods employed by skilled workers to assert control over the job in capitalist workplaces. There are two important differences, however. The first was that this process was an attempt to assert worker control over remuneration, not over the job per se. As a result of the transformation of the shop floor and endemic shortage workers had little opportunity to assert control over the methods, or at times the pace of production. They aimed instead to control under the payment-by-results systems was the rate of their remuneration. Secondly the lack of the development of a general class identity among the industrial workforce was re-inforced by the cultural implications of this process. The lack of common points of reference between the workforce meant that social identities on the shop floor became much more differentiated and that in terms of attitude and action the workforce became divided against itself; separated into "good" and "bad" workers, "new" and "old" workers, women, "peasants", even "lumpen elements". This in turn hindered the development of a common class identity that could unite workers, and encouraged the subsumption of class struggle and conflict into perceived antagonism between state and society.

The process that affected how industrial workers reacted to the Stalinist state and socialist industrialisation was considerably more complex and uneven than either models which stress "atomisation", or working-class formation suggest. Class played an enormous role in structuring the reactions of workers, but they failed to develop a class-based identity that they could use to challenge the state. In the somewhat inadequate terminology of classical Marxism industrial workers formed "a class in itself" but not "a class for itself". The following chapters expand and illustrate the central aspects of this argument.

Chapter 1 explores the process of the particularisation of worker identity at the point of production. It examines this by analysing the interaction between informal shop floor bargaining and worker notions of skill and work, and how ideas about gender, generation and social origin re-shaped them. In turn it considers the way in which such forces structured the informal bargaining process and shop floor relations. Chapter 2 turns to consumption and informal economic activity, arguing that "shortage" was not merely a phenomenon that affected production. It spread to every part of everyday life. Industrial workers, and many other social groups, responded to it by pursuing an ideal of self-sufficiency, increasingly using their workplaces in the socialist sector in an ever more instrumental fashion as a base for participation in the informal economy. This further contributed to the decomposition of links between workers and reinforced on the one hand differentiation between workers and on the other antagonism between the individual and the state. Chapter 3 accounts for worker's participation in the political realm and examines the extent to which they were prepared to act collectively. It shows that despite enormous discontent on shop floors across the country, workers were not easily mobilised and when such mobilisation did occur it came about as a result of the interaction between the collapse in regime authority and the political opposition of other groups, rather than as the extension of class based protest.

Chapter One

Rejecting Class Solidarity: Social Identity and Informal Control over Remuneration

Introduction

On a night shift in Pit No. XII of the Tatabánya coal trust in November 1951, Sándor Hajósi, one of the most experienced coal hewers in the mine was allocated a poor place to work at the coal face from which he would be unable to make his norm. As the hopelessness of his task dawned on him he became demoralised, slackening his work pace he grew ever more angry. In the end in frustration he threw down his pick and confronted the deputy responsible for his section, arguing that as a "good worker" with experience he deserved more than a poor position to work where he would be unable to make out. His superior retorted that he should not argue but return to work. Rather than stand in solidarity with him, Hajósi's work mates were far from united as to whether his treatment had been just, indeed one coal hewer new to the mine, Lajos Szabó, was heard to remark, reiterating the view of the deputy, that had Hajósi not put down his tools and argued he would have been able to fill two carts in the time he had wasted ¹.

This incident demonstrated that, at least in coal mining, the divisions between "new" and "old" workers identified by the authorities in their attempts to explain work discipline infringements was also to some extent felt by workers themselves. Many of the more experienced miners regarded newcomers, recruited to underground work, in the early 1950s as inferior both in terms of their command of their skill and in their work ethic. This attitude had been fuelled by miner opposition to the measures to shorten the training courses for prospective coal hewers recruited as part of the 1951

¹ - *Harc a Szénért*, 29th November 1951

campaign. Although few expressed their opposition to such a move publicly, in one meeting in Pit No. VI one miner stated that he did not regard it as just "that somebody could become a coal hewer after only one year, that person should only be able to join a brigade after a good 6 to 8 years apprenticeship under a master and that is the only way a good skilled worker can be trained" ². By 1953 party ideologists were beginning to draw attention to the existence of such culturally constructed divisions between miners. One criticised the more experienced miners for their failure to "break from the harmful consequences of their acclimatisation under the capitalist system" that he described as being their "skill based chauvinism, the way they look down on new workers who have come straight from the village and female workers" ³.

In spite of such official concern as time drew on these divisions became more deeply entrenched and gained more acceptance from mine management. Miners were able increasingly to draw attention to newly assumed, more particularistic social identities in order to extract concessions from lower and middle management. In 1955 one Tatabánya trade union official admitted that because he believed that "new workers are the ones who absent themselves" he stated that if "an old worker with 18 to 20 years service to the pit came to the factory management almost crying to ask that they don't penalise him for being absent, then of course with such an old and honest worker we wouldn't use a severe penalty, but for new workers who go absent, then we are strict" ⁴.

² - KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 32f.4/15ö.e., p.26

³ - *Társadalmi Szemle*, October-November 1953, pp.1024-5

⁴ - SZKL Bányász/922d./1955; *Jegyzőkönyv felvétel 1955. VI. 3-án a Tröszt bizottság helységben megtartott elnökségi ülésen*, p.4

The growth of particular social identities, of "good" versus "bad" workers, or "old" versus "new" workers, was not a phenomenon limited to coal mining. It was a general worker response to the changes in the work environment that occurred as a result of the First Five Year Plan, and one that was both deeply subversive of worker and class based forms of solidarity on the one hand and managerial authority over the shop floor on the other. The origins of this shift lay in the interaction between the re-composition of the industrial labour force explored in Chapters 3 and 4 of Part One and the informal bargaining thrown up as a response to the collapse of the wage system in the face of the actual operation of the planned economy explored in Chapter 2. Such particular identities and solidarities did not automatically correspond, as in coal mining, with a straightforward divide between so-called "old" and "new" workers that would be identified by Hungarian sociologists at the turn of the 1970s⁵. They were determined in a more localised and uneven manner determined by the different circumstances of various sectors, individual factories and communities. The growth and configuration of the identities created were always underpinned by notions of skill, gender, generation and social origin. These notions interacted with the requirements of shop floor bargaining to produce real conflict and shifts in worker identity as a consequence. Whilst the results of the particularisation of social identity were uneven, the factors giving rise to the process were visible across Hungarian industry. In order to explain the phenomenon this Chapter firstly discusses the patterns of informal bargaining over wages that had emerged by 1953. It then relates

⁵ - For an example of official thought which conceptualised divisions within the "working class" in this way see "Az MSZMP Központi Bizottsága Politikai Bizottságának Állásfoglalása a Munkásosztály Helyzetéről Szóló, 1958-as KB-Határozat Végrehajtásáról, A Munkásosztály Jelenlegi Helyzetéről" in *Az MSZMP Határozatai és Dokumentumai, 1967-1970*, pp. 459-76; for the classic academic studies which underline the existence of such a division see Kemény & Kozák *A Csepel Vas- és Fémművek Munkásai* and István Kemény & Gyula Kozák *Pest Megye Munkásai*, Társadalomtudományi Intézet, Budapest, 1971

them to the worker reactions to the re-composition of the industrial labour force.

Shop Floor Bargaining by late 1953: a snapshot of a problem

By the time of the announcement in June 1953 of the beginning of the New Course the authorities had lost effective control of the shop floor. The measures they took to boost living standards and halt the rising tide of ever more open worker discontent completely failed to address what for many workers was the most pressing problem; that of low wages and unpopular wage payment systems that were partially responsible for the growing disorganisation of production. These problems could no longer be ignored by the authorities or tackled simply through redress to repressive measures directed against the workforce. Many measures, most notably the abolition of financial penalties for infractions of labour discipline increased workers' bargaining power at the point of production. The promised liberalisation of small scale trade and the shift in policy towards agricultural co-operatives offered future potential exit options to many semi-integrated industrial workers ⁶.

The problem was particularly acute in agriculture where the retreat from the policy of forced collectivisation led to worker discontent in the workplace taking the particular form of a threatened return to agriculture among worker peasants. In the Budapest Crane Factory the question of the return of agricultural land was widely debated among the large number of workers who commuted from the provinces. In the Chemical Industry Machines and Radiator Factory, where commuters were strongly represented among the foundry workers, most regarded the new

⁶ - These measures are outlined in Habuda "A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja", and also in Szabó Új Szakas... pp. 55-7

government programme as an opportunity to retrieve their land and go back to agriculture ⁷. In the Zalaegerszeg Clothing Factory, young workers from smallholder families stated that if their parents left the co-operatives, then they themselves would leave the factory to return to agriculture ⁸. Among the state and collective farm workforce the desire to leave the collective and to return to the individual cultivation of land was extremely strong; in Zala county the ÁVH reported that in many cases the entirety of the membership called for the disillusion of the co-operatives ⁹.

Imre Nagy had placed particular store by reviving light industrial production in order to improve the supply of consumer goods and thus raise living standards. The promise of increasing the number of small artisans, led to those who worked in small scale industry prior to their assimilation into the socialist labour force threatening to return to their former employment. In the Zalaegerszeg Clothing Factory, a new factory, whose workforce was made up to a large degree of former artisans there was a strong desire to leave the factory for small scale industry. One worker stated, in front of the other workers, that "we should leave the factory here and get an artisan's permit, and there we will earn much more" ¹⁰.

It was not, however, until September that the party's Political Committee gave the task of providing a comprehensive picture of "the factory workers', the working conditions and the social and cultural situation of working class" ¹¹, to a five-member team of central committee members.

⁷ - SZKL SZOT Béosztály-Munkaügy/33d./1953; *Feljegyzés a kormányprogrammal kapcsolatos üzemi tapasztalatokról*, p.2

⁸ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1cs./ 80 ö.e., p.58

⁹ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1cs./ 80 ö.e., p.56

¹⁰ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1cs./ 80 ö.e., p.55

¹¹ - Habuda "A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja ...", p.28

The committee examined the situation in 30 factories, mainly concentrated in the steel production, machine and mining sectors, which employed a total of 150,000 people. During the following five weeks the committee was to hear a total of 500 employees, both white-collar and manual ¹². Alongside this investigation state organs elsewhere in the apparatus took the opportunity created by the desire to investigate working class wages and social conditions to draw attention to particular problems in their own spheres of interest ¹³.

Though few solutions were found to the problems of the wage systems, a picture was constructed of the endemic bargaining, most of it informal, over wages and norms that had come into existence by late 1953.

The workplace had become an arena for considerable shop floor bargaining fed by management's need to accommodate workers to cope with the demands of production in a shortage economy and worker rejection of the official wage system.

Many of the more blatant forms that this bargaining took were simply called "norm cheating" by the central apparatus. One form was the abuse of the innovation movement, that was often found in the metalworking sector to disguise short cuts in the production of each piece, a practice that often led to declining quality. Such "norm cheating" often took the form of the abuse of elements of the labour competition; in the Diósgyőr Steel Mills unskilled workers supplying the furnace were able to earn wages 50% higher than normal by engaging in "shock work". These workers officially left their

¹² - The story of the compilation of the report is told by Habuda "A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja", p.28 and by Pető *A Munkások Életkörülményei Magyarországon*, p.32

¹³ - An example of this kind of intervention is provided by the report of the Leather Workers' Union, on the situation regarding wages and norms in their industry, see SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30 d./1953; *Bőripari Dolgozók Szakszervezete Munkabérosztály Vezető levél*

workplace and were simply re-employed by the enterprise as shock workers, performing their original job, in order to gain higher wages. There were cases reported of workers abandoning the enterprise completely and simply living as shock workers as a result. In other cases "cheating" took the form of the foreman changing the size of the job done on paper in order to raise the wages of the workforce, in the Sztálinváros Brick Factory the foreman simply reported that 2-300 tons more bricks had been produced than was actually the case. On the Nagyatádi construction site the wage fund had been overspent by 147,000 Forints in August 1953. This was due largely to enterprise management that had paid for 2,500 square metres of plastering, as well as the haulage of 770,000 bricks, 825 cubic metres of mortar, and 390 cubic metres of concrete. This work had only ever been completed on paper ¹⁴. This more blatant form of wage manipulation was exceptional in that "norm cheating" generally occurred at times where "storming" was needed to achieve plan fulfilment.

Another more subtle form that informal bargaining took was the exploitation by management of ambiguities in the work categorisation system to give workers higher wages than the central authorities stipulated. Indeed bargaining between managers and workers over the categorisation of jobs for which there was a particular shortage of labour had become endemic by the early Summer of 1953. At that time the Ministry of Heavy Industry and the central union apparatus intervened to prevent an informal reduction of the norms in the Mátyás Rákosi Pipe Factory. The result was a debate between the central and the enterprise level organisation about the appropriate categories into which warehouse workers should be placed, with the enterprise arguing they should go into a higher category than that in which the central authorities wished to place them. The union reported that

¹⁴ - SZRL SZOT Bérosztály/28 d./1953; *Feljegyzés ...*

in steel mills the enterprise management commonly shifted maintenance workers, fitters and turners into higher wage categories than those centrally stipulated. Among maintenance workers in the textile factories such modifications seem to have been quite common and were made in order to give workers in these industries wages comparable to those in the metalworking sector in order to prevent labour mobility. In the Bekéscsaba Cotton Weaving Factory, of the maintenance workers 13 were in the VII category, 6 were in the VI category, 7 were in the V category and only 2 were in the IV category ¹⁵

The classic form which such shop floor bargaining took however was over the norms. One of the most notable features of the norms was how certain groups of workers could use their position in production process to informally bargain with management to secure their relaxation. This differed from "norm cheating" in that the latter consisted of blatant attempts to defraud management, whilst other forms of bargaining around the norms were more subtle. Initially the introduction of unpopular norms was met by a series of exaggerated complaints; in the Mátyás Rákosi Machine Factory, some 80% of the complaints were described as unrealistic and as a tool in the bargaining process between workers and management ¹⁶. If this failed to have an effect then the next step was for workers to withhold production; in the EMAG mechanics workshop, the workers regulated the pace of their work in order to underfulfill their norms over a twenty day period (50-60% fulfilment). Over the next ten days the enterprise management converted them to "shock work" wages, in order to fulfill the monthly plan, which led to norm fulfilment of 200-300%. Often such behaviour led to norm relaxation. In the metalworking sector this simply took the form of underestimating the

¹⁵ - *ibid.*, p.2

¹⁶ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/31d./1953; *Jelentés Bér és norma észrevételekről*, p.1

capacity of the technology to cope with the high work intensity ¹⁷. This also seems to have been the case with semi-skilled workers operating machines or working on automated assembly lines in food processing. Machine operators at the Budapest Pork Abattoir could fulfill their norms by 108-163%, at the Budapest Beef Abattoir by 172%, at the Budapest Chocolate Factory by 120-140%, and at the Lágymányosi Tobacco Plant by 120-150% ¹⁸. In construction crane operators had been able to bargain to relax the norms. This led to them earning as much as 2500-3000 Forints monthly whilst many of their work mates on the site could only earn around 800 Forints ¹⁹.

Some workers were better able than others to successfully secure norm relaxation, and this led to a re-shaping of the wage system. In the metal industry, at the Rákosi Mátyás Machine Factory the differing importance of the various shops in the production process led to wage differentials opening up between the skills depending on their area of employment in the factory. Turners average hourly wages varied from between 5.01 Forints in the lowest paid shop to 6.27 Forints in the highest, the biggest difference was among the grinders, the lowest paid earned 4.28 Forints an hour whilst those working in the maintenance section could earn 9.88 Forints ²⁰. In textiles lax norms were experienced in enterprises where skilled work by hand was required. In areas such as flax and hemp, yarn, silk and ready made hosiery production the norms for those jobs requiring

¹⁷ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/28 d./1953; *Jelentés a bérhelyzeteről*

¹⁸ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *Jelentés az élelmezései ipar bér- norma és premiumrendszer felülvizsgálásáról*, p.16

¹⁹ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/31d./1953; *Bérproblémák az Építő- és Építőanyagipar területén*, p.2

²⁰ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/31d./1953; *Jelentés Bér és normával kapcsolatos észrevételekről*, p.1

handicraft production were considerably more lax than those for machine workers, with handicraft norms fulfilled by 150-180% ²¹. In other areas of light industry the situation was similar, at the Rákospalota Natural Oils Enterprise, the norms were relaxed to allow workers to fulfill them by 140 to 150%, raising the wages to between 698 and 812 Forints monthly ²².

Maintenance workers were generally able to exploit their position to secure wage advantages through norm relaxation and informal bargaining over categorisation. In the metal industry the result of such bargaining was to create large wage differences between enterprises. In most large enterprises in light industry the maintenance staff accounted for some 50-100 workers. The work was not paid according to a standardised norm, though wages were generally set according to the rates for skilled work in heavy engineering ²³. The consequences of this lack of standardisation can be illustrated by the problem of the labour mobility of maintenance workers between the Almásfüztő Aluminium Smelter and the Almásfüztő Oil Refining Enterprise. In the aluminium smelter the maintenance staff were paid according to the heavy engineering rates, whilst in the oil refinery they were paid on the basis of the lower chemical industry rates. The consequence of this was that the latter enterprise had serious problems recruiting and retaining maintenance staff ²⁴. In mining low pay for maintenance workers relative to other sectors was a major cause of discontent among the workers. Monthly wages were as low as 500-600 Forints for some workers in

²¹ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *Tapasztalaink alapján megállapítottuk azt, ...*, pp.3-4

²² - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30 d./1953; *Könnyűipari és Mezőgazdasági osztály jelentés*, pp.1-2

²³ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *Könnyűipari és Mezőgazdasági Osztály Jelentés*, p.3

²⁴ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *A vegyiparban lévő munkaügyi- és bérproblémák*, p.4

the sector ²⁵. Such a lack of standardised payment gave workers considerable scope to employ informal bargaining strategies to increase their wages. In the Phylaxia, for example, maintenance workers simply refused to complete work when the enterprise management refused to offer them pay for supplementary time ²⁶. The ability of maintenance workers to participate in informal bargaining could lead to serious problems. Indeed in light industry the superior capacity of maintenance workers to bargain informally with management, than even skilled workers in the industries led to distortions in the wage distribution. In the Budapest Conserves Factory, for example, in August 1953 machinists earned between 1,079 and 1,098 Forints, whilst unskilled workers in maintenance, could earn between 1,146 and 1424 Forints monthly ²⁷.

Those workers responsible for supplying materials, and loading and unloading, were particularly successful in achieving norm relaxation, because of their ability to determine the pace of production, through regulating the speed of their work. At the Békés County Flour Mills, for example, average norm fulfilment varied between 90 and 105%, whilst loading workers could fulfill their norms by 135 to 140%. At the Szabolcs County Flour Mills, in the third quarter of 1953, average norm fulfilment varied at between 103 to 104%, guaranteeing an average monthly wage of 671 Forints. In this enterprise one loader was able with 20 days work to earn 1175.90 Forints, whilst one milling grinder in 15 days with 150 hours work

²⁵ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *Bányaipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete Jelentés a bányászat jelenlegi bérhelyzetről*, p.2

²⁶ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *Könnyűipari és Mezőgazdasági Osztály Jelentés*, p.3

²⁷ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30 d./1953; *Levél az Élelmiszeripari Minisztérium Munkaügyi- és Bérfőosztály Vezetőtől a Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa Munkabér-osztálynak, 1953 október 8.*, p.2, the information on the tightness of the norms for machinists in light industry can be found in *ibid.*, p.3

earned 847.37 Forints, and a flour siever with 17 days and 190 hours work could only make 487.60 Forints. Often the skilled millers earned less than the unskilled loaders ²⁸.

Workers in key positions within the internal division of labour of a given factory had an advantage in pursuing informal bargaining strategies with management to improve their remuneration or their conditions. Other small groups of workers could, however, resort to several strategies that would give them the benefits of becoming "key" workers in a given establishment. Furthermore their adoption of such strategies might be rewarded in different ways in different places, norm relaxation, job re-categorisation or leniency in the interpretation of work discipline regulations were all possible outcomes of successful informal bargaining. Management might choose to distribute good jobs to members of the key group, or guarantee them a relatively favourable supply of raw materials and tools. In an economy characterised by shortage that often made the difference between over-fulfilling a norm by 150%, or under-fulfilling it by 80%.

Becoming a Key Worker: Political, Production-based and Cultural Strategies

In Pit No. XII of the Tatabánya mines the director reported on his policies towards work discipline in the pit in 1954. He discussed the problem of workers who refused to accept allocated places at the coal face with the argument that they could not cut sufficient coal to make their norms. With some groups of workers he reported that his subordinates had given way to workers complaints, with others he had taken a firm hand barring them from

²⁸ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *Jelentés az élmezései ipar bér- norma és prémiumrendszer felülvizsgálásáról*, pp.12-3

work for up to three days as a penalty for their "indiscipline" ²⁹. All of the workers concerned had the same jobs, theoretically the same position within the division of labour of the pit, yet they were treated differently. Unfortunately the pit director in his statement did not give any criteria as to why one particular brigade's complaints met with a conciliatory response whilst the arguments of others did not. This was far from being an isolated incident, indeed the phenomenon of preferential treatment for some groups or individuals above others in production, irrespective of their position within the functional division of labour in a given plant, was widespread.

An examination of the strategies such workers could pursue in order to become "key" workers, as opposed to peripheral ones is the first step in examining the anatomy of informal bargaining on Hungarian shop floors and demonstrating how they fed the particularisation of worker identity. How then could a worker become a "key" worker in a given establishment? It seems that three strategies were viable: the first was through the political organisations of the plant, the second was through organising a small group of workers so that they would be able to disrupt production in a semi-covert manner and the third was to persuade members of plant management that the worker was too important to production for the factory to lose.

The most common example of the first kind of strategy was the manipulation of the labour competition, especially the Stakhanovite movement. The Stakhanovites themselves manipulated the movement in order to maintain the level of their earnings, whilst management co-operated with them in order to maintain the fiction that labour competition continued to function as it was intended in a production environment increasingly characterised by shortage. In Pit No. XII in Tatabánya, one "new" worker

²⁹ - SZKL Bányász/769d./1954; *Jegyzőkönyv Felvételt: 1954.XII.10-én a Trösztbizottság helységében megtartott elnökségi ülésről*, p.3

from a Transdanubian village employed simply to clear coal from the face and load it into carts was witness to how this system worked. Such workers were at the bottom of the hierarchy of underground workers; their wages were particularly low for the work that they did ³⁰. After working in dangerous conditions for such wages for six months he began to work in a brigade under András Tajkov, the leading Stakhanovite in the mine. Following his escape to the West he was to recount that "it was then that I saw how much easier things were for him and his group (than the rest), because they simply gathered together everything for him, wood, plank, sent the empty carts automatically to his place at the coal face, immediately took away the full ones" ³¹.

In an environment in mining where only around 50% of skilled workers at the coal face could make their norms ³² and in which officials privately admitted that it "was a really rare case, that a worker could gain such a percentage at the coal face that would make him a Stakhanovite" ³³, such help was crucial. For the factory party organisation, of which Tajkov's brother was the secretary, victory for the Stakhanovite's brigade in the "daily competition" was crucial to maintaining the fiction that plan fulfilment in the pit was possible, whilst the 200 Forint reward for victory supplemented the wages of the brigade members ³⁴. In an environment in which the mine was over-exploited, when it suffered from such a serious shortage of labour that

³⁰ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *Bányaipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete Jelentés a bányászat jelenlegi bérhelyzetéről*, p.1; it is interesting to note that the Mineworkers' Union who submitted the report did not believe that a monthly wage of 700-800 Forints was sufficient to cover a miners' living expenses, let alone 522 Forints, see *ibid.*, p.2

³¹ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 8083/54, p.6

³² - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály /28d./1953; *Minisztertanács Bértitkársága Javaslat az 1954. évben végrehajtandó bérügyi intézkedésekre*, p.3

³³ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *Feljegyzés Jamrik elvtárs részére*; for more detail on the findings of the investigation see MOL M-KS-276f.94/ 588 ö.e., p.130

³⁴ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 8083/54, p.6

both prisoners and conscripts were put to work alongside the civilian workforce, when machinery frequently broke down and where many parts of the mine were highly dangerous, management support was crucial to Tajkov in loading eight carts with coal in an hour ³⁵.

This preferential treatment for Tajkov and members of his brigade fuelled tensions among the pit's workforce, privately many stated that "why should we work for them, they don't give us back any of the reward" ³⁶. For this reason miners refused to accept that his rewards were earned in any way by hard work or based on his ability. This feeling was exacerbated by the fact that his older brother was party secretary whilst another blood relative was an ÁVH officer and commander of the forced labour in the pit ³⁷. The core of Tajkov's brigade was made up of close friends and relatives. When he became a Stakhanovite in 1949 by filling 140 carts in five and a half hours he relied on the labour of two of his brothers. He was always assisted by a close friend in clearing the coal from the face who according to other miners had "made him (Tajkov) a Stakhanovite" ³⁸. In addition to this

³⁵ - General information on Pit No. XII can be found in the records of the factory party organisation, see KEML MSZMP KMBA ir. 36f.3/20ö.e.; the best single source for production problems in the Tatabánya mines during the early part of the New Course is the discussion contained in SZKL Bányász/769d./1954; *Jegyzőkönyv Felvétel: 1954.XII.10-én a Trösztbizottság helységében megtartott elnökségi ülésről*; for Tajkov's statement on how many carts he was able to fill with coal in an hour see OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 8083/54, p.6

³⁶ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 8083/54, p.6

³⁷ - *ibid.*, p.5; indeed one former member of mine management attributed Tajkov's results to his political connections in an interview with me in 1995; Personal Interview with D.S., conducted in the Tatabánya Museum, 8th August 1995

³⁸ - Tajkov himself admitted this to a closed party meeting to discuss the crisis of production in the mines in June 1951, see KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/3ö.e., p.22; for other miners' comments on Tajkov's workmate see OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 8083, p.6

Tajkov's Communism was held against him in a climate in which substantial popular discontent with the regime existed ³⁹.

This gave rise to the notion that not only were Tajkov's "achievements" due to factors other than his working ability, but that he was the inverse of a "good", properly trained miner. According to the escaped former miner, older workers stated that "Tajkov originally worked as a coal haulier, and managed to get his coal hewers certificate without doing the apprenticeship, or the examination. The deputies had to help him all the time" ⁴⁰.

Whilst this was something of an extreme example it was by no means an uncommon one. Stakhanovism and certain forms of the labour competition formed spaces tolerated by the authorities in which individuals and small groups of workers around them could resort to informal bargaining in branches of industry other than coal mining. In metalworking in the Mátyás Rákosi Works the Stakhanovites similarly benefited from privileges granted them by factory management. Béla Röder, the nationally famous turner, was provided with a large job that did not require the adjustment of his machine. Imre Muszka depended on the assistance of two unskilled workers permanently allocated to him to ensure that he was able to switch between the two machines he needed to work on without delay ⁴¹. Access

³⁹ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 8083, p.6; for similar examples from another mining town on how popular anti-Communism shaped miners attitudes towards the labour competition and those who participated in it see György Moldova *Tisztelet Komlónak!*, pp.162-9, Magyarország felfedezése, Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1971

⁴⁰ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 8083, p.6

⁴¹ - On the privileges granted to Imre Muszka in the Rákosi Mátyás Művek see the interview with Elek Nagy, reprinted in Gyula Kozák & Adrienne Molnár (eds.) *"Szuronyok Hegyén Nem Lehet Dolgozni" Válogatás 1956-os munkástanács-vezetők visszaemlékezéseiből*, especially p.13, Századvég Kiadó - 1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1994; for the views of one former worker who escaped to the west in 1955 see OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 11356/55, pp.4-5

to these spaces was extremely restricted, however. It depended on whether an individual had been selected in the early days of Stakhanovite labour competition by management or the factory party organisation in 1949. Whilst this phenomenon in its infancy had been a form of management manipulation rather than one of informal bargaining, management later had to guarantee these individuals and the groups around them preferential treatment in order to maintain the fiction that the plan was achievable. This allowed those initially selected to effectively bargain with management for continued favourable treatment into the 1950s.

Assuming a key role in production through the labour competition was not the only way in which a worker or group of workers could gain favourable treatment within a given factory or shop. In many senses it was quite exceptional and was not unambiguously a form of informal bargaining. Small groups of workers through either an important position within the internal division of labour of a certain shop or their internal cohesion were able to use their informal control over the speed of production as a bargaining chip with management. This situation could exist, paradoxically, even in those plants where, on paper at least, production was at its most individualised. Indeed, this phenomenon requires further discussion with reference to one concrete case.

The Danube Shoe Factory by 1952 was the largest shoe factory in the country; it produced 2,513,000 pairs of shoes during the course of the year and employed 2,513 people⁴². It was created as a separate enterprise in 1948, and before that had simply been the shoe making division of a larger leather working plant. At the beginning of the First Five Year Plan it was a small establishment relying on handicraft methods and largely

⁴² - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/10ö.e., p.43

outdated technology, working conditions in the small plant were described as dirty, hot and dusty ⁴³. Over the next three years the plant was dramatically extended and modernised; beginning in 1949 the existing workshops were closed and transformed. Production was completely re-organised with the creation of vertically integrated workshops dealing with leather cutting and stitching; in each production was to be based on production lines with each worker performing specialised, narrowly defined tasks. New machinery was imported from the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. Gradually the factory was expanded as new workshops were progressively added allowing production to expand fivefold between 1948 and 1952. The intentions of economic planners in introducing a conveyor belt system were clearly stated by one Stakhanovite in the factory; "one can see that with a conveyor belt system it's possible to produce much more than before and one can really pay more attention to quality, unlike before the whole process is so unified and continuous, that the shoes can be looked at individually" ⁴⁴.

In spite of this intention the introduction of a conveyor belt system in the plant failed to create the "unified and continuous" production which the Stakhanovite believed the system heralded. Indeed production, and earnings in the plant were at the mercy of the operation of the planned economy, the factory constantly struggled with unpredictable deliveries of raw materials that completely depended on the situation of its supplying enterprise. As one manager put it; "if the leather factory is only making 70-

⁴³ - *Duna Híradó*, 10th June 1950

⁴⁴ - For this comment see *Duna Híradó*, 10th June 1950; for the rising production of the new factory as it is modernised see MOL M-Bp-176f.2/190/10ö.e., p.43; on the expansion of the conveyor belt system throughout the factory see *Futószalag*, 5th March 1952, *Futószalag*, 19th April 1952; for an article which gives a pointer to the degree of the transformation of the plant, see *Futószalag*, 25th September 1952

80% of its plan target, then we'll never make 100%" ⁴⁵. The result was considerable fluctuation in earnings; for example the monthly pay of one typical worker stood in September 1952 at 981 Forints, rising to 1124 Forints in October and then falling to 822 Forints in November ⁴⁶. Alongside this fluctuation in earnings take home pay in the shoe industry was well below the industrial average; in 1953 30% of workers were in the lowest wage categories, whilst 60% were in the median wage category for industry as a whole. Hourly wages were lower in shoe production, category for category, than the industrial average. This led to low wages for skilled workers; for example in one factory, of workers in category VII, 500 earned less than 500 Forints monthly, 1272 earned between 500 and 600 Forints, and a further 251 between 600 and 700. Unskilled shoemakers earned as little as 450-580 Forints ⁴⁷.

Low and fluctuating wages led to high labour turnover in the plant, and a problem of a permanent labour shortage ⁴⁸. Alongside this the quality of the shoes produced declined. In part this was due to the poor quality of much of the leather supplied to the plant. To a great extent, however, groups of workers were able to develop a degree of informal control over the quality control systems in order to pass off poor quality shoes as finished products. This was developed to allow them to make their norms which given the high intensity of work were otherwise impossible to fulfill ⁴⁹. The effects of

⁴⁵ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/6ö.e., p.242

⁴⁶ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/7ö.e., p.73

⁴⁷ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *Bőripari Dolgozók Szakszervezete Munkabérosztály Vezető levél ...*, pp.4-5

⁴⁸ - An excellent discussion of labour problems and factory management's attempts to deal with them can be found in MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/10ö.e., pp.6-13

⁴⁹ - On the poor quality of much of the leather supplied to plant see MOL M-Bp.176f.2/190/2ö.e., p.157; on the extremely high intensity of work and the impossibility of making the norms in the plant see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/7ö.e., p.195, *Duna Híradó*,

shortage on the conveyor belt system not only led to a loss of managerial control over the shop floor, it also created circumstances in which management developed a dependence on certain workers to solve problems within the realm of production. The initiative and skill of certain groups of workers thus became paradoxically crucial to a labour process designed to develop greater control over them. They were able to manipulate this situation turning it to their own advantage. This was illustrated by one production run in the leather cutting shops in late 1951. Low quality leather was delivered to the shop that could not be easily cut on the conveyors, at least not by much of the "inexperienced" new labour working there. As a result shop management re-organised production. It concentrated the small number of "experienced" workers into brigades of five, separating them from the rest, giving them special lower norms and allowing them to perform the best work, whilst lower paying, discontinuous work was given to the rest ⁵⁰.

The strict vertical integration of tasks within the factory that the introduction of a conveyor-belt based production system entailed created the space for other groups of workers to resort to cruder, though no less effective forms of shop floor bargaining around wages. Informal bargaining often occurred in the stitching shops where the shoes were assembled. Here workers seeking a laxer norm for a given job, who had tasks that were crucial to the assembly of the shoe would go-slow on their job, thus causing stoppages in production further down the conveyor. This in and of itself led to discontent among the affected workers which lower-management had to deal with, but it was especially effective as a strategy where it endangered plan fulfilment. Whilst the authorities were far from inclined to give in to this

February 1951 and the statistics on norm non-fulfilment contained in MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/6ö.e., pp.16-31. For worker collusion in order to avoid quality control see *Duna Híradó*, May 1951

⁵⁰ - For an account of this incident see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/2ö.e., p.139

kind of action, management, faced with a severe labour shortage, had little alternative ⁵¹.

The result of persistent shop floor bargaining was what the authorities saw as the "disorganisation" of the wage system in the factory. Wage levels and differentials came to depend increasingly on the shop an individual worked in, even the group in which they worked, and factors other than their actual job description. It was this, and the discontent that it caused within the workforce, that factory authorities used to legitimise the 1952 norm revision in the plant ⁵². Beyond the problem of the wage system *per se* it contributed along with several other factors in order to undermine worker solidarity within the factory. Whether or not a worker was able to resort to informal bargaining strategies, wages were extremely low across the plant; one former worker who escaped to the West stated that the wages were so low that theft was endemic as the workers struggled to survive ⁵³. Theft of both tools and leather was widespread whilst the tensions created by small groups of workers resorting to either theft or individual bargaining strategies, that often directly harmed the earning possibilities of other workers, led to violence within the plant ⁵⁴.

Contested Definitions of Skill

In addition to the form of bargaining described above there was another. This involved individual workers drawing on cultural notions of skill to make a case to lower and middle management for better treatment than

⁵¹ - *Futószalag*, 18th March 1952

⁵² - *Futószalag*, 28th April 1952

⁵³ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 3677, p.3

⁵⁴ - *Futószalag*, 19th April 1952

other groups of workers. Like other forms of informal bargaining, this was often employed to the detriment of other workers, and was impressed with a whole range of ideas of what made a good worker. As such it tended to deepen differences between workers related to gender, generation and social origin. It furthermore strongly undermined notions of a universal worker identity and advanced the particularisation of such identities in a way in which other bargaining strategies did not.

In the early 1950s the space was opened up for informal bargaining strategies in which workers drew attention to perceived attributes of skill. This space was created by growing official concern about the poor quality of much industrial output. By the Spring of 1953 the scale of the problem of the quality of industrial production was becoming extremely clear. For much of 1952 the quality of much of the coal mined in the Nográd field for export to Czechoslovakia was so poor that the Czechs did not accept it. In the machine industry the parts for coal cutting machinery were so poorly cast that they often broke whilst scrap rose throughout industry as a whole ⁵⁵. Increasingly the authorities came to regard the problem of quality as being one of the generally poor skill level of the workforce. Despite figures that showed the percentage of skilled workers in industry excluding construction increased from 32.1% in 1949 to 48.2% in 1953 ⁵⁶ by the beginning of the New Course questions were raised as to whether such figures reflected the true skill level of the workforce. One party investigator examining work methods in the machine industry was horrified by the methods used by many "young workers"; "the workers basically are not clear about even the most basic questions; for example in the repair and assembly shop one worker used a tool that should never have been used for that particular process

⁵⁵ - MOL M-KS-276f.94/591ö.e., p.110; MOL M-KS-276f.94/591ö.e., pp.127-37

⁵⁶ - "A magyar munkásosztály fejlődése", p.17

or he would just put a batch through the machine as fast as possible without looking what came out, or used such a large drilling bit that he could not possibly have drilled a hole with regard to any technical specifications at all" 57.

A linkage was made between the poor quality of much factory output and the perceived decline in the skill level of the workforce. This was nothing new, the same conclusion was reached by managers across the country prior to 1953. During the early years of socialist industrialisation the state had been deeply suspicious of such arguments. Many foremen and masters had been directly criticised for allocating good work to more experienced workers on these grounds and neglecting "newer" workers 58. There were two reasons for this. Firstly there was a considerable degree of social solidarity between foremen and the best skilled workers in much of industry, especially as many had been promoted from the ranks of the skilled workers. This had been accentuated by the purges initiated in 1950 and 1951 against foremen with a "capitalist" past; the result in one large Budapest factory, which was far from untypical, was that in 1951 "95% (of foremen) had worked in their current positions for under a year, and prior to that they had been skilled workers or semi-skilled machinists within the factory" 59. The second related to the extreme scarcity of such workers and the perceived need to hold them within a factory at a time when the poaching of skilled labour and labour turnover were widespread 60.

57 - MOL M-KS-276f.94/591ö.e., p.62

58 - These kinds of criticisms can be seen in SZKL Fejér SZMT/72d./1951; *Jelentés az iparba került dolgozók helyzetének néhány tapasztalatáról*, pp.1-3

59 - Quoted in Varga *Pató Pálok vagy sztahanovisták ?*, p.71

60 - For evidence of the poaching of skilled labour in heavy industry see ZML MSZMP ZMBA 1957f.1/ 52 ö.e., pp.47-9; on labour mobility see Belényi *A Sztálini Iparosítás Emberi Ára*, pp.106-9; also his "Az extenzív iparosítás politikája", p.622; Gyekiczky *A*

What made this particular form of informal bargaining special however was that it rested on cultural ideas of the meaning of the term skilled worker. This term did not simply mean a worker with exceptional command of a skill and experience with a given production process. It was also very much a cultural construct and was underpinned by a large number of assumptions about the interconnections between gender and work, generation and work as well as social origin and work. Such cultural values that underpinned notions of skill could be seen at workplaces across the country throughout the 1950s. These values often helped identify "good", "experienced" or even "skilled" workers, and helped exclude others.

These notions also determined access to the mechanisms within factories that would allow some to resort to informal bargaining and simultaneously exclude others. The Party Committee of the IV District of Budapest conducted an investigation into poor third quarter plan fulfilment in the Danube Shoe Factory in October 1952. They found that in terms of raw material provision one workshop received worse treatment than the others, that its plan fulfilment was constantly poor and that "inexperienced" workers were dumped there by management. The wage affairs officer of the factory trade union branch told the investigators that "it's spread right across the factory that this conveyor is given the nickname of "the agricultural co-operative conveyor". In part they use this term because of the large number of workers from the country who are on it, and in part, because of the large number of beginners" ⁶¹; the implication being that such workers could not be proper workers. The presence of women workers in heavy industry was fiercely resisted by many male skilled workers and foremen. This indeed

Munkafegyelem Jogi Szabályozásának, pp.20-2 and also his *A Fegyelem Csapdájában*, pp.31-5

⁶¹ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/7ö.e., p.244

was crucial in defining the gender composition of the industrial workforce. In the Óbuda Gas Factory skilled workers told women that "they should leave their jobs, because they aren't suitable for them". In the Bázakerretye Oil Drilling Plant, male skilled workers were accused of not seeing their female colleagues as "women workers, just as women" and of frequently threatening them with violence⁶². Foremen reserved the best work for male skilled workers, whilst allocating the worst to women, in the Elzett Factory "the female employees were put on different machines each day, hindering their chances of making their rate"⁶³. Notions of different attitudes towards work across generations further fed this process. Older workers often represented their younger colleagues as inept, undisciplined and corrupt; in the United Electrics Factory, one skilled worker complained of younger workers undertaking re-training schemes; "there are re-trainees who have absolutely no interest in the skill that they train for. It would be better to send them elsewhere, because all they do is destroy work discipline. There are re-trainees who claim 9 to 10 hours wages for 30 minutes work"⁶⁴. Such opinions were far from uncommon among older workers and tended to be shared by many foremen. This led to active discrimination against many recently trained younger workers; in the Ganz Vaggon Factory one young worker was allocated the jobs which no-one else would take on a regular basis and which, in some cases, were judged by union investigators to be physically impossible⁶⁵.

⁶² - For the incident in the Obudai Gas Factory see SZKL Fejér SZMT/72d./1951; *Jelentés a nők munkaállítása és a velük való foglalkozás néhány tapasztalatáról*, p.3; for the various incidents at Bázakerretye see ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.61f.3/3/PTO/6ö.e.; *Jelentés az MDP Üzemi Pártbizottságtól az MDP Letenye Járási Pártbizottságnak, 1953.marc.6*, p.1

⁶³ - SZKL Fejér SZMT/72d./1951; *Jelentés a nők munkaállítása és a velük való foglalkozás néhány tapasztalatáról*, p.3

⁶⁴ - BFL XXIX/321/1d.; *Jegyzőkönyv, felvétel 1951. december hó 15.-én reggel 6 órakor a II. alapszerv szakszervezeti helyiségben megtartandó termelési értekezlet.*, p.3

⁶⁵ - SZKL Fejér SZMT/72d./1951; *Jelentés az iparba került dolgozók helyzetének néhány tapasztalatáról*, p.1

The question remains however of how these mechanisms operated and exactly what implications they had for worker identity within the realm of socialist production. The answers are by no means simple and require a degree of in-depth examination. It is therefore necessary to describe some concrete cases of how such ideas influenced patterns of informal bargaining and examine their implications for worker identity. Two factors, gender and generation, are focused on to illustrate the argument presented here.

Gender, Work and the Structure of Informal Bargaining: Implementing Protective Legislation in the Workplace

In late 1952 and early 1953 social policy experts within the trade unions and public administration became concerned about persistently high rates of worker absenteeism in industry. They began to examine the differences in rates of absenteeism by gender and came to the conclusion that "in those sectors where women" were "employed in large numbers, where they" were "employed as skilled workers, that is where they" did "not fill a non-dangerous, auxiliary position" their rate of sickness was higher than men. In textiles, for example, the percentage of women off sick was 50% higher than the percentage of men, in the chemical industry the rate was 20% and in heavy industry overall it was 10%. In those sectors, such as mining, where the impact of female labour was more marginal the rate of female absenteeism due to sickness tended to be significantly lower than that among men ⁶⁶. In Summer 1952 union medical investigators had examined the causes of high absenteeism in women and identified infringement of the 1951 Labour Code as being one of the key causes. The

⁶⁶ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/ 3d./1953; *A táppénzszázalék és a női táppénzszázalék alakulása 1951-1952 évben*, pp.1-2

investigators strongly criticised enterprises which employed women in unskilled jobs in construction or as workers loading and unloading materials which were seen by them as being "too heavy" and resulting in "physical damage to the woman". Furthermore they attacked management where women who "were not completely healthy", or where girls under sixteen were placed on the night shift. Policy makers began to criticise the assumptions which had led economic planners to suggest that women take work in heavy industry and had begun to argue implicitly that such work be restricted in the interests of defending the health of women who were "physically weaker" than men⁶⁷.

The 1951 Labour Code had already laid down the principle that the law should defend what it described as the "physical constitution" of the working woman. It also laid down the principle that this should be achieved through two different kinds of restriction on women taking manual work. The first was that certain jobs were to be completely barred to women if they required "unusual physical strength", the second was to establish a second category of jobs that would only be open to women who had received a medical examination to show that they were in good physical health⁶⁸. This general legal provision had not been implemented by the branch ministries at the beginning of 1953, and the principle behind it was largely ignored by enterprise managers. The result of growing concern by experts within the apparatus about female absenteeism led the state to issue directives in early 1953 covering all the branch ministries that aimed to precisely stipulate how this principle would be translated into practice⁶⁹. These

67 - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitikai 11d./ 1952; *Jelentés a női táppénzes létszám emelkedésének okairól*, p.2

68 - For information on these two general legal provisions see Mikos, Nagy & Weltner (eds.) *A Munkatörvénykönyve és Végrehajtási Szabályai*, p.513

directives would eventually filter through to the Trust directorates and to the enterprises who would elaborate further on what they received from higher levels, eventually producing, usually at the level of the Trust two lists of jobs, one from which women were to be barred, and one to which access was to be restricted ⁷⁰.

At first glance the wave of directives designed to implement the provision of the 1951 Labour Code to protect the "physical constitution" of the women worker restricted employment opportunities for women in industry without bringing about improvements in health and safety. Throughout the period following 1953 female unemployment was privately recognised as a problem by the authorities. Opportunities for women to enter manual employment were extremely restricted during the period of the New Course; in 1955 it was estimated that some 25,000 recent school leavers had failed to find work who were registered, of these some 60 to 70% were girls. In Budapest in 1955 and 1956 the labour exchanges reported a problem of finding industrial work for women, leading local authorities to state that there was a problem of hidden unemployment among women, the extent of which "can only be estimated" ⁷¹. In Sztálinváros employment for the wives of steel workers was reported to be a problem in 1955 because there were "very few factories where it" was "possible to employ them" ⁷². The legislation seemed to have been imperfectly applied given that in many places of work health and safety conditions for women were little better after Spring 1953 than they had been

⁶⁹ - For a list of the various branch ministry directives issued together with their dates of issue see *ibid.*, p.514n.

⁷⁰ - For an example of how the Dunai Vasmű dealt with the legislation see FML XXIX fond/12/ 2 doboz; *A dolgozó nők munkakörének...*

⁷¹ - MOL M-KS-276f.94/886ö.e., p.141; MOL M-KS-276f.94/886ö.e., p.230

⁷² - FML MSZMP FMBA ir. 17f.1/19ö.e.; *Jegyzőkönyv felvéve 1955. április 9.-én a Sztálinváros Pártbizottság ülésén*, p.1

in 1952. In November 1953 it was reported in the Steel Foundry and Pipe Factory that pregnant women were not moved to lighter work because it could not be found in the plant, a common situation in Hungarian industry 73.

It was in sectors where large numbers of women had been traditionally employed that protective legislation was least likely to be observed. In clothing, according to the secretary of the Textile Workers Union, "a state existed in which in some places the cultural houses were used for factory production, but in addition they operated production lines in damp and unhealthy cellars" 74. In early 1954 in the textile sector it was reported that large numbers of women were working on the night shifts who had not received proper medical checks or were deemed too young to do so. Many textile mills lacked cooling equipment and consequently many women had to work in temperatures of 40°C or above without appropriate medical checks 75.

The effect of the renewed emphasis on protective legislation from 1953 onwards was to re-inforce the gender division within the labour force. In sectors where a history of large scale women's employment existed management placed less weight on the implementation of the protective measures at shop floor level. In other sectors, where there had been a large influx of women into the workforce after 1950, and where there had been more worker hostility to women taking jobs management seemed to take a

73 - MOL M-KS-276f.53/145ö.e.; *Tájékoztató az üzemi dolgozók és az üzemi vezetők által felvetett szociális és kulturális problémákról*, p.57

74 - PIL 867f.1/d-50, p.76

75 - MOL M-KS-276f.94/739ö.e., p.232; for a useful examination of one large textile factory's attempts to improve health and safety for its women workers see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/212/13ö.e., p.27

different view. In the smelter of the Lenin Steel Works large numbers of women had been employed for low wages in the ore processing plant, part of the factory where work was dirty and conditions were considered extremely damaging to health. In this plant immediately after the branch ministry issued its directive implementing protective legislation in 1953 the women were instantly shifted to other jobs and replaced by men. The degree to which the women had been simply used as cheap labour was demonstrated by the fact that enterprise management authorised the payment of a supplement to the new male workers that their female predecessors had never received ⁷⁶.

In practice much of the protective legislation was used, in large sections of heavy industry, as a means of legitimising attempts by small groups of male workers to recover and consolidate their monopolies over the more skilled, high paying jobs in the sector and to exclude the women. In the Lenin Steel Works female recruits to the plant were given semi-skilled positions within the factory as crane operators. The eighty or so female recruits, through the careful regulation of their pace of work, had been able to bargain informally with management so that they were able to earn relatively high monthly wages of 1,200 Forints by late 1953. As a result they earned more than the male skilled workers who were responsible for maintaining the cranes, a situation which led to considerable resentment. When the implementation of the protective legislation was initiated by the branch ministry the enterprise decided that the job of crane driver should be one not open to women, on the grounds that it was damaging to "their physical constitution". This was done to allow men to be taken on as crane drivers and to exclude women who would be forced to take lower paying work elsewhere in the plant ⁷⁷.

⁷⁶ - MOE-M-KS-276f.94/593ö.e., p.1

Even though this incident was one of the few reported occurrences of open gender related conflict on the shop floor during the early 1950s, there is much evidence to suggest that the situation it illustrated was far from exceptional. In the Sztálin Metal Works, another of the country's huge steel producing complexes, the list of jobs in the plant that were barred to women from 1953 onwards included not only positions such as that of foundry man, but also those in the machine plants to which the regime had enthusiastically sought to recruit women two years earlier. An examination of the list in co-ordination with wage statistics from the plant shows that women were consistently excluded from the best paying manual positions ⁷⁸. In 1954 the county branch of the Construction Workers' Union in Komárom-Esztergom county surveyed building sites under its supervision and found that women were completely excluded from skilled positions as a result of the changes ⁷⁹.

The case of the implementation of the sections of the 1951 Labour Code that aimed to protect the "physical constitution" of women workers clearly demonstrated not only the degree to which central regulations could be manipulated and their provisions twisted at shop floor level but the role of gender within the bargaining process. Gendered notions of appropriate work for women that often directly contradicted the aims and objectives of the regime determined how the process was implemented. In establishments

⁷⁷ - MOL M-KS-276f.53/145ö.e.; *Tájékoztató az üzemi dolgozók és az üzemi vezetők által felvetett szociális és kulturális problémákról*, p.1

⁷⁸ - For the list of occupations see FML XXIX fond/12/2 doboz; *A dolgozó nők munkakörének.....* For some wage statistics see MOL XXIX-F-2-a/54d.; *Fontosabb szakmák jelentései*, and FML MSZMP FMBA ir.17f.1/37ö.e.; *Sztálin Vasmű bérezési problémái*

⁷⁹ - SZKL Komárom SZMT/151d./1954; *Jelentés az Építő Fa és Építőanyagipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete, Komárommegyei bizottsághoz tartozó vállalatok nőbizottságainak és fiatalok között végzett szakszervezeti munkáról és az elnökségi határozat betartásáról*, see the individual factory returns on pages 2,3 and 4 of the report

where there was considerable resistance to the idea of women performing certain jobs or receiving higher wages than their male colleagues the various directives were used to legitimise informal bargaining strategies that aimed to give the men monopolies over the best paying positions.

Generations of skill: Work, Youth and Bargaining

By 1953 there was substantial official concern about the earnings and skill levels of young workers. This concern was motivated firstly by the desire to reverse the deterioration in the quality of much industrial output. Secondly the awareness after the announcement of the New Course that low pay levels were a serious social problem played a major role. Many of these young workers were new recruits to industry and consequently had trained as skilled workers on the crash training programmes introduced by the regime to solve the problems of shortages of skilled labour. Officials by 1953 were beginning to argue that these new programmes alone could not give them the command of their skill that workers trained under the apprenticeship system had. By 1953 in the furniture industry, apprentices studied their skill for two years, a time, which it was commonly agreed was far too short to master it adequately. When newly trained workers went into productive life, they were only able to fulfill their norms if they were given work that fell into low wage categories, thus leading to a problem of low pay⁸⁰. Consequently there was a problem of norm under fulfilment among young workers. In the MÁVAG Machine Factory of 88 young turners on payment-by-results systems of payment 76 failed to reach 100%, whilst in the Ganz Vaggon of the newly trained turners 87%, of the cutters and

⁸⁰ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30d./1953; *Könnyűipari és Mezőgazdasági Osztály Jelentés*, p.5

machine millers 100%, of piece makers 72%, and of tool makers 66% failed to reach 100% ⁸¹.

The authorities therefore decided that young industrial workers were insufficiently skilled to perform their jobs. The evidence often quoted by official inspectors for the poor skill levels of many younger workers was their frequent recourse to highly unorthodox work methods that deviated significantly from the world of the textbooks, or their blatant lack of concern for the quality of what they produced. One inspector examining shop floor production in the machine industry clearly stated he was convinced that many of the younger workers were "unable to judge their own work, whether it was good or whether it was scrap" ⁸². The same inspector when examining the situation in another factory was horrified by some of the work methods he found giving examples of inappropriate use of the cold chisel by some workers, and a general lack of concern for proper work methods ⁸³.

The use of questionable work methods by some younger workers is not in doubt, but it is far from certain that younger workers' recourse to such methods was exclusively the result of poor training. Before 1953 their older colleagues had noticed a clear difference between themselves and younger workers in their attitudes towards work, one that they frequently attributed to youth indiscipline. In the United Electrics Factory an older Stakhanovite was to comment in this way on the attitudes of his younger, also Stakhanovite colleagues; "In our workshop there are sixteen Stakhanovites, of whom six are young. From them it seems that work with the younger ones is not

⁸¹ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/15d./1953; *Információ a vasipari gyakorló szakmunkásokkal kapcsolatos néhány problémáról*, p.1

⁸² - MOL M-KS-276f.94/591ö.e., p.61

⁸³ - MOL M-KS-276f.94/591ö.e., p.62

satisfactory. In this it's not only us, but the young ones that are to blame. They go to get the high percentages, ignoring the fact that they should first look to the quality of what they produce, and then the quantity. There are those who just ignore the warnings of the Stakhanovites, and answer back, saying they'll pay a few Forints worth of scrap" ⁸⁴. In the neighbouring Duclós Mine Machinery Factory these differences fed generational tension. One party member recounted the story of a piece of work completed by a young worker that was returned by the quality control department; "I was curious as to why and looked at it the whole of the part was not properly cut, I don't know how such people can get work given out". Another recounted an incident of apparent indiscipline where "Simon (the young worker) asked for 2 knives, I gave him 2 knives which the foreman had cleared as being good for the job Simon replied that they were not usable and in the middle of this swore at me". Another blamed young workers for destroying grinding machines through their practice of using unauthorised grinding methods to make their rates ⁸⁵.

Generational tension had been a feature of shop floor life from the moment that the Stalinist regime began to transform shop floor practice in 1948. Much of the tension was created because the new state had attempted to use the young as a wedge against old working practices. In the early days of institutions such as labour competition younger workers and apprentices had been targeted by the party leadership and official propaganda, which had sought to exort them to subvert the traditional culture of the shop floor by participating in the new campaigns to remake the

⁸⁴ - BFL XXIX/321/2d.; *Jegyzőkönyv felvétellett 1952. szeptember 20-án az Egyesült Izzó Kulturtermeiben megtartott III.Sztahanovista konferenciáról*, p.6

⁸⁵ - MGL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., pp.138-9; for more examples see the factory newspaper *Kaparó*, 21st June 1952

Hungarian factory ⁸⁶, a strategy that met with some success ⁸⁷. In certain industries where a tradition existed of small groups of skilled workers exercising a high degree of on the job control the attempt to use youth to attack the pre-existing shop floor culture led to considerable generational tension. At the Bánhida power plant the authority of older stokers and boiler men had been challenged by less experienced younger colleagues through the Stakhanovite movement with the support of the local party. Deep underlying tension between the two groups still existed in 1951 when it was reported that "the older stokers still regard the experiences and methods of the younger Stakhanovites with a degree of contempt" ⁸⁸.

As large numbers of new workers were recruited into industry from mid-1950 onwards much of the hostility towards young workers was transferred away from youthful Stakhanovites towards the new recruits. Indeed older skilled workers saw the abandonment of traditional forms of apprenticeship and the shift towards crash training courses as direct attempts to undermine their positions. Consequently older workers came to see their younger colleagues as not possessing the same attributes as them, in short because they had not spent a long period as an apprentice they were not true skilled workers. In the United Electrics Factory it was stated that older skilled workers "did not want to accept" new trainees as skilled workers ⁸⁹. In the early 1950s this attitude was condemned officially

⁸⁶ - A clear example of this kind of propaganda infused with this logic is *Harc a Másodpercekért! Kézikönyv az Országos Termelési Versenyhez*, Szakszervezeti Ifjúság és Tanoncmozgalom, Budapest, 1948

⁸⁷ - There were countless instances of this in 1948 and 1949. One useful example is that of János Lutz in the Egyesült Izzó, who was one of the star performers of the Stalin labour competition in the factory in Autumn 1949. For information on Lutz and his career to that point see *Tungsram Híradó*, 5th December 1949

⁸⁸ - SZKL Komárom SZMT/80d./1951; *Jegyzőkönyv felvétel a Vas- és Fémipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete Komárom-megyei Területi Bizottság helységében Tatabányán megtartott Megyei Bizottsági ülésről*, p.5

by the regime as "skill-based chauvinism", and was seen as one of the most frequent examples of the "underground work of right-wing Social Democrats". The frequency with which this analysis appeared in party reports was testimony to the widespread nature of many of these generational tensions ⁹⁰.

These tensions were often fed by different generational attitudes towards work, in the United Electrics Factory such tensions undermined the potential for co-operation between workers in making their rates. In the machine shop the older workers began to work on a twelve hour shift when work was available to fulfill the plan, the young, however, were less flexible refusing to work more than their normal eight hours. In spite of this the whole workshop were awarded financial rewards above their wages for their performance that led to considerable dissatisfaction among the older staff. They retaliated refusing to help their younger colleagues creating fury among them ⁹¹. In the Sikvölgyi pit of the Tatabánya mines the lack of a "collective spirit" between miners was criticised in 1950, because of the tension created by young cartmen, who "did not pay proper attention to their work" and thus hindered the norm fulfilment of their older colleagues ⁹².

The foremen often identified with older workers, from whose ranks many of them had been drawn and who shared many of their attitudes. In the United Electrics Factory the factory party committee in 1952 stated that it believed that many of the plant's engineers and foremen were "former Social

⁸⁹ - MOL M-Bp.-134f./22ö.e., p.172

⁹⁰ - For some examples of reports which show regime concern about "right-wing Social Democrats" in Budapest see the documents in MOL M-Bp.-95f.2/168/bö.e. and MOL M-Bp.-95f.3/345ö.e.

⁹¹ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/194/19ö.e., pp.15-6

⁹² - SZRL Komárom SZMT/61d./1950; *Összesített jelentés folyó hó megtartott tervfelbontó értekezésekről, a bányauzemeknél, 1950 december 31-én*, p.2

Democrats" with little attachment to socialist work methods and enjoyed "good relations with members of the aristocracy of labour", code for the older skilled workers in the plant ⁹³. On the socialist shop floor it was often the distribution of work that affected individuals' abilities to make their rates. The solidarity that existed between older workers and foremen often helped ensure that older workers received more of the highly lucrative work than their younger work mates. In the tool making shop of the United Electrics Factory it was reported that newly qualified apprentices "almost never received decent jobsit often happens that some workers are able only to take on work that they judge to be advantageous to themselves" ⁹⁴. In 1952 it was reported that in one workshop of the Duclós Mining Machine Factory management, union officials and the foremen had colluded to prevent a three-member brigade of newly qualified apprentices, whose members had been decorated as Stakhanovites during their training, receiving adequate work to retain their title in their new workshop ⁹⁵.

As a result of such bargaining it was often the younger workers who were left with the worst jobs that attracted the lowest pay. In the Vacuum Technology division of the United Electrics Factory the plant director drew attention to the effects of this kind of informal bargaining in May 1953; "...the informal selection of work has still not disappeared. As a consequence of this the large, long batches are given to the key workers and for this reason young, promising workers are just not able to develop" ⁹⁶. In the Danube Shoe Factory their unfavourable situation within the

⁹³ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/194/19ö.e., p.14; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/194/23ö.e., pp.82-9

⁹⁴ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/194/19ö.e., p.17

⁹⁵ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/4ö.e., p.112

⁹⁶ - BFL-XXIX/321/4d.; *Levél a Vacumtechnikai Gépgyár Gyáregységvezetőtől a T. P.Nagy Balázs elvtársnak, 1953.V.6*

internal division of labour of the plant led young skilled works to quit their jobs in greater numbers than any other group in November 1953 ⁹⁷.

Quitting their job was only one strategy that was open to young skilled workers who wished to improve their earnings' prospects. There were other less drastic options than falling foul of the work discipline code and possibly the criminal law for leaving without authorisation. They resorted to methods such as the abuse of machinery, paying no regard to quality or using unorthodox, unauthorised work methods to make the norm. Young workers frequently employed these as a rational response to their poor position within the wage bargaining networks of a given shop. It was often this that inspectors misinterpreted as the poor command of a skill. In the Duclós Mining Machinery Factory it was reported in 1954 that the only good work, according to many young workers, was that "which was paid according to the sixth category" and "where the norm could be fulfilled by 170%, or enough to get the desired amount of money" and that when work was issued without the right norm or rate of pay then "an endless amount of scrap was produced" ⁹⁸. In 1952 in one textile factory it was reported that under performing workers submitted blatantly fraudulent time sheets to the factory administration frequently counting on the negligence of the foremen to get them passed. A query from the norm office or a failure to pay the claimed amount often resulted in small groups of workers abandoning their machines for ten minutes to complain, disrupting the whole rhythm of production on an entire floor ⁹⁹. In one shop in the Danube Shoe Factory

⁹⁷ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/11ö.e., p.202

⁹⁸ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/191/9ö.e., pp.27-8

⁹⁹ - MOL M-Bp.-143f./10ö.e., pp. 84-7

one party activist stated it was common that "many rules were broken" in the way workers used machinery in order to make their norms ¹⁰⁰.

Many party inspectors who entered factories in 1953 and reported that the reasons for the poor quality of much production were to be found in the inadequate skill level of "new" skilled workers misinterpreted the situation. Older workers were merely using their ideas about skill, as something which could only be transferred through long and careful study on the shop floor under a master, and as something that was best acquired through age and experience, as a bargaining chip. In the labour process that had been brought into being during the early 1950s the key to maximise earning potential was to gain sufficient work of a kind that the worker could make their rate with. Older workers were able to use their ideas about skill as something intimately tied to experience, length of service and generation to secure a monopoly over such work as a result of the fact that many foremen shared their ideas, privately disagreeing with the regime's view of skill as a body of knowledge that could be codified and taught. As a result of being consigned to frequently impossible jobs, abuse of machinery by younger workers was in many ways a rational response to their position in a structure of shop floor bargaining that was heavily skewed against them.

Unlike the manager of the Vacuum Technology department of the United Electrics Plant who accurately saw the problem in May 1953 as being one of the advantage that older skilled workers enjoyed over their younger colleagues in informal bargaining ¹⁰¹, policy makers took a different view. They increasingly accepted the assumption of older workers about skill

¹⁰⁰ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/6ö.e., p.233

¹⁰¹ - BFL XXIX/321/4d.; *Levél a Vacumnteknikai Gépgyár Gyáregységvezetőtől a T. P.Nagy-Balázs elvtársnak, 1953. V.6*

retreating from earlier notions that had branded those who held such ideas as "skill based chauvinists". In 1951 an official report had attacked a factory manager for discriminating against a young worker ¹⁰², by 1954 they were discussing the percentages of such young workers who had an "insufficient command of their skill" ¹⁰³. The degree to which ideas about the relationship between generation, work and skill were shaping relations between workers on the shop floor and thus workers' social identities was extremely clear by early 1954.

Conclusion

In 1958 as the party and the authorities attempted to evaluate the changes to the "working class" that had occurred over the previous ten years, many pointed to the way in which the industrial workforce had been "diluted". Writing with the events of 1956 firmly in mind the secretary of the party committee of the X. district of Budapest argued that "one part of the working class does not agree with us. It does not accept this system"; a part of the workforce that was "not the majority, but they are many" ¹⁰⁴. This "one part" was made up of two groups; on one side were the so-called "aristocracy of labour" within the factories, those who belonged to elite skill groupings in the previous system "toolmakers, turners etc." who had lost their prestige and high wages since 1945. As a result such workers whose "political influence (in the factories) was much greater, than their numbers" had come to take an openly anti-regime stand ¹⁰⁵. Alongside the

¹⁰² - SZKL Fejér SZMT/72d./1951; *Jelentés az iparba került dolgozók helyzetének néhány tapasztalatáról*, p.1

¹⁰³ - "A magyar munkásosztály fejlődése", p.17

¹⁰⁴ - MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/19ö.e., p.301

¹⁰⁵ - MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/19 ö.e., p.301

"aristocracy of labour" stood another group, those consisting of "declassed" groups, who acted as rumour-mongers on the shop floor, thus managing, according to the secretary, to confuse "honest" and "diligent" workers with their reactionary views 106.

Whilst the party secretary's opinions remained his own they, like much of the debate of which they were a part, revealed the extent to which it was clear how deeply divided the industrial workforce was by 1958. Even within the sphere of factory based production any sense of a "working class", united by a sense of solidarity as workers, was gone by the mid-1950s. The industrial workforce was not "atomised" by the Stalinist dictatorship either; the process of change was far more complex. It could not be said that a neat division between "new" and "old" workers existed, the divisions at the point of production were not so neat and were influenced by many more different factors. "New" and "old" were present in the creation of worker identity but so were factors of gender, generation and social origin. Instead the process can better be described as one of the "particularisation" of worker identity at the point of production.

This process rested on the ability of certain groups of key workers to use the flexibility required of them in production to bargain with lower management. Through resorting to such strategies individual groups of workers were able to subvert the centrally established wage system. The adoption of such strategies and their relative success had several important effects on the workforce. Firstly they undermined the faith of workers in institutions and collective action. In turn they strengthened the legitimacy of individual and informal solutions. This strengthened the paternalism of management and reinforced patterns of personal dependency of employee on employer. Secondly it undermined solidarity between workers and

106 - MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/19ö.e., p.301

undercut appeals based on class interest for two connected reasons. Core workers tended to gain, and their benefits were often achieved at the expense of more peripheral workers like women or those of peasant origin. In order to construct appeals to management small groups of workers often drew upon particularistic social identities; claims like "we deserve more than women who are less physically able to do the job", or "we work better than the commuters who like taking Monday's off" reinforced in workers' own minds' divisions of kin, gender, generation and social origin between them, whilst the success of appeals based on such identities tended to legitimise them.

Yet it was not only re-made social relationships within the factory itself that were serving to radically alter the meaning of the term "worker". The whole realm of the informal economy was assuming a central significance in changing attitudes to work, money and identity.

Chapter Two

Work, Consumption and the Realm of the Informal: Adjusting to Shortage in Everyday Life

Introduction

In the late Spring of 1952 the regime moved to end the practice of paying a supplement in kind to the wage in the flour mills. This provoked an extraordinary wave of labour unrest. Across Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county "the workers employed in the mills under no circumstances wanted to accept" the measure. In two mills discontent was so strong that workers protested by refusing to vote in elections for the factory committee, ensuring that no votes were cast in either mill. In Vas county one worker threatened to lead a mass resignation from the union if the measure was not revoked ¹.

Why did the workers in flour milling regard the question as, in the words of one union official, "so sensitive ²? In the main this was due to the extremely low wages in the nationalised flour mills; in 1953 the union estimated that the average monthly wage in the sector was only 536 Forints, well below the industrial average and far below the minimum needed for an individual to survive ³. The system of a payment-in-kind that supplemented

¹ - SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/24d./1952; Szakszervezetek Szolnokmegyei Tanácsa Jelentés a természetbeni juttatások megszüntésével kapcsolatban elvégzett feladatokról, p.1; SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/24d./1952; Szakszervezetek Vas megyei Tanácsa Jelentés az NT. 432/22/1951. határozatának a természetbeni juttatások és a kedvezményes vásárlások rendezésének végrehajtásáról, p.1

² - SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/24d./1952; Szakszervezetek Tolnamegyei Tanácsa Jelentés a Népgazdasági Tanács határozatának végrehajtásáról

³ - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/30 d./1953; Könnyűipari és Mezőgazdasági Osztály Jelentés, p.1

the money wage had functioned as a mechanism for mitigating the circumstances created by low monetary wages. Even the formal value of such payment-in-kind was substantial. The supplement came in two parts, firstly a food allowance was paid to the workers alongside their wage, and above this the worker was entitled to 400 Forints worth of corn ⁴. The 400 Forints worth of corn was of central importance to the workforce and formed the most important element of their wage for two reasons. Firstly because the authorities widely suspected that in the flour mills, as in other parts of the food processing sector, the actual value of the produce given to the worker was greater than 400 Forints and often exceeded the value of the money wage ⁵. Secondly its value lay not solely in the fact that it could be consumed within the household of the worker, but that given the environment of general shortage it could be sold or exchanged informally giving a household its major source of income or goods ⁶.

The result was twofold. Firstly the abolition of payment in kind, despite the fact that some enterprises unofficially retained the food allowance, led to severe poverty among the workforce. Secondly it destroyed the fundamental attraction of the job, namely that although wages were poor the job gave the workforce access to a good that could either be unofficially traded or used to support other private economic activities that

⁴ - For reports which reveal the structure of remuneration in kind for mill workers see SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/24d./1952; *Szakszervezetek Győr-Sopron Megyei Tanácsa Jelentés a természetbeni juttatások megvonásáról, és a kedvezményes vásárlások beszüntetéséről*, pp.1-2; SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/24d./1952; *Szakszervezetek Zalamegyei Tanácsa Információs jelentés a N.T. 432/22/1951 sz., a természetbeni juttatások és kedvezményes vásárlások rendezésével kapcsolatos határozatának végrehajtásáról*, p.1

⁵ - For this observation about the food processing sector generally see SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/24d./1952; *Szakszervezetek Zalamegyei Tanácsa Információs jelentés a N.T. 432/22/1951 sz., a természetbeni juttatások és kedvezményes vásárlások rendezésével kapcsolatos határozatának végrehajtásáról*, p.1

⁶ - This was admitted by the Ministry for Compulsory Deliveries in February 1955, see MOL M-KS-276f.94/829ö.e., pp.115-6

gave affected households their means of survival ⁷. It was reported that the chronic shortage of labour in the mills that emerged subsequently was largely due to the fact that employment offered no gate to participation in the informal economy, merely low money wages ⁸.

This case of supplements to wages paid in kind in milling illustrates the way in which the structure of consumption in a climate of endemic shortage regulated the relationship between industrial work, the household and the informal sphere. Work in milling was not seen as a means of acquiring money and self-satisfaction in and of itself. It was regarded in a highly instrumental light. Because of low wages it was seen as offering an indirect way of gaining access to a different realm of production and of work; the informal economy that emerged alongside the more publicly visible industrial enterprises of the First Five Year Plan. Whilst the proletarianised millers represent something of an extreme case, the phenomenon was present across industry and was to have profound implications for the way workers related to industrial work and thus for their own identities.

The relation between consumption, factory work, informal work and the household was highly corrosive of worker identity in mid-1950s Hungary, it served to downgrade the importance of factory work generally and led to an increase in the importance of work within the informal sphere. Furthermore it promoted survival strategies and forms of resistance to the state that relied on particular networks based on personal connections. As such they tended to re-inforce the particularisation of worker identity. Whilst opposition to the state contributed to participation in the informal economy it represented an attempt by workers to cope with endemic shortage in the

7 - MOL M-KS-276f.94/829ö.e., p.115

8 - MOL M-KS-276f.94/829ö.e., p.116

field of consumption. Shortages of basic goods affected the value workers gave to their wages from work in the socialist sector and thus their attitudes towards the state. As such the growth of informal activity is discussed in the context of the problems of consumption in a shortage economy and the way in which workers adjusted to those problems.

Surviving the Queue: Popular Responses to Goods Shortages in Industrial Hungary

Problems with the supply of goods were first noticed in Hungary's mining areas. In Tatabánya the problems began in September 1950 with shortages of sugar that led to workers queuing for supplies, this was followed quickly by the shops running out of potatoes, onions and other fresh vegetables. By early October the city council was responding to the shortages of these goods and the queuing that resulted by distributing daily supplies from 6 a.m. onwards in the market place ⁹. Official organs received complaints about consumers having to queue for sugar, especially from households where both partners worked and as a result were unable to queue forcing them to go without for weeks on end ¹⁰. Workers in the VI pit of the mines regarded the shortages of milk and potatoes and the fact "that workers had to run around after them" as a sign, along with the norm revision, that the regime "continually talks about rising living standards and gives us nothing" whilst another stated that living standards were declining because "on the market there aren't any goods". The combination of the norm revision and goods shortages, stated a power plant worker, meant that "we (the workers) only earn salt and paprika now" ¹¹.

⁹ - TVL Tatabánya VB ülések jegyzőkönyvei; 29th September 1950, Item No.4, 6th October 1950, Item No.2/b

¹⁰ - SZKE Komárom SZMT/42d./1950; *Titkári jelentés 1950 év november hónapjáról*, p.1

These shortages in Tatabánya were to spread quickly to all industrial areas. As a result "shortage" became not only a fundamental determinant of life within the sphere of socialist production, but also in consumption and consequently came to fundamentally determine the contours of daily life for industrial workers and their families during the early 1950s. The changes in the standard of living of industrial workers during the period of the First Five Year Plan cannot be considered without an examination of the qualitative changes in the realm of consumption that were created by these developments. Despite the fundamental importance of this sphere very little attention has been paid to it in critical social scientific investigation of the patterns of everyday life in state socialist societies ¹². Shortages of goods undermined the legitimacy of the regime and called into question for many "working class" consumers the relationship between work and reward. Problems in the realm of consumption fundamentally reduced the willingness of industrial workers to respond to the work incentives that were designed to improve their performance in the realm of socialist production. The problems of consumption were to create the space for a large parallel economy alongside that of official socialist production that operated autonomously of, whilst not being entirely separate from it. To explore this in more depth it is necessary to look at "working class" consumers' experiences in an era of persistent shortage.

11 - SZKL Komárom SZMT/43d./1950; *Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa Esztergom-Komárom Megye Bizottság 393./1950 sz. Hangulat jelentés*, pp.1-2; SZKL Komárom SZMT/43d./1950; *Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa Esztergom-Komárom Megye Bizottság 419./1950 sz. Hangulat jelentés*, p.2

12 - This is exception to this has been anthropological work on Romania during the 1980s. Katherine Verdery has argued that the regulation of consumption through shortage was part of the attempt of the state socialist regime in the country to "confiscate" the time of its citizens, forming part of the general process that she identified as the "bureaucratisation of time". See her *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next ?*, Chapter 2

In 1953 in a party propaganda pamphlet the regime made increases in living standards and in consumption central to its appeal. Though it admitted there had been "difficulties" in the field of food supply, it argued that "the free market prices of many foodstuffs have fallen and a state of general plenty has been created in the provision of industrial goods" ¹³. The party had certainly given improvements in "working class" consumption a high priority, seeking to improve the supply of goods and expand retail services to industrial areas from 1949 onwards. It had sought principally to drive private markets, where agricultural goods were sold directly to consumers, out of food and goods supply in the industrial areas and replace them with a network of state run or municipalised stores. Small shops were to be nationalised and replaced with department stores, whilst artisans were to be re-organised into larger co-operatives providing services to the industrial population. Indeed the lack of large shops in industrial areas was seen as a fundamental mark of the discrimination against them relative to the more "*bourgeois*" centres of the capital and large provincial cities. In Újpest in early 1950 the regime had set great store by attempting to close the gap in the provision of facilities that existed between it and neighbouring Budapest, and underlined its achievement over the previous two years by expanding the state owned network of grocers at the expense of the market that had hitherto been the main source of the town's food provisions ¹⁴. The centrepiece of the regime's proposals to modernise and improve the network of shops was the Állami Áruház, a state department

¹³ - *Mit adott a népi demokrácia a dolgozóknak ?*, pp.12-3, Kiadja a Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Központi Vezetősége Agitációs és Propaganda Osztály, Budapest, 1953

¹⁴ - See *Pártmunkás*, 10th January 1950; for the important role that markets had played in supplying even the towns middle classes with food and basic goods in the inter-war and immediate post-war era see the interview with a former middle class Újpest resident in Péter Győri "Telepek Újpesten" in Mihály Andor (ed.) *Újpest. Tanulmánykötet*, p.37, Művelődéskutató Intézet, Budapest, 1982; for information on working class shopping habits and the role of markets in the north of the capital in them in the late 1940s see *Tungsram Híradó*, 15th December 1948

store, which was supposed to bring mass consumerism to Újpest when it opened in 1951 ¹⁵.

The reality of early socialist consumerism in this regard fell short of state intentions. Though the number of shops increased substantially the conditions in them were often inadequate. In Újpest during the course of the 1950s the number of shops selling spices doubled, whilst between 1951 and 1958 the number of butchers increased from 29 to 40. In spite of this even as late as 1958 officials judged that "alongside modern and pleasant shops there are those which are old fashioned and give cause for concern on health grounds". Furthermore whilst the centre of the district was well provided for, "goods supply to outlying areas" was "inadequate" ¹⁶, disadvantaging the residents of those parts of the district.

A similar situation existed in provincial industrial towns. In Tatabánya the number of shops selling groceries increased between 1948 and 1953; the number of general grocery stores rose from 62 to 64, and the number of butchers grew from 64 to 65. The stores providing services fell; the number of tailors went from 53 to 27 and the number of shoemakers plummeted from 22 to just 12 ¹⁷. Conditions in many of the shops and the general standards of service often left a great deal to be desired. In one of the *Népboltok*, or People's Shops, it was reported that often potatoes were simply left on the floor because of the lack of storage space, the storage space that did exist was infested with rats and mice whilst the staff were not only frequently rude to customers but smoked whilst selling fruit and vegetables. Due to the

¹⁵ - László Czoma & Imre Tóth "Újpest, a főváros IV. kerülete 1950-1975" in Ede Gerelyes (ed.) *Újpest Története*, p.302, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1977

¹⁶ - MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/20ö.e., p.272

¹⁷ - MOL M-KS-276f.53/145ö.e.; *Tájékoztató az üzemi vezetők által felvetett szociális és kulturális problémákról*, p.66

general lack of investment in the network of shops this was not an unusual state of affairs ¹⁸. In the new town of Sztálinváros, despite its privileged position as far as state investment in services was concerned, similar problems were experienced. In 1954 the local representative of the Ministry of Internal Commerce admitted that "the development of commerce has been pushed into the background in recent years" and that this had led to poorly designed and often inadequate shopping facilities in the town ¹⁹. The local branch of the Construction Workers' Union in 1953 reported on poor standards of service in local shops, stating that many of their staff regarded customers as an inconvenience to be tolerated ²⁰. In 1952 frequent complaints were received about staff in the shops deliberately underweighing quantities of milk, cheese and meat and then overcharging consumers. This was combined by arbitrary pricing where shop staff would unofficially change prices from hour to hour ²¹. Apart from the field of goods provision one consumer complained about service in the towns' hairdressers in 1953; "there isn't any heating where one has to sit with wet hair they wash hair with cold water because there isn't any way of heating it (the water) in the shop" ²².

Even though the provision of shops and basic services for consumers in the industrial centres left much to be desired it was at least considerably

¹⁸ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/21d./1952; *Szénszállító és Szolgáltató Vállalat Szakszervezeti Bizottsága, Tatabánya - Jegyzőkönyv Társadalmi ellenőrök részére megtartot értekezetről*, p.2; for more on the state of food provision in the town see SZKL SZOT Munkásellátás/15d./1953; *Jelentés a tatabányai munkásellátási kérdésekről*, pp.2-3

¹⁹ - *Sztálin Vasmű Építője*, 19th March 1954

²⁰ - SZKL Építők/939d./1953; *Jelentés a munkásellátási munkáról, szállások és társadalmi ellenőrök munkájáról*, p.2

²¹ - FML MSZMP FMBA ir. 9f.2/PTO/48ö.e.; *A Sztálinvárosi Tanács végrehajtó Bizottságba.....*, pp.1-2

²² - *Sztálin Vasmű Építője*, 31st December 1953

better than in the surrounding villages from where many workers commuted. In the villages surrounding Tatabánya during the early 1950s there was a simple lack of basic facilities and services; few had anywhere that could be used for cultural purposes, a grocer's shop only in those villages where a marketing co-operative for agricultural produce had survived the collectivisation drive, though most had a small pub ²³. In rural Zala county which because of the oil industry contained a significant number of village dwelling commuting workers the situation was similar. In 1953 the county section of the Central Statistical Office counted 31 villages without a shop, of these 1 had a population of between 500 and 1000, whilst the remaining 30 had populations over under 500, as a result some village dwellers were often at least 4 kilometres from the nearest shop ²⁴.

In addition to frequent goods shortages there were major problems related to the poor nature of many of the shops themselves. In theory, however, from 1951 onwards "working class" consumers were able to turn to the "free markets" where producers directly sold their goods to consumers at market prices. Such a market was created in Sztálinváros in 1952, but was not as widely used as hoped by "working class" consumers; in reply to the question of who shopped on the "free market" an official replied that "in the morning it is the housewives who live locally, after work the workers come down to get necessary things. The real situation is that very few use it" ²⁵. In part the "free market" suffered from a problem of legitimacy as in many consumers' minds it was often associated with speculation and a poor deal; many consumers incorrectly referred to the "free market" as the "black

²³ - SZKL Komárom SZMT/61d./1950; *Jelentés a bányász falvakról*, pp.1-2

²⁴ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 57f.2/1par/66ö.e.; *Kedves Nagy elvtárs*; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.2/1par/66ö.e.; *Kedves Elvtársak !*, p.1

²⁵ - FML MSZMP FMBA ir. 17f.1/24ö.e.; *Jegyzőkönyv felvétel 1952.junius 3.-án megtartott pártbizottsági ülésen, a P.B. tanácstermében*, p.2

market" implicitly refusing to recognise its officially tolerated status ²⁶. The second problem was that because of the reliance of both state shops and "free markets" on the state of agricultural production often food supply in both state shops and on the "free markets" tended to suffer from the same problems. Where agricultural production was of a high quality and quantity the markets tended to be well stocked, and markets in areas that had a tradition of market gardening tended to attract customers from miles around, this was the case of the market in Szentes in south eastern Hungary for example ²⁷. In industrial areas they tended to be less well stocked, in Sztálinváros in 1952 the city party leadership discussed how they could attract "private traders" from the capital as well as the local agricultural co-operatives to sell there in order to improve the supply of goods ²⁸. Furthermore during times of agricultural dearth they tended to be as poorly stocked as some of the shops, this was especially the case during the poor year of 1952. In June of that year the amount of available goods on Budapest's "free markets" was 14.3% lower than a year previously ²⁹.

At least in urban households because of their strict gender division of labour, the "working class" consumer was often the woman within the household. It was her responsibility to negotiate the problems of food shortages and poor standards of service and design in the shops. This task was often made more difficult by both the acute poverty in many "working

²⁶ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/9d./1951; *Kereskedelmi és Pénzügyi Dolgozók Szakszervezete Feljegyzés a kenyér és husjegyek bevezetésével kapcsolatos hangulatról*, p.2

²⁷ - For information on the Szentes market in the mid 1950s, see OSA RFE Magyar Gy.300/40/4/43, Item No. 8349/56

²⁸ - FML MSZMP FMBA ir. 17f.1/24ö.e.; *Jegyzőkönyv felvétel 1952.junius 3.-án megtartott pártbizottsági ülésen, a P.B. tanácstermében*, p.2

²⁹ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/22d./1952; *A 1952 II.negyedév kiskereskedelmi forgalmáról*, p.5

class" households during the early 1950s and the gender division of household income. Poverty and declining living standards were serious problems in the early 1950s; according to trade union figures real wages were some 16.6% lower in 1953 than in 1949, whilst the average income of households living from wages and salaries had fallen by 8% over the same period. The consequences of declining living standards could be seen through the shares of household budgets devoted to the consumption of certain categories of goods; groceries accounted for 45.9% of the budget of an average household in 1949, a figure that had risen to 58.8% by 1953, whilst the share of expenditure on clothing had fallen from 18.2% to 10.4%. Furthermore the average household's consumption of meat, fat and milk was lower in 1953 than in 1938 ³⁰. These averages concealed the desperate poverty of many households, one young worker who had escaped to the West remembered that many of his neighbours had "gone every six weeks to give blood to get a supplementary income" ³¹. In 1953 and 1954 the sight of large numbers of people scouring the capital's rubbish dumps for scraps of food or assorted bric-a-brac to sell was very common ³².

In addition to this absolute poverty, severe pressure was brought to bear on "working class" household budgets. Very basic living standards were enjoyed by very small households, with few dependents. For larger households the situation was much worse. One miner's wife who fled to the West in 1952, described the problem of budgeting given the low level of industrial wages and the relatively high level of prices; "My husband gave

³⁰ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/13d./1953; *Adatok és példák a Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa III. Teljes Ülésének beszámolóhoz*, pp.1-5

³¹ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6./ Item No.11555/55, p.4

³² - See the 1954 sociography on the plundering of the capital's rubbish dumps by László Földes, which was finally published in 1994. See László Földes "A város peremén. Leírás Nagy-Budapest szeméttelképéről, 1954-ben", *Mozgó Világ*, No.5, pp.22-9, May 1994

me the whole of his wage to manage the householdAt the beginning of the month the mine paid the first instalment that was always about 320 Forints, and I had to budget with it so that it would last until the middle of the month, when my husband got the second instalment of his monthly pay. During that time I only bought the most necessary things, like fat, oil, flour then came the second part..... from that with the most basic living standard I managed to save 100 to 120 Forints, though that was only done because my husband instead of resting did extra shifts so that sometimes I could buy material to make clothes for the children" 33.

Often, however, the husband or male partner refused to give all his earnings over to his wife or partner insisting that he keep sufficient income for leisure whilst expecting his wife to maintain the household. Often women were severely disadvantaged by this distribution of the household budget. An extreme example of a situation that was by no means uncommon was that of a young woman without children who lived with her fiancé in a poor Budapest district, who finally escaped to the West in 1954. Though her fiancé was a skilled worker he "drank and gambled on the horses" that resulted in her getting "600 or 700 Forints" of the "1100 to 1200 Forints" he earned monthly, and from this housekeeping allowance he would "often ask for money back". Because of high prices she was often unable to buy food for herself or afford to heat the flat during the day in winter. In this situation she ate only bread and jam, and stayed in bed simply to keep warm when not out shopping for the household 34. Such problems were intensified by the rise in alcoholism that occurred among male industrial workers during the 1950s 35.

33 - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 08371/52, p.1

34 - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/Item No. 10820/54, pp.1-5

Even where women were able and willing to ease the income problems of their households by participating in the labour force of the socialist sector, the burden of housework and of shopping for the household fell upon them. This in a world characterised by shortage, unresponsiveness and inefficiency was far from an easy task. One Budapest consumer who did not work described the daily shopping routine when the supply of food and goods was not interrupted by shortage thus; "every morning I got up at six and went to the *Tejért* (the dairy shop) to buy necessary things for breakfast I had of course to queue, but at least in the week I could buy as much milk as I wanted, or as much as I could afford. It was only on Saturday there was a restriction on how much I could buy, just a litre per person I had to buy bread at the *Közért* (general grocery store) after my fiancé had gone to work I would do the shopping for lunch and dinner, by this time one did not have to queue". Consumption was frequently characterised by many 'small trips to the shops in the industrial districts simply because "the wives of workers didn't have enough money to buy large amounts" ³⁶.

For working women, especially for those on morning shifts, shopping had to be done before or immediately after work. Because of the lack of capacity of many of the shops and the frequent late deliveries of many foodstuffs, this led to a problem of queuing; in Sztálinváros in 1952 queues frequently developed in the morning hours before work and then in the afternoon at the end of shift at 2 p.m. It was reportedly common to have to queue for "hours" whilst the bread was delivered, shelved and distributed.

³⁵ - On alcoholism see "Budapest, 1954. augusztus 7. Molnár Ferencnek, a Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa Társadalombiztosítási Főosztálya Vezetőhelyettesének Levele a Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Központi Vezetőségéhez az Alkoholizmus Terjedéséről" in Éva Beranné Nemes & Erzsébet Kajari (eds.) *A Magyarországi Szakszervezeti Mozgalom Dokumentumai. 9. kötet. Útkeresés 1953-1958*, pp. 153-5, Népszava Kiadó, Budapest, 1989

³⁶ - OSÁ RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 10820/54, pp.4-5

This forced many to wait for up to two hours in the morning and then to wait again in the afternoon before they were able to buy what they wanted ³⁷. In early 1953 female workers on the morning shift in the Újpest Yarn Factory complained to the factory trade union organisation because they had to rise at four in the morning on weekdays to be sure of being able to buy meat. If they tried to buy it after their shift it was simply unavailable ³⁸.

Commuters from rural areas, even those with no land, were in a more unfavourable position as consumers in the socialist economy. In rural households where one or more members worked in urban industry the gender division of labour had been modified, with women likely to remain in the village and work in agriculture ³⁹. In such cases it was the men who would combine their work with shopping for goods that where a family owned land, could not be cultivated at home, or were scarce in the village generally. This division of labour within a household unit existed both where the men commuted over a long distance returning home only every few weeks, and where the worker commuted on a daily basis. In both instances commuters' consumption habits differed significantly from their urban counterparts, though for different reasons. The major difference was that commuters did not go to the shops frequently, but tended to go infrequently and buy noticeably large amounts. In the case of long distance commuters this was in order to take large quantities of goods that were scarce in their home villages for their families over the time that they were away. In 1953 in

37 - FML MSZMP FMBA ir. 9f.2/PTO/48ö.e.; *A Sztálinvárosi Tanács végrehajtó Bizottságba....*, p.1

38 - SZKL SZOT Munkásellátás/4d./1953; *Kedves elvtársak! Üzemi levél*

39 - For evidence of this kind of gender division of labour in areas characterised by commuting see the example of Támok, close to Budapest (OSA 400/40/4/43; Item No. 7095/54); for allusions to this as a reason for the "weakness" of agricultural co-operatives in the rural mining areas in Komárom-Esztergom see SZKL Komárom SZMT/168d./1956; *Jelentés a Falusi Osztályharc Helyzetéről*

Sztálinváros the long distance commuters were said to be taking advantage of the favourable supply of meat to the town alongside "customers who do not work here", causing a run on meat supplies on the day before the free Saturday when they were off work ⁴⁰. Those who commuted on a day to day basis would buy larger amounts than urban residents for another reason, namely that they would buy for friends and relatives in their home village who did not have any other connection to the urban world. One commuter to the mines in Tatabánya was challenged on the train home by a trade union official as to why he had ten loaves of white bread, and replied that he had been asked to buy the bread for his neighbours ⁴¹.

Commuting workers' consumption patterns led them to be frequently accused of hoarding goods. This, together with the perception that all those who lived in villages had access to land and the general antagonism which existed between workers on the basis of social origin as a result of the particularisation of worker identity all contributed to a climate in which commuters were often actively discriminated against. In Tatabánya in 1952 one trade union official instructed the director of the local shop to "give out the white bread at midday when the buses to the villages depart", justifying this on the basis that "the commuters take loaves and loaves of the bread from the town dwellers, the same happens with the flour that they take packets of and so hinder our shopping for food" ⁴². This kind of discrimination was quite widespread and caused considerable anger among

⁴⁰ - FML MSZMP FMBA ir. 17f.1/29ö.e.; *Jelentés a város közellátásának helyzetéről és az üzlethálózat fejlesztéséről*, p.1

⁴¹ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/21d./1952; *Szénszállító és Szolgáltató Vállalat Szakszervezeti Bizottsága, Tatabánya - Jegyzőkönyv Társadalmi ellenőrök részére megtartott értekezetről*, p.2

⁴² - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/21d./1952; *Szénszállító és Szolgáltató Vállalat Szakszervezeti Bizottsága, Tatabánya - Jegyzőkönyv Társadalmi ellenőrök részére megtartott értekezetről*, p.1

commuting workers themselves. One village youth described his day-to-day experience of such discrimination stating that in his village "meat was not available, if someone wanted to buy meat they had to go to town. In the town furthermore, if in the shop they knew you were from the village and wanted to buy they very unwillingly gave you fat, let alone meat, because it was commonly said, why do the villagers come to the town, when in the village they have plenty of everything" stating that this was part of the "sad life of the youth" of his community ⁴³.

The considerable difficulties created by the inadequacy of the state shops and "free markets" intensified during the periods of extreme food and goods shortage. The experience of this phenomenon had two effects. The first was to encourage "working class" consumers to resort to a series of measures designed to mitigate the situation. The second was a more long term process that led to the development of a trend towards attempting to be less dependent on the wage packet from the socialist sector and the goods available in the state shops. This led workers to strive for greater household self-sufficiency. Even the most successful households who tried to become more self-sufficient never managed to completely achieve this objective.

Firstly the various forms of immediate adjustment to shortages which "working class" consumers attempted to deploy are examined. The most common response among those with sufficient cash available to them was to buy up goods when they became available and to hoard them. Because of the financial constraints on most "working class" households, it was reportedly those with spare money, who had either an extra source of income or food through land, and were not dependent on their low wages from industry for survival that were able to employ such a strategy. In February 1952 as fat and eggs reappeared in the shops in two counties it

⁴³ - OSA 300/40/4/43; Item No. 6700/54, pp.1-5

was reported that "largely villagers" bought up the goods with the intention of hoarding them, from one shop 5000 eggs were sold in two hours ⁴⁴. Some families sought to buy up goods by sending all the family members to queue; in one case in Tatabánya it was reported that five members of the same family had stood in one queue and had each bought flour ⁴⁵. In 1951 rumours of food shortages often provoked waves of panic buying; in January 1951 in Nagykanizsa a general wave of panic buying ensued as a result of rumours of general shortage with consumers justifying themselves by stating that "in a few days' time it will be impossible to buy anything" ⁴⁶.

Shortages, buying up and hoarding significantly reshaped buying patterns amongst those who had the ready cash to do so, and severely disadvantaged those who did not. One factory newspaper somewhat unconvincingly attempted to satirise the buying habits that shortage had brought into being by publishing the spoof diary of "a passionate performer of overtime" in January 1952. It described its subjects buying habits thus; "I had to spend my money In the *Közért* there was a huge queue and I couldn't wait until my turn came", driven by the fact, however, that he "believed in things like" a "rumour that there would be a problem with money" he ended up spending all his money on various things that he had no need of before he spent his money "to the last coin" ⁴⁷. The behaviour of the "passionate performer of overtime" was more common and rational than the authors of the newspaper article he appeared in believed or gave him credit for. Shortage produced a mentality in which consumers would buy to

⁴⁴ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/22d./1952; *Feljegyzés a dolgozók hangulatáról*, p.3

⁴⁵ - SZKL SZOT Munkásellátás/15d./1953; *Tatabánya. Ótelepi gépüzem, 1953. január. 31*, p.4

⁴⁶ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.2/Agit/10ö.e.; *Nagykanizsa Városi Pártbizottság, 1951. január 2. du. 4.30*

⁴⁷ - *Duna Híradó*, 15th January 1952

purchase what was available, if they had the money to do so and if they could store it, in order to protect them against a period in which they required a certain good when it was not available.

Food and goods shortages often forced consumers to resort to informal, unofficial and often illegal solutions to their problems. Certain "working class" consumers were able to secure privileged access to goods through kin and friends who worked in the stores, or in some cases through blatant corruption. In February 1953 it was reported that staff in the state shops in Tatabánya were secretly reserving scarce supplies of flour for their friends and relatives ⁴⁸. Very little direct evidence exists of bribery, but its existence seems likely given that overcharging by staff in shops, with the staff pocketing the extra, seems to have been a common practice throughout industrial Hungary during the early 1950s. Consumers complained of not being given change, and officials of prices that were rapidly changed against management orders by the shop staff so that they themselves could make an "unofficial" profit through sale ⁴⁹.

The other form that informal, unofficial and illegal strategies took was that of buying through the "black" market. Due to administrative control access to it could be extremely restricted. Many people came into contact with unofficial economic activity through itinerant sellers from rural areas who would offer food in exchange for used clothes or industrial goods. In one Budapest industrial suburb every house was visited weekly by "a peasant lady from one of the neighbouring villages, who was only prepared

⁴⁸ - SZKL SZOT Munkásellátás/15d./1953; *Tatabánya VIII.akna. 1953. február 9.*, p.2

⁴⁹ - FML MSZMP FMBA ir.9f.2/PTO/48ö.e.; *A Sztálinvárosi Tanács végrehajtó Bizottságba....*, p.1; SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/21d./1952; *Szénszállító és Szolgáltató Vállalat Szakszervezeti Bizottsága, Tatabánya - Jegyzőkönyv Társadalmi ellenőrök részére megtartot értekezetről*, p.2

to exchange agricultural produce for used clothing" ⁵⁰. Given the need for extra cash "working class" consumers themselves sought to exploit shortages in order to supplement their own incomes. In Miskolc in 1951 cases were reported of workers who had bought boots that were in short supply either passing them onto relatives and using their personal connections in the shops to secure new ones, or were simply selling them illegally for prices higher than those in the state shops ⁵¹.

The longer term effect of such shortages, beyond the kinds of survival strategies that were often resorted to, was to seek a degree of self-sufficiency as faith in state produced goods declined enormously. This phenomenon is particularly well illustrated by the problem of bread production and consumption in the mining areas. Much state produced bread was not only frequently late but was of extremely poor quality. In Tatabánya in 1952 complaints from consumers that the quality of bread was poor and that all kinds of things could be found in a loaf that should not have been there prompted an investigation of the bread factory. This found that everything from sawdust, to pieces of wood and even stone was finding its way into the dough before baking creating remarkably unappetising bread ⁵². As a result of this persistent poor quality "working class" consumers began to demand the freedom and the goods to make the bread themselves by 1953. Many miners told a party committee investigating their living conditions that "they wanted to eat home-made bread, as the factory-

⁵⁰ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6; Item No. 11699/52, p.1

⁵¹ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/9d./1951; *Jelentés a Miskolc, diósgyőr munkásellátási kérdésekről*, p.1

⁵² - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/21d./1952; *Szénszállító és Szolgáltató Vállalat Szakszervezeti Bizottsága, Tatabánya - Jegyzőkönyv Társadalmi ellenőrök részére megtartott értekezetről*, p.4

made bread was of appalling quality" and demanded that the appropriate flour and yeast be made available in the shops ⁵³.

This attempt to shift towards greater self-sufficiency took a number of forms. Often it led to the theft of certain goods that were in short supply in the socialised chains of shops; this was particularly the case with firewood, of which there was a significant shortage in the Winter of 1952. In areas close to woods and forests this led to a significant problem of the illegal felling of trees. One miner's wife who escaped to the West in 1952 remembered that "because my husband wasn't a member of the trade union, we didn't get wood" at concessionary prices. That meant that "wood cost 280 Forints for a cubic metre" and anyway was in short supply, instead they went to the nearby woods to cut wood, which was only possible to do "on Mondays and Fridays, when no-one was there to look after the wood", as if caught they faced a heavy fine ⁵⁴. In some rural areas a growing problem of poaching was experienced as many workers in both industry and agriculture illegally hunted to ensure that they gained an adequate supply of meat, in one state forest the supervisor kept a very close eye for either forestry workers or outsiders hunting wild boar ⁵⁵. Another sign of this shift was the growth of unofficial fishing. During the early 1950s the state reorganised fishing clubs placing them under the control of the enterprises and banning those who were not members of a club from buying either fishing tackle or obtaining a fishing licence. The state furthermore ordered that anglers kept a record of every catch so that when their records were inspected, the authorities would be able to see that the angler had caught only the

⁵³ - MOL M-KS-276f.53/145ö.e.; *Tájékoztató az üzemi dolgozók és az üzemi vezetők által felvetett szociális és kulturális problémákról*, p.40

⁵⁴ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6; Item No. 08371/52, p.2

⁵⁵ - OSA 300/40/4/24; Item No. 8183/55, p.5

amount of fish that was deemed necessary to feed the family. Yet unofficial fishing was said to be widespread ⁵⁶.

In addition to pilfering, hunting and fishing, there was a marked increase in the importance of foodstuffs produced within the household, whether in an allotment, garden or in the case of worker-peasant households on their land. In split households where the man took employment in industry and women remained within the household to manage the smallholding there was strong resistance from women to joining agricultural co-operatives. This was because they saw land as giving the household a degree of independence from the shortages of the socialised retail sector. In villages in the Zala oil fields wives were said to have threatened their husbands with divorce and suicide if they joined the co-operatives and refused to cook for their husbands where they had signed away their land. This female opposition was related to the role that the land played in helping such mixed households mitigate the hardships created by goods shortage, indeed one oil worker stated to the authorities on the oil fields that "it (the land) is there to help us live, because of it we have not starved, but if it is taken away from us we will (starve)" ⁵⁷. The growing importance of small scale agricultural production as a means of helping many households in industrial areas survive the food shortages was emphasised by an incident remembered by an oil engineer from his period in the Zala oil fields during the early 1950s. He recounted how, in order to mitigate the impact of food shortages in his own household, his colleagues advised him to keep chickens and to grow his own vegetables. With the help of some books and a little money he became a small scale producer and

⁵⁶ - See OSA 300/40/4/25; Item No.9394/54, and OSA 300/40/4/25; Item No. 09153/53

⁵⁷ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 61f.2/Agit/7ö.e.; *Hangulat jelentés*, p.1; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.61f.2/Agit/7ö.e.; *MDP MAORT Lovászi üzemi pártszervezet titkársága jelentés*

was extremely successful in producing eggs, so successful, in fact, that he attracted the attention of the local party committee ⁵⁸.

These options were relatively more open, however, to rural dwellers, to the ranks of commuters than they were to those who lived in urban, industrial settlements. In spite of this the ideal of greater household self-sufficiency in foodstuffs was very strong during the early 1950s in industrial centres as well. Of those who joined the schemes to encourage private house building in mining areas the overwhelming majority were "old workers" who had lived in the *kolóniak*, the blocks provided by the capitalist mining companies that dated back to the turn of century ⁵⁹. One of the attractions of such housing to these workers was the opportunity they provided for access to a garden or an allotment that could then be used for the keeping of chickens, or the growing of vegetables ⁶⁰.

The possibilities for industrial workers and their households to achieve a meaningful degree of self-sufficiency in food or any other kind of good were so small as to be virtually non-existent. In spite of this, especially in the case of worker-peasant household, a significant supplementary income could be derived from the employment of such strategies. What however was important was not whether the aspiration to greater household self-sufficiency was ever a realistic goal or not, but how the ideal contributed to reinforcing the division between the public and private spheres in individual industrial workers' minds. The private sphere, if it meant a house with a garden, or a flat attached to an allotment, represented an

⁵⁸ - For this story see Dénes Vidos *Zalai Olajos Történetek*, pp.94-9, Magyar Olajipari Múzeum, Zalaegerszeg, 1990

⁵⁹ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/16d/1952; *Feljegyzés a bányász sajátlakás építéssakció helyzetéről*, p.1

⁶⁰ - Personal interview with Sz.J., Tatabánya Múzeum, 15th August 1995

autonomous sphere, when set against the sphere of public consumption characterised by a chaos that the individual consumer had no control over. Furthermore the declining importance of the wage from the factory in household income served to de-center worker identity, increasing the importance of factors other than the workplace. Informal economic activity, however, was not merely defined by measures taken as the result of a desire for household self-sufficiency in food; the nature of the informal economy in Hungary by the mid-1950s was far more diverse. The ability to participate in the various forms of informal economic activity available divided workers against each other creating yet another set of barriers to solidarity within the workforce. Though independent of a workers' formal employment, access to participation in such activities was dependent often on relationships built up in the workplace. This further re-defined the nature of work. It is to these that attention is now turned.

Socialist Workers and Informal Economic Activity

In 1955 a young electrician from the housing maintenance co-operative of the XII District of Budapest, upon his escape to the West, described the working conditions that he had left behind. The co-operative had been formed by artisans forced to combine together by the authorities and at work morale was low. The quality of the workmanship of the co-operative was poor and was "only 25% as good as that done before the war", this was due in part to the constant pressure of high norms and the shortages of raw materials. Electricians suffered from shortages of plaster, whilst plumbers often had to improvise due to a shortage of piping. Official wages were around 1000 Forints a month, but the subject electrician made another 400 to 500 Forints monthly through what he described as "black work". The official co-operative charges were high and often the electrician could pocket the money for the job by charging the customer lower rates.

The electrician described how in September 1954 he " was sent by the co-op to the flat of an old lady, who wanted her electrical door bell changing. She had the door bell but no wire. Because she was poor I said to her that she didn't have to pay for the wire, just the 10 Forints fitting charge, and at the same time told her that the co-op for the same work would have charged her 40 to 50 Forints. The old dear eagerly agreed but after she had to call the co-op to say the work hadn't needed doing" ⁶¹.

By the mid-1950s employment in the socialist sector was not merely valued for the official salary it brought in, but the opportunities it gave for earning extra money in the informal, and often explicitly illegal sector. Whilst such activities themselves were nothing new their importance to industrial workers was dramatically increased by the general environment of shortage, the poor range of goods and services and low wages. Prior to the beginning of the First Five Year Plan many workers, as a kind of hangover from the days of hyper-inflation, combined their low wages with an individual income derived from some kind of entrepreneurial activity dependent on the unofficial use of resources from their official place of work. In industry throughout the 1940s small workshops pressed by a shortage of raw materials and funds contracted out certain jobs to groups of workers who illegally used factory resources to earn a supplementary income in difficult economic circumstances. In the United Electrics Factory in mid-1946 one work group leader was found by the disciplinary committee to have taken on substantial private milling work on three different occasions and to have used factory materials and machines without authorisation ⁶². One grinder

⁶¹ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No.1646/55, pp.1-8

⁶² - SZKL Vasas/ 78 d./ 1946 - Egyesült Izzó Ü.B; *Fegyelmi Jegyzőkönyv, 1946.IX.25*

in the same year was punished for taking grinding work from a small local firm, and grinding the pieces in working hours ⁶³.

In many cases workers in some sectors were using incomes from the socialised sector as a hedge against the insecure situation of small scale businesses operated either by themselves or a family member. By 1949 material and financial problems in small scale industry were leading to unemployment within the sector ⁶⁴. For the masters this led to general economic uncertainty and they or their family members attempted to mitigate this uncertainty by taking jobs in the socialised sector to provide regular incomes when business was not good. One worker in MAVÁG Machine Factory was periodically off sick during the course of 1949. Union inspectors discovered that he combined his job with a business as he was an artisan in the metalworking sector. When, according to his wife, he had a full order book he went off sick to complete the work but given that orders were infrequent and uneven he used his factory income to try and guarantee himself a basic minimum on a continuous basis ⁶⁵. Another unskilled worker in one of the Budapest railway workshops was, whilst on sick pay, trained by his father who was an independent shoemaker with his own business. Reportedly the shoe making business could not guarantee the family an adequate income and so he had taken on work ⁶⁶. One worker in the printing industry went sick when he received orders for the small bookbinding workshop that he ran in the cellar of his house ⁶⁷. Another

⁶³ - *ibid.*, *Fegyelmi Jegyzőkönyv 1946.XII.26*

⁶⁴ - For the information on male unemployment which shows this see *1949 évi népszámlálás 7/a munkanélküliek adatai*, pp.9-11 & 16-8

⁶⁵ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/37d./1949; *Jelentés a beteglátogató aktívák által felvett szabálytalanságokról*, p.1

⁶⁶ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/36d./1949; *Jelentés Sz.K., a Déli-műhely segéd munkásáról*

printer also was frequently absent when the small printing press that had been nominally owned by his deceased wife received orders and the work needed organising ⁶⁸.

This strategy was undermined by the policies of nationalisation, punitive taxation and administrative restriction during the course of the early 1950s that succeeded in virtually eliminating the private sector in industry. The reduction in the number of private artisans was progressive; in October 1948, when they were surveyed by the Central Statistical Office, there were a total of 141,818 artisans in industry, and a further 23,808 masters in privately owned construction. In addition to the artisans and masters themselves a further 131,066 were employed in small scale industry ⁶⁹. When the Central Statistical Office surveyed their numbers in January 1951 it found 93,703 artisans in industry and 15,058 masters in private construction. By October 1950 the number of skilled workers in small scale industry stood at 16,963 and that of other employees at 10,567, whilst the equivalent figures for private construction were 2,984 and 2,614 respectively ⁷⁰. In February 1953 the number of industrial artisans stood at 36,209 and that of private construction masters at 5,310, whilst the total number of employers had fallen to 3,617 in small scale industry and only 654 in construction ⁷¹. During the period of the attack on the private sector, entrepreneurs in industry attempted to evade restrictions by using personal connections to skilled workers inside the factories of the socialist sector,

⁶⁷ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/31d./1949; *A Nyomda- és Papíripari Dolgozók Szakszervezete Szociálpolitikai Osztálya szeptember hávi jelentése*, p.2

⁶⁸ - SZKL SZOT Szociálpolitika/31d./1949; *Betegellenőr jelentése alapján indult meg a nyomozás*

⁶⁹ - *Központi Statisztikai Hivatal Statisztikai Évkönyv 1952*, p.103

⁷⁰ - *ibid.*, p.103

⁷¹ - *ibid.*, pp.102-3

sub-contracting work to them, for which the workers would illegally use factory materials and premises. This pattern of informal economic activity was especially evident in industrial areas like Újpest where a large number of private artisans had survived the 1949 nationalisations ⁷². In the early hours of 17th June 1951 factory security in the United Electrics Factory caught several workers in one of the shops where there was no night shift. Here under the supervision of a foreman, 7 mechanics, 2 painters, 1 fitter, 1 carpenter and 2 unskilled workers were engaged, using factory materials and machinery, in completing private work for one local entrepreneur ⁷³.

As the private sector was eliminated the nature and scope of informal economic activity was transformed. This was partly the result of former artisans taking jobs in industry and continuing to provide services to former customers outside working hours using goods stolen from their official workplace. A large section of the skilled shoemakers entering the expanding Danube Shoe Factory during the early 1950s came from shoemaking co-operatives or from small scale businesses. These workers were very discontented because "the piece rates paid were not acceptable, because their wages or incomes from their previous workplaces had been much higher" ⁷⁴. As the growing centralisation of shoe production eliminated alternative workplaces within the sector, artisans and other skilled workers resorted to other strategies in order to survive. A persistent problem of theft was reported within the factory as early as 1952 ⁷⁵, which was to grow worse in subsequent years. The culprits were mostly former artisans who stole raw materials to manufacture and repair shoes within the framework of

⁷² - For precise statistical information on Újpest industrial enterprises which survived see MOL M-KS-276f.65/246ö.e., especially pp.7,8,12,14,16,36,39,43,45,46,50,54,60,63 & 72

⁷³ - BFL XXIX/321/3d.; *Feljegyzés*

⁷⁴ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/10ö.e., p.7

⁷⁵ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/190/6ö.e., p.204

the "black" economy outside the factory gate, in 1955 one worker who had been fined on five occasions for theft was finally dismissed and prosecuted for stealing 20,000 Forints worth of leather, sole and other related materials in order to participate in the black economy ⁷⁶.

What was new about the informal economic activity which emerged during the years of the First Five Year Plan was that it was not merely limited to former private artisans and their employees, not even in the Danube Shoe Factory, nor were links to the private sector central to its existence. Whilst the extent of informal economic activity is very difficult to quantify it is clear that it increased as did the numbers participating in it. One escapee to the West who had worked in the Danube Shoe Factory stated that all the workers had participated in this form of economic activity. Indeed prior to 1953 they had been given materials to make two pairs of shoes per year as a kind of payment in kind that was then taken away. Furthermore it was general to steal in order to provide themselves with the means of survival given that their wages were so low ⁷⁷. Indeed across much of light industry and food processing as well for as unskilled work right across industry wages were far too low to guarantee a family an income if only one household member worked; a fact that even the party, government and trade unions were to recognise in 1953 ⁷⁸.

Legal restrictions designed to control the labour market and private economic activity led to a dramatic increase in the kinds of activity that were categorised as illegal. This in and of itself led to a broadening in the scope

⁷⁶ - *Futószalag*, 9th April 1955

⁷⁷ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 3677/56, p.3

⁷⁸ - SZKL SZOT Bérostály/28d./1953; A Bizottság vizsgálatai során bér-és normakérdésekben az alábbiakat tapasztalta, p.2

of the informal economy. Such restrictions were most clear in the cases of supplementary incomes which many low paid workers required in order to survive. Supplementary work or a second job were permitted only in cases where the director of the enterprise in which the worker was primarily employed gave his written permission. The director was to refuse permission where the secondary work could not be completed without interfering with the worker's performance within the enterprise, or if the quality of the worker's work was unsatisfactory ⁷⁹. These provisions were commonly side-stepped which led to workers taking up secondary employment unofficially or illegally. In 1953 it was shown that wages amongst railwaymen varied between 420 and 700 Forints monthly. Of these some 8000 employees failed to earn more than 570 Forints. In such cases many workers spent their spare time undertaking additional employment; most commonly informal agricultural work to guarantee a basic standard of living for their families ⁸⁰. Access to such informal work was often dependent on contacts secured through work mates in the socialised sector of the economy. This was especially true of casual labour in agriculture during periods of harvest; as early as the late Summer of 1951 it had been noticed that the Sztálinváros construction site was being used as a kind of informal labour market to recruit casual labour. The party was especially concerned that some landholders were promising payment of 50 kilos of corn for harvest labour and that such promises would undermine labour discipline on the construction site itself ⁸¹.

⁷⁹ - Mikos, Nagy & Weltner (eds.) *A Munkatörvénykönyve és Végrehajtási Szabályai*, p.126

⁸⁰ - SZKL SZOT Bér és Munkaügyi Osztálya/21d./1953; *Közlekedés- és Postaügyi Minisztérium Vasúti Főosztálya levél Varga Jánosnak, Szakszervezetek Országos Tanács titkára, 21st November (1954) 1953*

⁸¹ - FML MSZMP FMBA ir.18f.2/1ö.e.; *Jelentés a Dunai Vasmű Pártbizottság augusztus havi munkájáról*, p.1

Both the cases of private shoemaking and informal agricultural work demonstrate that the socialised enterprise that provided a worker with a job was essential to worker participation in the informal economy. This was true both in terms of the use of personal contacts and as a source of materials for such activity. Private economic activity, like the kinds of black work that the employee of the housing repair co-operative had engaged in or in private shoe manufacture and repair had clear implications for worker identity. The first was that a job in parts of the socialist sector was not merely valued as the source of a wage, but in addition as a base through which informal economic activities could be pursued. In order for this to happen many workers had come to see cheating or stealing from their employer as legitimate. Certainly contemporaries believed this practice to be widespread. One journalist who escaped to the west in 1956 remarked that "the villages surrounding the "great constructions of socialism" contain the most new peasant cottages, built from excellent materials, and of sound construction of course the material "removed" from the site of the socialist constructions" 82.

The theft and illegal use of materials came to be seen as legitimate by workers simply because of the growing perception that the state was stealing from them. This was a perception that had become quite general to all workers by 1953 irrespective of their social origin. This feeling was especially strong among worker-peasants who faced a combination of low wages and heavy taxation on their family land holding. In late 1952 during the signing of peace loans on the Sztálinváros construction site one young worker expressed his frustration with the regime citing the example of his father who "had 2 hold of land, he (the worker) has nothing, and the tax collectors took (from his father) their only cow, the pig that was bought from

82 - Quoted in Lomax "The Working Class in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956", p.32

his (the workers) wage, and the fuel, the price of which was deducted from his (the workers) wage" ⁸³. Worker-peasants also bore the brunt of the peace loans, as they were levied twice on such individuals, once on any factory income and then separately on their land holding. In 1955 in the Zala oil fields the largely worker-peasant workforce sought to disrupt the process of peace loan "volunteering" by refusing to pay at their factory, if they had already paid on the basis of their land, expressing opposition to the official principle that they should pay on the basis of both ⁸⁴.

Such attitudes were not merely restricted to worker-peasants and were generally held by industrial workers whatever their generation, gender or social origin. The feeling that they were all exploited by a "bloodsucking government" ⁸⁵ was one of the few things that all industrial workers had in common during the mid-1950s. In one combined slaughterhouse and meat processing plant management attempts in 1953 to prevent the theft of meat from the factory prompted "older" workers in the plant to tell their "newer" colleagues that "in the old "reactionary" times on Saturdays our wives used to come into factory and they showed them the slaughtered pig and asked where they wanted their free cuts taken from and no-one constrained them furthermore they gave us enough so that the whole family could eat well, and we didn't have to pay for it, because it was our allowance above wages" ⁸⁶. In the Danube Shoe Factory "older" workers who had worked in the old workshops that were owned by the Wolfner family prior to 1948 told their

⁸³ - FML MSZMP FMBA ir.17f.2/20ö.e.; *Jelentés a harmadik Békekölcsönjegyzés agitációs munkájáról*, p.1

⁸⁴ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.61f.2/PTO/27ö.e.; *Békekölcsön előkészítésével kapcsolatos tájékoztató*, p.1

⁸⁵ - This phrase is taken from the response of a worker to the beginning of the New Course, quoted in SZKL SZOT Bér-Munkaügy/33d./1953; *Feljegyzés a kormányprogrammal kapcsolatos üzemi tapasztalatokról*, p.1

⁸⁶ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 11241/54, p.13

"newer" colleagues that "under Wolfner they had a better life", stating that the base of the system was "the enslavement of the worker" ⁸⁷. One escapee to the west who had worked at the United Electrics Factory during the New Course period stated that the feeling that the regime was exploitative was fed by the perception that "the way wages were calculated was without reason and unjust" and that "a significant percentage of their pay was deducted for all kinds of reasons" ⁸⁸.

In spite of the enormous divisions that existed between workers a negative solidarity had grown up against the state by the beginning of the New Course around small scale acts on the shop floor that harmed the state. In the Danube Shoe Factory where the workforce was riven by strong internal tension there was nevertheless a degree of solidarity between all workers when it came to attempting to get poor output passed the quality control systems in the factory. The plant newspaper criticised workers on production line 301 in Summer 1953 for being prepared to accept and pass on the poor quality shoes made by other workers without questioning them in order to subvert the quality control system ⁸⁹. Such forms of solidarity were common across industry and had an important political dimension. Upon his escape to the West in 1953 one former worker in a heavy engineering factory, in answer to the question of why workers collaborated to keep the quality of their work at a low level, or to use more materials than was strictly necessary, answered that "psychologically the situation was that they (the workers) were happy if they could harm the Communist system" ⁹⁰.

⁸⁷ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy. 6/ Item No. 3677/56, p.3

⁸⁸ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 6519, pp.3-4

⁸⁹ - *Futószalag*, 29th August 1953

⁹⁰ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 08794/53, p.1

Even though these attitudes towards the state certainly explain to a great extent why workers saw theft and the use of material advantage from their place of work as right, they do not entirely explain why certain forms of informal economic activity were seen as legitimate by them. This was a particular issue in relation to those forms of activity which in other contexts workers often regarded as "speculation" and as "corrupt". Such a form of activity was described by a foreman in a conversation with a journalist during the mid 1950s; "Do you know what it means "spontaneous sabotage"? it's very useful and lucrative. They say copper is needed for the ships destined for the Soviet Union. Plated sheets will be good enough for them! The copper will be sold to the small foundries. I do it and my colleagues do it, often without saying a word to each other" ⁹¹.

In short this was because endemic petty corruption in many fields of life tended to legitimise in workers' minds their own recourse to black markets, to illegal forms of "speculation" and practices of tipping. Many workers, however, resented such informal economic activity when it was resorted to by teachers or doctors. Within public education by 1958 "working class" parents were complaining that teachers were neglecting the needs of their children, concentrating on those of "middle class" origin whose parents paid them for informally given private tuition ⁹². In terms of medical provision throughout the 1950s doctors illegally accepted tips from patients in order to supplement their low incomes in return for preferential treatment ⁹³. Another form of informal economic activity that caused particular

⁹¹ - Quoted in Lomax "The Working Class in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956", p.32

⁹² - MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/19 ö.e., p.336

⁹³ - Ádám *Az orvosi hálapénz Magyarországon*, pp.88-9

resentment was corruption in the housing allocation process ⁹⁴. This kind of endemic petty corruption alongside resentment of the state created an environment which led workers to develop attitudes that were often characterised by the phrase that "who does not steal from the state, steals from his family" ⁹⁵, and which came to provide the "moral" basis for much informal economic activity.

Whilst informal economic activity based upon either theft or the illegal use of access to scarce goods or materials through one's place of work was underpinned by a kind of general negative solidarity among workers against the socialist state theft or participation in illegal economic activity was in no way a collective act. The foreman who admitted to a journalist in the mid-1950s that he stole copper from his workplace to sell on the black market stated that it was done by everyone and that they did it "often without saying a word to each other" ⁹⁶. This created a situation in which it became almost part of the culture of many enterprises to steal and use it as a base for secondary economic activity. An investigator into losses from the warehouse of one construction site between Dorog and Esztergom in 1955 reported with incredulity that "from the director downwards almost everyone stole" ⁹⁷. The extent to which the creation and implicit acceptance of this culture affected the relationship between private work and work in the state sector was well illustrated by another case from a construction site in 1955. In this incident three workers were caught using company material to do their own

⁹⁴ - Some examples of these kinds of complaints are contained in MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/19 ö.e., p.335

⁹⁵ - One informant used this to justify his own recourse to the theft of bricks in order to supplement his income in the 1950s (Personal interview with B.O., Dunaújváros, 4th August 1995). For the resonance that this phrase had among agricultural workers in Hungary during the 1980s see Lampland *The Object of Labor*, pp.259-70

⁹⁶ - Lomax "The Working Class in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956", p.32

⁹⁷ - MOL M-KS-276f.94/827ö.e., p.251

private work in company time. The director, rather than instigate criminal proceedings for theft against the workers concerned and ordering their instant dismissal as the law required, simply issued them with a written warning⁹⁸.

Conclusion

It has been argued that participation in informal economic activity within agriculture constituted a form of "atomised resistance" to the socialist state during the early 1950s⁹⁹. When one attempts to use this argument in order to analyse the participation of industrial workers in such economic activities its problems become clear. It was clearly true that oppositional sentiments amongst many workers fuelled some forms of informal economic activity, in particular through the way in perceptions of the regime's policies towards them helped legitimise theft and other related forms of illegal economic activity among workers. In spite of this two points need to be made, firstly that it seems difficult to reduce all "working class" participation in the informal economy to resistance, and that secondly, whilst such participation was certainly not a form of collective action the fact that it was often dependent on a form of unspoken, negative solidarity within the workplace against the state suggests that it cannot be taken as evidence of atomisation either.

It has been argued here that such activity was most fundamentally a response to the twin factors of widespread poverty among industrial workers and endemic shortage in the field of consumption. It was the interaction of these factors that created the space for and generated the need for

⁹⁸ - MOL M-KS-276f.94/827ö.e., p.249

⁹⁹ - For this argument see Rév "The Advantages of Being Atomized"

participation by industrial workers in the informal sector. Whilst certain forms of informal or illegal activity were legitimised in worker's own minds by their discontent with the regime, resistance played only a partial role.

Furthermore whilst acts of theft or the use of enterprise property were far from collective acts they could in no sense be taken to be evidence of the "atomisation" of Hungarian society. They depended upon a particular culture created by the negative solidarity of workers against the socialist state in the mid-1950s, that created space in which such actions were legitimised and made possible. This culture was the product of a set of shared values and attitudes towards the state that had been produced by the common points of the very many different experiences of socialist industrialisation in the early 1950s. In many senses discontent with the state was one of the only common factors that unified an extremely divided industrial workforce.

This state of affairs had a number of consequences. The first was that the environment of shortage and insecurity in the formal economy led to a re-evaluation in workers' minds of the division between public and private; the growth of an ideal, if not a practice, of household self-sufficiency demonstrated that popular experience of shortage increased tendencies towards social privatisation. Whilst the attainment of this ideal was in many senses impossible, many workers managed to gain an illusion of relative independence from the formal sector through informal economic activity, something which increased throughout the 1950s. Paradoxically much informal economic activity was based on contacts, or materials that could only be attained through an "official" job in the socialist sector of the economy. Consequently an official job came to be seen as a passport not only to a wage, but to such informal opportunities thus subverting the "socialist" work ethic. The informal economy played a central role in the

development of extremely instrumental attitudes towards work on the part of industrial workers. This, once again, was greatly assisted by worker rejection of the socialist regime and its policies towards labour. In short informal economic activity undermined the material bases of a common worker identity in the sense that it led workers to think of sources of incomes and work outside of their official employment, or skill. It promoted and underpinned an ideal of social privatisation, even though paradoxically it was dependent on certain collective norms and institutions.

Much informal economic activity was, however, underpinned and legitimised by political dissent that raises the question of the relationship between it and collective forms of political opposition. Some sociologists who have examined the relationship between industrial workers and the informal economy in late socialist and early post-socialist Hungary have argued that such activity served as a substitute for collective action, either integrating industrial workers into the system or atomising them ¹⁰⁰. The extent to which, and why industrial workers, in the Hungary of the mid-1950s sought redress for their grievances through collective action is a question that must now be addressed.

¹⁰⁰ - For some variants of this view see Stark "The Micropolitics of the Firm and the Macropolitics of Reform"; Kemény *Ouvriers hongrois, 1956-1985*, pp.98-116; András Tóth "Changing Values and Behaviours in the Field of Industrial Relations, or Workers, Trade Unions and Political Parties: Prisoners of the Past", Paper for the XII International Sociological Association World Congress, Bielefeld, August 1994

Chapter Three

Between Accommodation and Resistance: Workers, Reform and Revolution

Introduction

The picture of industrial workers in Hungarian society in the early and mid-1950s that has been presented here is one of a deeply divided workforce with little sense of cohesion or feeling of common interest. Divided by household circumstance and social origin common, broad based identities that could have unified the workforce were replaced with more particularistic ones at the point of production. Furthermore shortage in the economic sphere deeply undermined worker identity and informal economic activity, although widespread, tended to be either individual or particular to small groups. Whilst it would be inaccurate to state that the Hungarian industrial workforce was "atomised" by the mid-1950s, it could not be said to form a "class", or have assumed a class identity in the classical sense of the term. This, however, seems to be deeply puzzling when set against the evidence of the popular mobilisation of broad sections of Hungarian society, including many industrial workers, during the 1956 Revolution. During the Revolution numerous popular organs, notably the workers' councils, claimed to represent the workforce as a class against the Stalinist, and then after the Soviet intervention, the Kádár regime.

Bill Lomax has argued that fundamentally 1956 was a popular revolution. Inter-party strife and the growing mobilisation of intellectuals from 1953 onwards was driven by a radical popular movement among peasants and industrial workers for fundamental social change. It was this movement, he argues, which led the population to take to the streets in October 1956 forcing ever more radical steps on intellectuals who were more moderate,

and the state. Following the Soviet intervention in November it was the workers who led the opposition in the streets and the workers who created the most novel institutions of the Revolution, the worker's councils, which promised the democratisation of the socialist system, and participated in the general strike against the new regime. Much of this action was driven, he argues, by working class consciousness, self-awareness and solidarity; in many senses Lomax argues, 1956 can be seen as a working class revolution¹.

The case presented here will attempt to account for and describe the nature and extent of collective action among industrial workers between 1953 and 1958. It will argue that prior to the beginnings of de-Stalinisation, and even then, for a considerable time, open collective action was rare in spite of considerable popular discontent with the socialist regime. This was because of a policy of severe repression that successfully intimidated many workers and created a climate of fear that was only rarely, and sporadically broken. As a consequence of this many workers withdrew from politics and the expression of political opinions. It was only as a crisis of confidence within the regime itself took hold in the Summer of 1956 that worker discontent began to find expression in popular mobilisation.

It was only in October 1956 that discontent assumed mass proportions, and even then it would seem that division existed within the ranks of industrial workers about the nature, aims, and desirability of the Revolution itself. Beyond this point it seems that it is very difficult to assess what, if anything, industrial workers as a group wanted from the Revolution

¹ - For Lomax's contribution to the historiography of the 1956 Revolution see Bill Lomax *Hungary 1956*; Lomax (ed.) *Eye-witness in Hungary*; Lomax "The Working Class in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956"; Lomax "The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Origins of the Kádár regime"; Lomax & Kemény (eds.) *Magyar munkástanácsok 1956-ban*; Lomax (ed.) *Worker's Councils in 1956*; Lomax "The Rise and Fall of the Hungarian Working Class"

beyond the end of the Stalinist regime, greater democracy, improvement in their standard of living and national independence. Certainly after the Soviet intervention in November active worker support for the worker's councils and for the general strike was much more patchy than has been previously believed. Over the two years that followed the Revolution moreover the Kádár regime was able to quickly and successfully consolidate its authority over industrial workers through a mixture of the selective deployment of state repression and carefully distributed economic concessions.

The 1956 Revolution was a moment of considerable and unprecedented popular mobilisation. As has been argued above, it seems that whatever else divided industrial workers by the mid-1950s they shared a negative solidarity against the Stalinist state that they saw as both exploitative and highly oppressive. It was against the state they mobilised in October 1956.

Collective Action and State Repression: Industrial Workers and Political Activity under Rákosi

In mid-December 1951 in an attempt to prevent absenteeism on the days immediately after Christmas in industry the government announced that it would end the practice of paying wages before the holiday paying them on the 27th of December. The result in the Ikarusz bus plant in Budapest was one of considerable discontent, as both the union and the party organisation in the factory were deluged with complaints. Prior to trade union members' meetings on the 19th December management and the factory organisation received assurances from the ministry that wages could be paid on the 23rd in spite of the decision and the factory party committee immediately issued a statement to that effect to the discontented workforce. On the 23rd payment of wages began to workers on the morning shift. At eleven, however, the

ministry intervened to prevent the payment of wages to those scheduled to receive their wages at half past one in the afternoon. The factory party and management objected, resulting in a dispute between enterprise and ministry; one that was decided by Ernő Gerő of the party central committee who ruled that no more of the wages should be paid. By this time it was three thirty and some 1,500 workers were waiting impatiently for their wages. As the decision was announced the 1,500 staged an angry demonstration occupying the offices of management and of the factory party organisation. It was only broken up by the use of force and the ÁVH who, it was estimated, took 156 people into custody for their role in the demonstration ².

This demonstration was the largest single act of collective protest by industrial workers in Hungary during much of the period. It was an exceptional event, indeed when the pressures on workers' incomes are considered it is surprising how little collective protest there was. Attacks on workers' incomes such as a further attempt to revise the norms in 1952 were met with only sporadic opposition. At one factory close to the western border six workers expressed public opposition to the norm revisions at a factory production meetings, attacking Hungary's peoples democracy and arguing that "the American example" was better. Several days later they were caught attempting escape to Austria. In one Pécs factory attempts by one mechanic to organise a strike were quickly crushed by the authorities, whilst in one leather plant workers attempted to persuade their colleagues to resign their *Szabad Nép* subscriptions ³. In another plant the director, factory committee president and party secretary received identical anonymous letters stating

² - MOL M-Bp.-95f.4/118ö.e., pp.81-7

³ - SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/13d./1952; *Fejjegyzés a normarendezéssel kapcsolatos problémákról 1952. május 31*, pp.1-2

that "our time is coming. You will not escape the gallows, You have betrayed your country. Traitors, vagabonds, nobodies" ⁴.

Why was open labour protest not more widespread ? In large part this was due to the pursuit of a policy of considerable repression by the state. This was mainly conducted by the political police, or the ÁVH, which as early as 1950 had become a state security organ with the ability to intervene to a considerable extent in everyday life. By 1953 the tension that considerable state repression had created over the previous several years was enormous and could easily and quickly be brought to the surface by exceptional incidents. In the Lovászi oil fields where the workers were judged to be "politically unreliable" and which was close to the Yugoslav border the ÁVH maintained a substantial presence; relations between industrial workers and the secret police were extremely tense. As early as October 1950 conflicts between secret policemen and young workers over local girls were widely believed to have led to the disappearances and beatings of young oil workers ⁵. In 1952 the refusal of some workers, including some party members, on the site to obey what they saw as unreasonable commands issued by members of the ÁVH, led to serious beatings that provoked a wave of protests even from the factory party organisation ⁶. The secret police presence on the site created a situation where the party leadership had to admit that "the workers are scared of the secret policemen (*ávosok*)" ⁷. The hatred the workers felt for the ÁVH finally exploded in August 1953 at a football match at which the factory club played

4 - SZKL SZOT Közgazdaság/13d./1952; *Feljegyzés a normarendezéssel kapcsolatos problémákról 1952 május. 28*, p.1

5 - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1/73ö.e., pp.85-6

6 - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1/73ö.e., p.112

7 - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1/73ö.e., p.116

the Zala secret police and border guards' club. During the first half of the match one player from the secret police side successfully scored a goal directly from a hand ball. The referee gave the goal and the captain and players went to protest surrounding him; the referee refused to back down ordering that the team play on. The result was that the Lovászi fans, among them several party members, invaded the pitch assaulting the referee and the players of the other team. The result was a general melee with the fans of the other club joining in ⁸.

Because of its closeness to the Yugoslav border and regime perceptions of the political unreliability of the oil industry workforce the degree of direct ÁVH control at Lovászi seems to have been exceptional. In many establishments the use of secret police officers themselves to control workers on the job was far from effective. One former miner from Tatabánya who escaped to the west in 1954 remembered "the secret police officers from time to time would appear at the mine, and would go in and out of the party offices. They were also accustomed to come down the mine, but not in uniform, always in miner's work clothes. We only knew that they were secret policemen because they were strangers and we could tell from their expressions that they were always watching us" ⁹. Furthermore not all secret police officers were as enthusiastic about the Stalinist regime as some of their superiors. One textile worker, a commuter from Pest county, recounted a conversation between one ÁVH officer, a former classmate, and a friend during a train journey to work; the police officer began to complain about living conditions in the country to which the informant's friend replied "don't speak like that ! You earn lots of money, walk round in uniform and don't have to work !". The secret police officer replied that "he was not

⁸ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 57f.1/73ö.e., pp.117-20

⁹ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 8083/54, p.4

enthusiastic about his job he satisfied the woman (the informant's friend) that he had no great desire to go to war against the Americans" 10.

The ÁVH tended to rely to a much greater extent on networks of informers on both the shop floor and in the community, sometimes made up of either those who were willing to denounce work mates or neighbours, or by people on the secret police payroll. This tended to only be of limited effectiveness because after a certain amount of time workers who informed on their colleagues became easily identifiable. Sándor Rácz, describing the situation in the Standard factory during the mid-1950s, explained that as time went on in the plant "one after the other the informers had been found out, and they had become the objects of general hatred the lad (one informer) had to be removed from the workshop because nobody was willing to work with him" 11.

The existence of an apparatus of political repression seems to have precluded the possibility of workers resorting to successful collective action, and to have severely constrained the open expression of worker discontent. After 1953 many workers admitted this themselves 12. Because of the dependence of the ÁVH on the local organs of factory management, the party and other social organisations for information on "oppositional activity", some workers gained greater latitude than others to express political discontent, provided it did not lead to open collective action that could not be ignored by authorities off the site, than others, largely because

10 - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 5898/54, p.6

11 - Quoted in "Hungary '56 - the Workers' Case: An Interview with Sándor Rácz", with a foreword by Bill Lomax, *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, Vol.7, No.2, p.4, Summer 1984

12 - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.2/Agit/15ö.e.; *Jelentés Nagy Imre országgyűlési beszéde utáni megnyilvánulásokról*, p. 1

of their position within the internal division of labour in the firm. This was illustrated by one incident recounted by a former skilled worker in the Danube Shoe Factory on his escape to the West in 1956. He complained to the personnel director about his low wages that led to him "being called into the party offices, and threatened with a couple of years in prison if he said anything like that again. They said that they were only letting him go free because he was essential to the factory" ¹³. The counter side to this was that state repression could fall disproportionately on inexperienced, "newer" workers whose inexperience and lack of acclimatisation to the shop floor could, and frequently lead to accusations of sabotage being made against them. Such an incident occurred in the Tatabánya mines and was recounted by one escapee to the west; "a "new" miner lit up a cigarette (underground). After he'd smoked a deputy came up to him and after he'd smelt the smoke, called to the miner "please give me a cigarette". When the miner gave him one the deputy asked him for a match. After he gave him one, the deputy called in the police and the unlucky guy was taken out of the mine. We never saw him again" as he was accused of sabotage, an explicitly political offence ¹⁴.

Whilst repression constrained explicit and open political opposition, it did not mean that all protest or discontent was effectively suppressed by the secret police. Often many of the forms of hidden collective action that have been interpreted as part of informal bargaining were seen by their perpetrators as explicit acts of protest, and ones that did not lead to any penalty being levied against them by management or the state. Elek Nagy, later a worker's council leader in Csepel during the 1956 Revolution, stated that "there were a whole series of hidden strikes under Rákosi and then under Imre Nagy, which were generally caused by wage issues. The norm-

¹³ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 3677/56, p.2

¹⁴ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 8083/54, p.4

setter gave us the time (for a given job). Then a workmate went to complain then we decided to organise a "black" strike" 15. One worker in the Duna Cipőgyár remembered that "in 1953 there were grumbles about the norms, at one time it came to the workers going out on an unofficial smoke break to protest. Work stopped for ten minutes. Because the workers didn't want to risk any more, the management simply forgot the incident, and there were no consequences from it" 16.

Underneath these forms of concealed collective protest lay another level at which discontent was expressed. In addition to widespread theft of factory property that has been discussed these acts of resistance tended to take an "infrapolitical" form; in other words a form that was concealed from the direct view of those in power and consisted to a greater degree of individual acts such as jokes, persistent rumour mongering and the expression of oppositional statements through graffiti and in other forms 17. Many of these statements of discontent tended to reveal deep discontent relating to the low living standards of industrial workers. Young workers from Tatabánya who escaped to the West in 1953 recounted how under cover of darkness they would go from the worker's hostel into the town to tear down posters inviting them to produce ""More coal for the homeland"", or to ""sign up for peace loans, build a future for your family and your children"", and

15 - Quoted in Kozák (ed.) *"Szuronyok Hegyén Nem Lehet Dolgozni"*, p.13

16 - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 3677/56, p.2

17 - For a discussion of the whole nature of "infrapolitical" resistance as a concept see Scott *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, especially Chapter 7; for an examination of such kinds of "resistance" in their Hungarian context see Rév "The Advantages of Being Atomized"; the archives are full of reports of anti-Communist graffiti discovered during the Rákosi years. The change of system in Hungary has led to the publication of several political joke books covering the whole of the socialist period but containing a multitude of political jokes from the Rákosi years; the best collection is Imre Katona *A helyzet reménytelen, de nem komoly. Politikai vicceink 1945-től Máig*, for the Stalinist years see pp. 25-71, Móra Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1994

replaced them with their own home-made posters with slogans like "Long live the Americans !", or "don't work for such low wages !" ¹⁸.

From Bystanders to Participants: Workers, Reform and Crisis, 1953-6

The Spring and early Summer of 1953 was a period of intense worker protest across East-Central Europe that demonstrated the tension which Stalinism had created in the societies of the region. In May workers in the tobacco plant in Plovdiv in Bulgaria rioted as a result of unfavourable changes made to work norms. In Czechoslovakia a currency reform was introduced in the same month cutting into wages and eliminating savings. The result in the town of Plzeň was generalised revolt led by 20,000 striking workers from the Skoda plant in the city. It was as the shock waves from these events were being felt throughout the region that the Hungarian party leadership was summoned to Moscow by the Soviet leaders in the event that would initiate the New Course. In the German Democratic Republic, however, a New Course had already been announced and the crisis of confidence within the East German party that this caused combined with a decision to tighten work norms led to a wave of demonstrations and strikes on 17th June 1953 across the country ¹⁹. Whilst the events in the GDR did not lead to open mass protest in Hungary, they had an electrifying effect on the shop floor. The notion that a population could express its discontent openly in a socialist state began, albeit slowly, to lift the lid on a well of discontent. Industrial workers in Budapest were reported to be openly

¹⁸ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 06687/53, p.5

¹⁹ - For the Plovdiv events see R.J. Crampton *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*, p.176, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987; on the revolt in Plzeň the best available account is still Otto Ulc "Pilsen: the unknown revolt" *Problems of Communism*, Vol.14, No.3, pp.46-9, 1965; for a summary of the 1953 events in the GDR the best English language account is in Mary Fulbrook *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949-1989*, pp.177-87, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1995

stating that "the Hungarian party can learn from the German party that it is not correct to apply pressure all the time through the norms". In one industrial suburb in the capital one party secretary reported that people were stating that the workers should strike in Hungary and follow the example of the GDR. In a neighbouring factory one party member called for the smallholders to be given back land that had been "donated" to agricultural co-operatives ²⁰.

As the New Course was gradually implemented in Hungary with firstly the sitting of the Central Committee in late June and the announcement of the programme of the Imre Nagy government public discussion of poor working conditions in factories was permitted and led by the press. This climate was heralded by an editorial in *Szabad Nép* only four days after the East German events that criticised "many of our party, State and economic officials" who "do not note the justified complaints put forward by our working people". Over the next few days the paper printed a series of complaints from "working class" correspondents; one factory worker complained about the non-payment of his April bonuses, whilst some Tatabánya miners complained about having to walk 12 kilometres to work because their local bus service did not function, as another worker complained about having to eat lunch in the open because of the lack of a factory canteen. Over the following weeks this climate was expressed in the factory press as almost every plant in the country began to find that its workforces had serious complaints about working and living conditions in socialist Hungary. In the Duclós Mining Machine Factory the dirty and dangerous working conditions in some shops as well as the tightness of the norms were publicised for the first time. In the Magyar Pamutipar cotton factory the textile workers used the letters' pages of the factory paper to

²⁰ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.2/215ö.e., pp.54-5

complain about the dust and the unbearable heat of the machine rooms. In the Danube Shoe Factory the paper was deluged with complaints about wages, the poor organisation of production, the working conditions and the poor food served by the factory canteen ²¹.

In spite of this limited degree of liberalisation strong constraints were maintained on the freedom of expression of workers. New Course criticisms had very tight limits imposed upon them by the state. As early as August 1953 the authorities expressed concern that in steel production middle level union and economic cadres were calling for a relaxation of the norms along with a lowering of the plan targets as a result of worker criticism, behaviour that was condemned as "encouraging those who make demagogic statements in relation to wages" ²². Direct political criticism of the regime was as harshly dealt with as prior to the announcement of the government programme; rumours in the HPS cotton weaving factory that the new government was the result of a marginalisation of Rákosi, or that it represented a defeat for the party were condemned as "oppositional statements". In spite of this, however, rumours persisted that the New Course had been instituted because the Stalinist authorities "feared a Revolution like that in the GDR" ²³.

In terms of creating a shift towards either greater public participation by workers in Hungarian society, through the use of official forums or greater collective protest, the New Course years seem to have represented

²¹ - For this editorial see *Szabad Nép*, 21st June 1953; for the first two complaints see *Szabad Nép*, 25th June 1953; for the third see *Szabad Nép*, 21st June 1953; for the complaints in the Duclós Mining Machine Factory see *Kaparó*, 4th July 1953 and 6th November 1953; for the Magyar Pamutipar cotton factory see *Pamutújság*, 9th July 1953; for the Danube Shoe Factory see *Futószalag*, 3rd July 1953

²² - SZKL SZOT Bérosztály/28 d./1953; *Jelentés a bérhelyzetről*, p.1

²³ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.2/77ö.e., p.32

a false dawn. Industrial workers continued to resort to either hidden, "infrapolitical" forms of protest as they had done during the period of high Stalinism, or sought to ameliorate their situation through recourse to strategies such as labour mobility, informal bargaining or activity within the informal sector of the economy. Unlike the period of high Stalinism worker's real wages rose during the New Course period, according to figures provided by the Central Statistical Office worker's real wage were 3% higher than their 1949 level in 1954, whilst in 1955 they stood 7.1% higher than that level²⁴. These real increases did not stem workers' discontent with the socialist regime, as the recollections of one escapee recording opinions of the regime held among miners in 1954 demonstrated. A young miner from rural western Hungary remembered that in 1954 "in general there was a great deal of discontent among the miners, they denounced the system, grumbled, because in spite of the difficult work their pay was low". Furthermore he recounted one conversation with a work mate who asked him first where he came from, when he answered the work mate replied "if I was in your place I wouldn't stay here for a minute but I'd go to the West where at least you are valued for as long as you can work, here you are just treated like a dog to whom they occasionally throw a bone so you don't starve"²⁵.

Much of the discontent was increasingly informed by the propaganda broadcasts of the Hungarian language services of western radio stations such as the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe, who were increasingly able to challenge the monopoly of the official state radio²⁶.

²⁴ - "A Lakosság Fogyasztása és a Reálbérek, Reáljövedelmek Alakulása 1955-ben, és a 1949-1955 időszakban", p.22, unpublished research report, Central Statistical Office, Budapest, 1956

²⁵ - OSARFE Magyar Gy. 6./ Item No. 8083/54, p.12

Between 1949 and 1954 the numbers of radio licence holders rose from 539,000 to 1,270,000. A representative statistical survey of household budgets and living conditions in the same year found that 66.1% of "working class" families owned a radio, and noted that "the vast majority of urban families have a radio. In the villages the supply of electricity is the only thing in some places that prevents the use of radio" ²⁷. The western radio stations, especially Radio Free Europe could be easily received on the Peoples' Radio (*Néprádió*), the standard radio set owned by Hungarian households in this period ²⁸.

The western radio stations were widely listened to and seen as an alternative source of information to the official radio that came increasingly to be seen as the voice of the state. Young workers in the hostels of the Tatabánya coal mines remembered frequently listening to Radio Free Europe's Hungarian language broadcasts ²⁹. The contents of reports from Radio Free Europe frequently provided material for anti-Communist rumour mongering amongst the workforce. In June 1953 Radio Free Europe reported that 28,000 workers in Csepel had gone on strike and that 600 had been interned by the ÁVH in order to suppress the open expression of discontent. This was widely repeated by industrial workers, in the Zala oil fields it was reported to have caused both excitement and consternation. The authorities were so concerned that they issued a strong denial through

²⁶ - For a general account of the role of the two radio stations in delivering propaganda to East European populations during the early and mid-1950s see Walter L. Hixson *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War, 1945-1961*, especially Chapters 2-3, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1998

²⁷ - *Statisztikai Szemle*, May 1955, p.466

²⁸ - Personal interview with B.P-né, Dunaújváros, 9th February 1995

²⁹ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 06687/53, p.5

official media channels ³⁰. The degree to which Radio Free Europe propaganda was effective was also demonstrated by an incident in the Chinoin in August 1952. The radio station broadcast a programme called the "Black Book" in which it broadcast information collected from émigré's about party members and other workers sympathetic to the regime. One female Stakhanovite in the factory had learned through work mates of relatives who listened to the station that she was mentioned on this programme, and had taken it to mean that "she was described on a list as an exploiter of the workers". As a result she had begun to hold back her production, and not attempt to continue to work as a Stakhanovite ³¹.

The major effect of the widespread habit of listening to the Hungarian language broadcasts of the western radio stations was a re-evaluation of worker opinions of western societies. Increasingly in direct contrast to official propaganda which aimed to draw unfavourable comparisons between the living conditions of workers in western and socialist countries, workers began to see the West in an increasingly positive light ³². This had a direct effect on the nature and extent of worker opinions. In the United Electrics Factory in the run up to the 1953 parliamentary elections workers were strongly opposed to the existence of only one list in the election stating that "there will be voting, but no election". These workers were hopeful that "a bourgeois democracy will be created through a bourgeois revolution", reflecting the pro-western propaganda of the western radio stations that contrasted the political system of the capitalist states with the repression on

³⁰ - ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.1/80ö.e., p.55; for the denial see *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 29th June 1953, p.25

³¹ - For the "Black Book" programme see Hixson *Parting the Curtain*, p.62; for a description of this incident see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/184/4ö.e., p.213

³² - For an example of this kind of official propaganda see *Népi Demokráciánk Eredményei*, pp.19-23, Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Központi Vezetősége Agitációs- és Propaganda Osztály, Budapest, 1955

the socialist side of the Iron Curtain ³³. Propaganda that described the "good life" that apparently existed in the United States by the mid-1950s also shaped worker's opinions and focused their anger about their low standard of living in socialist Hungary. In March 1954 one younger miner who was to escape to the West overheard a conversation among four or five older work mates who had been Communists six years earlier. One miner stated that "I don't understand why we work so much in Hungary and we work for nothing and with absolutely no outlook. We have to struggle and endanger our lives in the mines for just a small amount of daily bread. A worker can't give his family the comfort that a western worker enjoys, as they have to work much less than we do. In the United States they only have to work four hours and they earn enough to have their own property in their old age, their own car and house" ³⁴.

Despite this workers were no more likely to resort to collective action to express their discontent during the New Course period, than they had been during "high" Stalinism. This could be seen in worker responses to the norm revision in the heavy engineering sector that took place in 1955. As in 1952 there was very little open collective protest, opposition was expressed but in a sporadic manner and more often than not in the form of individual complaints. Workers were heard to ask "why do they always attack the wages of manual workers?". This was combined with attacks on individual norm setters. In other places workers demanded a "guaranteed minimum wage", and that only those workers who "excessively" over fulfilled their norms be penalised ³⁵. By the end of 1955 there was enormous discontent

³³ - MOL M-Bp.-95f.2/77ö.e., pp.10-2

³⁴ - OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 8083, pp.12-3

³⁵ - MOL M-KS-276f.94/831ö.e., p.186; FML MSZMP FMBA ir.17f.1/36ö.e.; *Jelentés a Városi Pártbizottság részére!*, p.2; KEML MSZMP KMBA ir.32f.4/29ö.e., p.48; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/194/26ö.e., p.198

on the part of industrial workers with the regime, but there was little sign of organised, generalised opposition, merely warning signs for the state coming from the shop floor. Open protest movements seemed to be confined at this stage merely to the intellectual elites; groups like the writers and the journalists and a growing number of party officials who sought a revision of Stalinist policies as well as the removal of Rákosi from the party leadership ³⁶. This was to change, and then haltingly and unevenly throughout the first ten months of 1956.

The upheavals of 1956 were to begin in February with Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, the purges and the cult of personality to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. The speech was to have an electrifying effect in Hungary as in the rest of the region where the leaders of the domestic version of high Stalinism, especially Rákosi, remained in power ³⁷. The contents of the speech fatally weakened the confidence of many "working class" party members in the regime, and split the party, effectively destroying its ability to govern. When Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin was revealed at closed party meetings up and down the country "working class" Communists, who privately shared many of the grievances of non-party colleagues reacted with total incredulity. In Sztálinváros party members in the factories questioned the local leadership, most commonly with questions like "Stalin led the party for thirty years, how can it be that his mistakes have been discovered now?" and "What is the

³⁶ - There is now an enormous literature of intellectual and party based opposition to the regime in mid-1950s Hungary, for a sample see Lomax *Hungary 1956*, especially pp.19-35; György Litván "A Nagy Imre-csoport", *Századvég*, Nos.1-2, pp. 103-9, 1989 and his "A Nagy Imre-csoport kialakulása és tevékenysége 1955. április-1956.július", *Társadalmi Szemle*, No.6, pp. 89-95, 1992; János M. Rainer "Nagy Imre és a hatalmi központ, 1954 december-1956.július", *Társadalmi Szemle*, No. 6, pp.81-8, 1992. On the Petőfi kör itself see András B. Hegedűs "Petőfi Kör - a reformmozgalom fóruma 1956-ban", *Világosság*, No.1, pp.21-33, 1989; on the implications of one specific debate see Zoltán Ólmosi "A Petőfi Kör sajtóvita és a hatalom, 1956 nyara", *Múltunk*, No.1, pp.90-110, 1990

³⁷ - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/158ö.e., p.32

current situation in Hungary with the cult of personality ? Was Rajk wrong ?", alongside more mundane questions like "Will Sztálinváros remain Sztálinváros ?", as well as "I own a copy of Stalin's complete works and have read them all. What do I do with them now ?". In the United Electrics Factory the issues raised by the Khrushchev speech became an open topic of conversation among the workforce. Many workers were reported to be of the opinion that the "cult of personality was just as marked here (in Hungary) as in the Soviet Union, especially among the top leadership" and that "Hungary, like the other peoples democratic countries were representatives of Stalin's policies, and the comrades responsible have not been made accountable for their actions" ³⁸.

Continuing political ferment was to have a direct effect on worker opinions, especially in Budapest factories, throughout 1956 as the cracks in the regime increased open opposition to the regime. The growing militancy of the debates of the Petőfi kör, the intellectual debating forum of the opposition to Rákosi, especially its debate on press freedom had a direct impact on the expression of worker opposition, especially in Budapest. In the United Electrics Factory one worker was to openly state that "the leadership is destroying the national economy. The people no longer believe anything they say and they have no role anymore". Furthermore in June the riots in Poznan and the mounting political crisis in Poland were also reflected on the shop floor. Workers began to openly state that "the riots broke out in Poznan not because of the enemy and foreign spies but because twelve years after the end of the war living standards remained low", such comments contained a threat to the Hungarian regime also, many said that "the People's Democracies are equally on a political level, but

³⁸ - FML MSZMP FMBA ir.17f.2/8ö.e.; *A rendkívüli taggyűlésen felvetett kérdések*, pp.1-10; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/154ö.e., p.275; OSA RFE Magyar Gy.6/ Item No. 6380/56, p.4; MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/149ö.e., p.227

economically Hungary and Poland are the most under-developed and in the two countries the living standard is the lowest". As Rákosi was forced out of power and replaced with Gerő in July the loss of regime control became more obvious as did the spread of open popular opposition. Workers complained not about Rákosi's removal from power but the method by which it was achieved stating that it demonstrated the lack of national sovereignty Hungary enjoyed. Furthermore there were growing signs of belief in the effectiveness of collective action; in the *Ikarusz* it was stated that "under pressure from the masses the leadership has abolished the peace loans, if we exert even stronger pressure we will be able to force new measures to raise our living standards". The effect of the combination of a loss of confidence within the party in its ability to govern and rising discontent was enormous; by September "a real feeling of panic" was reported among members of the apparatus in the capital ³⁹.

Although the collapse of confidence within the party in its ability to govern was crucial to the outbreak of Revolution in October, it would be a mistake to see the growing willingness of workers to resort to collective, open protest as being merely a reaction to growing intellectual dissent and to division within the party. Discontent had been building below the surface for several years prior to 1956 that was not appreciated in intellectual circles. Furthermore these two factors interacted with a third, namely the economic reform movement which held out the promise of greater democracy within the factory. This began with the drafting the Second Five Year Plan, which was to begin a year late. It was decided to publish the

³⁹ - The minutes of the debate on the press have been published in András B. Hegedűs & János M. Rainer (eds.) *A Petőfi Kör Vitái Hiteles Jegyzőkönyvek Alapján. IV. Partizántalálkozó-Sajtóvita*, Múzsák Kiadó -1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1991; for worker responses see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/154ö.e., p.188; for reactions to the Poznán events in Budapest factories see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/154ö.e., p.274; for the other points see MOL M-KS-276f.66/23ö.e., p.42; MOL M-KS-276f.66/23ö.e., p.43; MOL M-KS-276f.66/23ö.e., p.63

principles on which the plan would be based for discussion with the workforce. This in the aftermath of the Khrushchev speech merely served to deepen and widen the open discussion of the Stalinist years; it spoke openly of the "mistakes" of the First Five Year Plan" 40.

The collapse of the authority of the regime had, by the Summer of 1956, lifted the lid on well of building discontent that existed on Hungarian shop floors. By that time many industrial workers were simply not prepared to confine the expression of their opinions to the officially proscribed limits. Often they were supported by some factory and union committees who joined their rebellion against the regime. This climate was fuelled by the obviously worsening economic situation of the country. In the Duclós Mining Machinery Factory in August 1956 the factory party committee issued a statement stating that "the rights of the workers have to be secured" in disputes with management, that workers were right "to demand a just wage system" and that the overly "formal monthly production meetings" be replaced with true forums of factory democracy 41.

Increasingly worker anger was directed at the autocracy and arrogance of management supported by the official functionaries of the party, union and youth organisation. In the Chinoi in Spring 1956 it was stated that "the cult of personality has also manifested itself inside the factory particularly among the middle and upper level economic cadres. It

40 - *Szabad Nép*, 27th April 1956; Pető & Szakács *A hazai gazdaság....*, pp.286-7; Iván Pető "Ellentmondásos kiütkeresés. Az 1956-ban elfogadott második ötéves terv koncepciójához" in Henrik Vass (ed.) *Válság és Megújulás. Gazdaság, társadalom és politika Magyarországon. Az MSZMP 25 éve*, pp.35-50, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1982; Iván Pető "1956 és a gazdaság" in András B. Hegedűs & Péter Baló (eds.) *1956-ról a Rendszerváltás Küszöbén*, pp. 89-102, Széchenyi István Szakkollégium-1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1996

41 - MOL M-KS-276f.94/891ö.e., pp.179-82; on the climate of general rebellion in the Duclós Mining Machine Factory during the summer months see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/149ö.e., p.216; on the response of the party see MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/149ö.e., pp.7-8

has not been uncommon that workers didn't want to criticise, or to make suggestions because they were scared of the management". In late July 1956 the payment of large plan fulfilment premiums to management for performance during the third quarter at Lovászi when wages remained low led to generalised worker discontent. Whilst the majority of workers' complaints concerned the poor level of wages and social provision, the focus of the attack used the vocabulary of the intellectual opposition to attack management. Károly Papp, the director of the plant was directly attacked for promoting a "cult of personality" around himself. Of the signs of management behaviour which was said to be especially offensive to workers was that Papp had lavishly celebrated his birthday using factory property to do so ⁴².

Workers were already beginning to demand greater democracy in the factories. One fitter in the Duclós Mining Machinery Factory stated in August that "it is useless complaining to the party and factory committee because they can't do anything. What happens here is basically what the director says", and behind this were more widespread demands across the factory "to give the trade union a greater role". In September the factory press was beginning to publish similar complaints. One former trade unionist wrote in the paper of the Danube Shoe Factory that "in the period following the liberation old, committed trade unionists were promoted to become managers. We should say clearly that later these comrades became detached from the workers, they became one sided and didn't speak up sufficiently for the interests of the workers new people filled the trade and the beginnings of the co-option, not the elections of the (new) leaders

42 - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/147ö.e., p.16; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.61f.1/42ö.e.; *Lovászi üzem helyzetéről feljegyzések és tájékoztató*, pp.1-2; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.61f.1/42ö.e.; *Nagyaktíva ülésen készült feljegyzések*, p.1

(of the unions) began the union leaders regarded anyone who stood up for their interests as the enemy, and dealt with them in this manner" 43.

Yet as the mood for change in the factories was gathering pace the regime politically was continuing to collapse. The growing thaw in relations with Yugoslavia, the re-burial of László Rajk on the 6th October, the retention of power by Gerő, discredited by his Stalinist past, and the lack of any clear leadership from the regime was pushing the situation to crisis point. When the Revolution began on the 23rd October with the demonstration organised by students of the Technical University in Budapest, and the violent clashes between the more radical of the demonstrators and the authorities, industrial workers were to play more radical roles than they had done beforehand.

Revolution in the Factories, October 1956-January 1957

As the afternoon shift began in the United Electrics Factory on the 23rd October young workers coming onto their shift brought copies of the sixteen points agreed by the Technical University students in the city centre. They began to circulate the copies as work began creating considerable excitement and disruption on the shop floor. As the demonstrations in the capital turned into revolution in the evening factory security were attacked by demonstrators from the city centre demanding weapons. Around two-thirds of the workforce arrived for work for the morning shift on the 24th in spite of the lack of public transport. In the middle of the morning the tool workshop and the vacuum products plant stopped work to organise mass meetings to discuss the events of the night in the capital, ending their meetings with a call for a mass meeting of the full factory workforce in the

43 - MOL M-Bp.-176f.2/149ö.e., p.4; *Futószalag*, 22nd September 1956

House of Culture. The factory party organisation attempted to circulate a pamphlet calling on the workers to condemn "counter-revolutionary activity" and to make up the lost working time. They had, however, completely misjudged the mood of the workers. At the mass meeting there was a marked anti-Communist mood with factory workers deciding to dismantle the red star on the factory gate and issuing a militant statement demanding the removal of Gerő from the party leadership, a complete amnesty for members of the armed groups, the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the implementation of the students' demands 44.

The uprising in the factories had started before the beginning of the Revolution on the streets in Újpest. The factory party organisation began to take measures to stem the tide of protest from the shop floor. A new workers' guard (*munkásőrség*) was founded, a body that was exclusively composed of party members. The second measure was the foundation of a worker's council, an independent organ that would manage the factory that the party leadership hoped it would be able to control. This measure backfired when only a small minority of Communists were elected to the worker's council; its membership was made up of the most respected of the skilled workers together with some of the engineers and foremen 45. Furthermore fighting broke out on the streets of the district that evening and as the Revolution gathered pace worker opinion in the factory and in other plants across the district became more radical. On the following day representatives of the local armed groups arrived to organise workers'

44 - MOL M-Bp.-9f.1957/Asz/15ö.e., p.102; PIL 290f.1ö.e., p.197; Lajos Izsák, József Szabó & Róbert Szabó (eds.) 1956. *Plakátjai és röplapjai. Október 22.- November 5.*, p.62, Zrínyi Kiadó, Budapest, 1991

45 - On the formation of the United Electric's Worker's Council see MOL M-Bp.-9f.1957/Asz/15ö.e., p.102; János Kenedi (ed.) *A forradalom hangja: Magyarországi rádióadások 1956. október 23 - november 9.*, p.82, Századvég Kiadó - Nyilvánosság Klub, Budapest, 1989; Kemény & Lomax (eds.) *Magyar Munkástanácsok 1956-ban*, pp.15-6; Lomax (ed.) *Worker's Councils in 1956*, p.9

councils in the factories and to urge the workers to go on indefinite strike. This revolt spread and over the next three days workers' councils were set up in a further nine factories across Újpest ⁴⁶.

Over the course of the following forty-eight hours the United Electrics Worker's Council, the first in the country, sought to re-make the institutions of the factory and to transform its management. The factory's managing director and one production director were removed, the managing director was replaced with the president of the worker's council that announced that it saw itself as provisional, existing only until full elections could be held. It abolished the Personnel Department which under Rákosi had been used as the representative of both the party and the secret police within the management of the factory. It further announced that the strike would be maintained and full wages would be paid, whilst low paid workers would be given a 15% wage rise and other workers 10%. It began the process moreover of more fundamental reforms to factory administration, beginning administrative de-centralisation and the elimination of bureaucracy, an overhaul of the payment-by-results wage system in the factory, and called for the establishment of a 71 member general workers' council and for the creation of shop worker's councils under it. The skilled worker majority whose thinking dominated the changes instituted by the workers' councils made their philosophy and distrust of centralisation clear at a meeting of all the councils in Újpest on 29th October; "the mistakes of recent years show that we have to build from below, we have to solve problems using our own strength" ⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ - MOL M-Bp.-9f.1957/Asz/15ö.e., p.102

⁴⁷ - For the deeds of the worker's council in its first three days of operation see Dobricia Cosic *7 nap Budapesten 1956. október 23-30*, pp. 80-2, Bethlen Gábor Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1989; for an English version see Lomax (ed.) *Worker's Councils in 1956*, pp.15-7; on the comments of Sándor M. Kiss of the United Electrics' Worker's Council quoted above see Varga *Az elhagyott tömeg*, p.207

The politics of the foundation of the United Electric Workers' Council were to be replicated across the country during the last week of October. On the 25th October the Stalinist Gerő was deposed as secretary of the party and replaced with the more reformist János Kádár. The discussion within the new reformist party leadership revealed a minority of radicals who favoured accommodation with the demands of the demonstrators, and a majority who seriously overestimated the degree of support for the party. This grouping argued that the armed groups represented "counter-revolutionaries" who should be suppressed with the use of force, whilst the situation was made more dangerous by the passivity of the "working class" disillusioned with their treatment under Rákosi. The party, argued this majority needed to "turn to the working class" and to show that it had corrected the mistakes made under the previous regime. One of the "mistakes" that had been most widely perceived among party and trade union leaderships had been the elimination of independent organs of democracy in the factories in 1948 and the imposition of greater bureaucratic control. Thus the party leadership sought to set up Workers' Councils as a means of reviving the party's perceived base among the "working class" that it could use as a hedge against what it saw as the "counter-revolutionary" armed groups. On the following day both the party and the unions were not merely to endorse but call on factories to set up workers' councils ⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ - For the politics of the party leadership in the final week of October 1956 see Zoltán Ripp "A pártvezetés végnapjai" in Julianna Horváth & Zoltán Ripp (eds.) *Ötvenhat októbere és a hatalom: A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja vezető testületeinek dokumentumai 1956 október 24 - október 28*, pp.219-57, Napvilág Kiadó, Budapest, 1997; this strategy would become clear in the leadership's discussion on the following day see "Gyorsírói Feljegyzés az MDP Központi Vezetőségének Üléséről, 1956. október 26" in Horváth & Ripp (eds.) *Ötvenhat októbere és a hatalom*, pp.67-81; on the perception in 1956 that it had been a mistake to dismantle the factory committees in 1956 see György Marosán *A Tanúk Meg Éinek*, pp.144-5, Hírlapkiadó Vállalat, Budapest, 1989; Sándor Gáspár secretary of the National Council of Trade Unions admitted how the memory of the factory committees, not the Yugoslav example, shaped the official proposals for workers' councils in 1956, see OHA 220, p.342; this point about party strategy in relation to the Workers' Councils is also made by Varga *Az elhagyott tömeg*, p.202; for the call of the party leadership see *Szabad Nép*,

The biggest problem of the leadership of the party was that it had no support or credibility left among the industrial workforce. Workers' Councils were established across the country in spite of the regime and largely in response to its accelerating collapse. In some places the Workers' Councils formed a central part of the uprising along with the armed groups and local revolutionary organs. This was clearly the case with the Sztálin, to be renamed the Danube Steel Works. Whilst the plant worked normally on the 24th October on the next day work stopped as the first demonstration in the town was organised, this was, in the words of one former Workers' Council member "not an official strike, we just didn't know what we wanted". As production was stopped the question of how factory equipment would be maintained was raised, one worker remembered that "in the Martin they wanted to shut down the furnaces completely but we didn't allow that. The R.G. the plant manager said look guys, its all the same whether Hegedüs or Imre Nagy is Prime Minister, we have to look after the equipment because our bread comes from it. It was then that we set up the Workers' Council". As the Revolution gathered pace a full Workers' Council was established. Although it had the long term goal in the words of one of its officials of creating "control of the workers over the whole enterprise" and that a "kind of limited public company (*részvénytársaság*) model" was worked out for the enterprise as well as a "model for the internal organisation of the new enterprise, the rights of employer and employees and a new social benefits system" in the short term it dealt exclusively with the political. Indeed apart from handling the resignation of the managing director of the enterprise its main activities were ensuring "that the strike was not broken and that the workers got their money". Up to the Soviet intervention Workers' Council meetings seem to have to dealt with the issue of supporting the local

27th October 1956; Kenedi (ed.) *A forradalom hangja*, pp.87-8; for the call of the National Council of Trade Unions see *Népszava*, 26th October 1956; Kemény & Lomax (ed.) *Magyar munkástanácsok 1956-ban*, pp.16-7; Kenedi (ed.) *A forradalom hangja*, pp.86-7

revolutionary organs' political decision rather than re-structuring production
49.

Across the Zala oil fields the new revolutionary Workers' Councils were also less concerned with restructuring production than supporting the political goals of the Revolution. Indeed they adopted radical positions in support of these goals, organising the National Guard within their plants, restricting the output of oil in order to support the national strike and dismissing unpopular members of the factory management. It was indicative of the radical mood of the oil fields that when state radio issued a call to oil workers to return to work and re-start production on the 27th October, the Workers' Council at Bázakerettye issued a reply through Győr Free Radio stating that they would supply Budapest with gas unconditionally, but would not produce oil until Soviet troops had fully withdrawn from the country ⁵⁰.

At the end of October the party and state seemed to concede to the demands of the revolutionary movement in the country. The MDP was dissolved and the party was re-founded as the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP), a multi-party system was declared, the parties from the popular front period were refounded and a withdrawal of Soviet troops

⁴⁹ - For the recollections of Workers' Council activists see *Dunaújvárosi Hírlap*, 7th November 1989; for the only surviving minutes of the Dunai Vasmű Workers' Council that this author is aware of see FML MSZMP FMBA ir.19f.1956/4ö.e.; *Jegyzőkönyv készült 1956.október 30-án a Dunai Vasmű Munkástanács ülésén*

⁵⁰ - Lajos Srágli "Munkások a forradalomban: A zalai olajipar 1956-ban" in Erzsébet Csomor & Imre Kapiller (eds.) *'56 Zalában. A forradalom eseményeinek Zala megyei dokumentumai 1956-1958*, p.32, Zalai Gyűjtemény 40, Zalai Megyei Levéltár, Zalaegerszeg, 1996; on the deeds of the various Workers' Councils at the drilling plants see ZML. XXXII.15/1956-os Gy./M.B.ir.; *A Budafai Kőolajtermelő Vállalat Munkástanácsának jegyzőkönyve, 1956. október 29.*; ZML. XXXII.15/1956-os Gy./M.B.ir.; *A Nagylengyeli Kőolajtermelő Vállalat Munkástanácsa Igazgatósági Tanácsának határozatai, 1956.X.29.*; for the call of state radio to the Zala oil workers see Kenedi (ed.) *A forradalom hangja*, p.112; ZML. XXXII.15/1956-os Gy./M.B.ir.; *A Budafai Kőolajtermelő Vállalat Munkástanácsának levele a győri Szabadság Rádióknak*

began. Though there was bloodshed as the result of a battle for the headquarters of the Budapest party, reform continued as the remaining political prisoners were released, and on the 1st November Imre Nagy announced Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact ⁵¹. The Soviet troops, however, were not withdrawing as promised but were re-grouping gaining a hold over airfields and other strategically important points. Furthermore János Kádár secretly flew to Moscow to bargain with the Soviet leadership over the establishment of a renewed socialist regime to be restored by force. In the early hours of 4th November Soviet troops attacked Budapest in order to install Kádár at the head of a Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Government. Imre Nagy and his associates escaped from parliament and took refuge in the Yugoslav embassy and Kádár was able to return to Budapest as Prime Minister on the 7th November ⁵².

Resistance on the streets did continue though was effectively smashed within days of the Soviet intervention. The armed guerrilla groups in the capital continued to resist before they were overwhelmed by superior Soviet firepower on the 8th November. On the industrial stronghold of Csepel armed resistance lasted for a further three days, falling to the

⁵¹ - The best overview of these events in English is György Litván (ed.) *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Reform, Revolt and Repression 1953-1963*, pp.75-81, Longman, London and New York, 1996; in Hungarian see András B. Hegedűs (ed.) *1956 Kézikönyve. Első kötet, Kronológia*, pp.151-99, 1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1996; for the disillusion of the MDP and the foundation of the MSZMP see Ripp "A pártvezetés végnapjai"; György Litván "A Nagy Imre-féle MSZMP" in Zsuzsanna Körösi & Pál Péter Tóth (eds.) *Pártok 1956. Válogatás 1956-os pártvezetők visszaemlékezéseiből*, pp. 265-8, 1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1997; on the creation of the multi-party system and the refounded political parties see Körösi & Tóth (eds.) *Pártok 1956*; for an orthodox Kádár-era account of the battle for Budapest party headquarters see Hollós & Lajtai *Köztársaság tér 1956*

⁵² - Once again the best English language source is Litván et al. *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956*, pp.80-1 & pp. pp.104-7; for the Soviet documents relating to the intervention see Vjacseszlav Szereda & Alekszandr Sztikalin (eds.) *Hiányzó Lapok 1956 történetéből. Dokumentumok a volt SZKP KB Levéltárából*, pp. 127-39, Móra Ferenc Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1993; Éva Gál et al. (eds.) *A "Jelcin-Dosszié". Szovjet Dokumentumok 1956-ról*, pp. 64-103, Századvég Kiadó-1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1993

Soviets on the 11th November. This brought to an end the violent uprising in the streets. It is very difficult to estimate the total casualties of the street fighting; official statistics that almost certainly underestimate the number of casualties give a picture. They show that in Budapest some 16,700 were injured and 2,502 were killed. Of those killed the majority were under thirty and were industrial workers. In the provinces resistance was more sporadic; in Tatabánya news of the Soviet intervention was greeted with anger, though many believed that armed resistance would be futile and the revolutionary bodies resisted calls to arm angry youths with petrol bombs to stop the advance into the town. In Sztálinváros-Dunapentele this was not the case; as news of the Soviet intervention spread according to the party secretary in the town "at least 80% of the male residents" prepared to fight Soviet tanks with petrol bombs. Aware of the preparations being made, the Soviets held back until the 7th November attacking the town initially by air and then by land. In the ensuing battle eight were killed and thirty-five wounded before the town was overrun ⁵³.

In the factories the immediate reaction to the news of the Soviet intervention was one of furious shock. The result was an immediate and solid strike against the new government and its Soviet patrons, in the capital this strike remained solid for up to a week. In the United Electrics Factory workers were not allowed into the factory until the 12th November and even then due to reduced electricity supplies work was unable to start.

⁵³ - On the resistance to the Soviet invasion see Litván et al. *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956*, pp.101-4; Lomax *Hungary 1956*, pp.147-9; on groups in the IX District see László Eörsi *Ferencváros 1956: A kerület fegyveres csoportjai*, pp.104-16, 1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1997; László Eörsi *A Tűzoltó Utcai Fegyveres Csoport a Forradalomban*, pp.60-75, Századvég Kiadó-1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1993; for the events in Csepel see Drucker "A felszabadult Csepel", pp.476-7; on the casualties see András B. Hegedűs et al. (ed.) *1956 Kézikönyve. Megtorlás és Emlékezés*, pp. 303-5, 1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1996; on Tatabánya see László Gyüszli *Tatabánya 1956-ban*, p.48, Kultsár István Társadalomtudományi és Kiadói Alapítvány, Tatabánya, 1994; for Sztálinváros see FML MSZMP-FMBA ir.22f.1957/4/a ö.e.; *Október 23-tól November 7-ig*, p.41; Hegedűs (ed.) *1956 Kézikönyve. Kronológia*, p.226

Throughout the week following the 4th November there was reported to be "a mood behind the strike" in the district. Újpest was to take centre stage in the opposition, as its National Committee renamed itself the Újpest Revolutionary Workers' Council. This committee in its first week of operation was less than effective, indeed according to one young oppositional writer "in the town hall both the Stalinist town council and the revolutionary workers' council were operating occupying separate rooms. And when I arrived they were having a joint meeting. This was typical: they kept on arguing with the Stalinists, and I thought, what's the point?". The catalyst was to come from the writer's union who were to send Miklós Krassó with two other students to meet with the Újpest Revolutionary Workers' Council. At this meeting Krassó successfully persuaded the committee to issue a call for a meeting the next day to set up a Central Workers' Council to negotiate with the government. The plan would build on attempts already made by Workers' Councils in individual districts to co-ordinate their efforts ⁵⁴.

In response to the move the Kádár government and its Soviet allies adopted a two track strategy. It issued a decree allowing the workers to elect legal Workers' Councils within three weeks of returning to work. On the other hand they attempted to prevent the Újpest meeting taking place. Soviet tanks surrounded the town hall and several members of the Újpest Revolutionary Workers' Council were arrested. The meeting was postponed and held the next day under the auspices of the United Electric Workers' Council, which finally established the Budapest Central Workers' Council. At

⁵⁴ - For the initial strike in Újpest see MOL M-Bp.-9f.1957/Asz/15ö.e., p.104; Hollós *Kik voltak, mit akarták?*, p.121; Miklós Krassó "Hungary 1956: An Interview" reprinted in Lomax (ed.) *Eye-witness in Hungary*, p.162; on the role of the Writers' Union see Éva Ständeiszky *Az Írók és a Hatalom, 1956-1963*, pp.121-4, 1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1996; for Krassó's trip to Újpest see Krassó "Hungary 1956: An Interview", p.162; on the attempts of Workers' Councils to co-ordinate their efforts prior to 12th November see Molnár *A Nagybudapesti Központi Munkástanács*, p.53 and Varga *Az elhagyott tömeg*, pp.211-2; for the call of the Újpest Revolutionary Workers' Council see Kemény & Lomax (eds.) *Magyar munkástanácsok 1956-ban*, p.61

the meeting there was substantial discussion of strategy at which Writers' Union representatives called for a political compromise with the regime that was based upon the idea's of the minister from the Nagy government, István Bibó. The workers' representatives were much more militant, and it was only one of them, Sándor Báli from the Workers' Council of the Standard factory who gave the new body a clear strategy; to refrain from recognising the Kádár government but to negotiate with it. The body, largely dominated by skilled workers, was to negotiate with the government and to call for the introduction of a mutli-party system, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary and greater democracy in the Hungarian workplace. Relations between the Workers' Council and the state were tense and by the beginning of December agreement seemed to be highly unlikely ⁵⁵.

It was becoming obvious by early December that no agreement between the revolutionary organs and the restored government would be possible. Furthermore the Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council was giving clear political leadership to what remained of the organised opposition to the Kádár regime in the country, which could be largely found in the Workers' Councils. Even more troubling for the regime were the growing contacts between the organs in the capital and the provinces and the plans to establish a National Workers' Council, a step that would have clearly represented a direct threat to the regime. Taking these factors into

⁵⁵ - *Népszabadság*, 14th November 1956, reprinted in Kemény & Lomax (eds.) *Magyar munkástanácsok 1956-ban*, p.63; on the setting up of the Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council the best accounts are Lomax *Hungary 1956*, pp.151-2; Varga *Az elhagyott tömeg*, pp. 211-6; for a Kádár era account which is more a condemnation than anything else see Molnár *A Nagybudapesti Központi Munkástanács*, pp.53-9; for the role of intellectuals in the meetings see Standeiszky *Az Irók és a Hatalom*, pp.124-7; Krassó "Hungary 1956: An Interview", p.163; for important personal accounts see that of Balázs Nagy "Budapest 1956: The Central Workers' Council" in Lomax (ed.) *Eyewitness in Hungary*, pp.165-81; and those of Miklós Sebestyén, Ferenc Tőke and Sándor Rác reprinted in Kemény & Lomax (eds.) *Magyar munkástanácsok 1956-ban*, pp.160-7, pp.167-89 & pp.217-39; for documents on negotiations with the government see Kemény & Lomax (eds.) *Magyar munkástanácsok 1956-ban*, pp.64-95; for the situation at the end of November see MOL M-Bp.-1f.1957/29ö.e., pp.24-6

consideration Kádár was to shift from a policy of negotiation to one of repression. On 5th December some two hundred activists in the workers' council movement and the former intellectual opposition were arrested. This and the active prevention of plans to call a meeting to found a National Workers' Council and growing government intransigence led to a serious stand-off between the Budapest Central Workers' Council and the state. The Council called for a two day general strike on the 11th and 12th December and was immediately outlawed. Its members were gradually arrested over the next few days and by the morning of the 11th with the arrest of the two leaders of the council, Sándor Rácz and Sándor Báli, the government succeeded in effectively eliminating its most dangerous adversary ⁵⁶.

Following the removal of the Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council state policy moved to one of explicit repression. In Tatabánya the week prior to the events in Budapest had been tense. Conflict had arisen between the Workers' Council and the local authorities over the security forces which workers demanded by disbanded. A strike began on 6th December that later turned against the will of the Workers' Council into a demonstration that was broken up by both the local security forces and Soviet troops; there were no deaths but eighteen were wounded. The arrests of several key members of the Workers' Council followed in reprisal, but the outcry in the town forced the authorities to free most of them within a week. The result of the arrests was the organisation of several small armed groups, the most significant of which was a guard for the mineworkers housing on the so-called sixth site that was assembled by the residents to prevent the security forces or the Soviet entering the site. The result of this

⁵⁶ - For the final elimination of the Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council see Lomax *Hungary 1956*, pp.165-9; Litván et al. *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956*, pp.112-4; Hegedűs (ed.) *1956 Kézikönyve. Kronológia*, pp.264-81; for the various policy statements of the Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council see MOL M-Bp.-1f.1957/29ö.e., pp.24-85

organisation was a second wave of mass arrests. By the time the Greater Budapest Workers' Council was disbanded the resistance of the local Workers' Council was practically over; it chose not to heed the call to strike for forty-eight hours on 11th December so fearful was it of the consequences, even though much of the workforce did. Waves of arrests of Workers' Council members continued throughout December⁵⁷. On the 13th December the government banned strikes and demonstrations, a position that was to be strengthened in January 1957 when the government decreed that striking or incitement to strike be made a capital offence⁵⁸.

Before the arrests of Báli and Rácz it was becoming increasingly clear that industrial workers were progressively less willing to support strike action, in part because they came to see the eventual victory of Kádár as inevitable and in part because of the greater use of state repression against open political discontent. A report for the Budapest party committee expressed this clearly; "in the first half of November at a decision of the Workers' Council without any sign of resistance the factories would stop" yet "by the second half of November they (the Workers' Councils) tried to find better justifications for work stoppages: wage demands, solidarity, strike" yet even at this stage "the desire to work was growing". Despite general fury at the Soviet intervention the initial general strike was never as universal as has often been claimed. Although in the capital Workers' Councils effectively maintained the strike for the first week following the Soviet

⁵⁷ - For the tense week in Tatabánya see Gyüszti *Tatabánya*, pp. 58-66; see the documents in Erzsébet Kajári (ed.) *Rendőrségi Napi Jelentések. Belügyi Iratok 1*, pp.383-4, 415, 432, 467, 478-9, 505, Belügyminisztérium-1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1996; for the disquiet relating to the round of arrests see MOL M-KS-288f.25/1957/7ö.e., p.135

⁵⁸ - FML MSZMP FMBA ir.19f.1957/14ö.e.; B.M. *Fejérmegyei Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó Főosztálya Feljegyzés*, p.2; on the arrests themselves in Fejér county see MOL M-KS-288f.25/1957/7ö.e., p.75; for the use of detention as a deliberate policy instrument in the textile industry against the Workers' Councils see MOL M-KS-288f.25/1957/8ö.e., p.152; on the evermore draconian legislation against strike activity see Lomax *Hungary 1956*, pp.168-9

invasion this was not the case in the provinces, especially in areas where the restored regime was able to consolidate its power quickly. In Szolnok county within several days it was reported that work was beginning; in the Szolnok Paper Factory it was reported that 85% of the workforce were at work, although in many factories production was hindered by raw material shortages caused by strikes elsewhere. By the 13th November, however, daily police reports revealed a steady, if uneven, drift back to work across the country, whilst in the capital a majority were reported to be back at work on the 20th ⁵⁹.

The first major test of industrial workers' loyalty to the Workers' Councils came with the prevention by the state of the meeting to set up a National Workers' Council on the 21st November, as a result of this a forty-eight hour protest strike was called which was supported by all the Workers' Councils except the Csepel one. On the 22nd November all the Újpest factories were not working, however, at the United Electrics, inspite of the strike call around 3,000 of the 6,500 strong workforce turned up to work during the day only to find themselves locked out by the Workers' Council. Outside the capital there were signs that the workforce was more divided about the wisdom of striking than it had been in the second week of November; reports on the 23rd November suggested that in Fejér county 70% of the workforce reported for work but were not allowed into their factories by the Workers' Councils. In Tatabánya around 20% of the workers reported for work during the strike ⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ - For these judgements see MOL M-Bp.-1f.1957/42ö.e., p.121; Kajári (ed.) *Rendőrségi Napi Jelentések*, p.42; *ibid.*, pp.53-61; MOL M-Bp.-1f.1957/42ö.e., p.122

⁶⁰ - MOL M-Bp.-1f.1956-7/41ö.e., p.110; Kajári (ed.) *Rendőrségi Napi Jelentések*, pp. 164-77

The last major test was in the forty-eight hour strike that began on the morning of the 11th December. In Újpest in most of the factories no work was done, in the Magyar Pamutipar cotton factory, however, work began as normal on the morning shift and only when the news of the arrests of the leaders of the Greater Budapest Central Workers' Council arrived did workers walk out. In spite of this though perhaps because of police intimidation, on the 13th the Workers' Council in the plant vowed that it would re-start production and take greater care over the maintenance of work discipline. By this point, however, it was not merely a recognition of the defeat of the Revolution or growing fear of police retribution that was deterring workers from resorting to the strike weapon, but the growing fear of unemployment given the crisis ridden state of the economy and the lack of strike pay. By this point the strike call in the provinces was far from being universally observed. Though strikes would continue into January 1957 for all practical purposes the revolution in the factories was over ⁶¹.

Protest and Consolidation, 1957-1958

In early 1957 the Central Statistical Office put together an estimate of the damage done to the capital as a result of the 1956 Revolution. It found that 5,264 buildings had been damaged whilst 2,753 flats had either been destroyed or rendered uninhabitable by the fighting. The damage extended to the public transport system with the destruction of 136 trams, 10 trolleybuses and 15 buses, whilst in December 1956 total industrial production in the city stood at only 29.2% of its December 1955 level ⁶².

⁶¹ - MOL M-Bp.-1f.1956-7/41ö.e., p.160; MOL M-Bp.-1f.1956-7/41ö.e., p.170; on the fear of unemployment in the factories see MOL M-Bp.-1f.1956-7/41ö.e., p.23; for the situation in provincial Hungary see Kajári (ed.) *Rendőrségi Napi Jelentések*, pp.476-511

⁶² - MOL M-KS-288f.23/1957/34ö.e., p.3

Alongside the physical damage was the psychological damage to the population; industrial workers had found the defeat of their Revolution by the tanks of a foreign power assisting a small number of their leaders to be an extremely traumatic experience. It was one which was to have profound effects on worker faith in collective protest as well as having profound implications for the consolidation of the Kádár regime.

Despite the defeat of the revolutionary movement, the traditions of the revolution left their mark on hidden forms of protest in the factories over the following two years. In Újpest there was considerable evidence of concealed anti-regime agitation throughout 1957. During the early part of the year anti-regime leaflets were still being circulated throughout United Electrics. One leaflet stated that "Kádár still keeps the Rákosite Antal Apró, out with the swindler Márosan, bring Imre Nagy into the government, out with the Soviet Army, declare Hungarian neutrality, why is the Kádár government scared of arming the peasants and workers ? Perhaps they are fascists". On the national holiday of 15th March anti-government and pro-revolutionary leaflets were said to be circulating in the Danube Steel Works. The first anniversary of the outbreak of the Revolution was marked by individual acts of protests across the country, this was also the case on the shop floor in Újpest. As the first anniversary approached rumours like "they are striking in Csepel" and "in Újpest there were demonstrations" were widespread. On the whole the 23rd October was a quiet day and was marked merely by several individual acts of protest among workers. In the United Electrics some of the workers engaged in a deliberate act of sabotage to commemorate the Revolution by destroying the electrical box that supplied power to light the red star on the front of the building, thus ensuring that during the week following the 23rd October it did not light up

63.

The suppression of the Revolution increased support among industrial workers for conservative positions and traditional pre-socialist institutions, whilst leading them to believe that the socialist regime had achieved a degree of permanence and could not be successfully resisted. This combination of attitudes could be seen in 1958 on one of the large "working class" estates built at the turn of the century in the suburbs of the capital. In one flat it was reported the walls were decorated with pictures of saints and with crucifixes. The flat was inhabited by one extended worker family; there the grandmother stated that she was the owner and said that they had nothing to do with the children. Indeed the family stated that they considered religious education as a burden to the career or work advancement of the children and for that reason separated them from it. The grandmother stated that she felt that "religion was only for the elderly, and in such cases it could be forgiven (by the state)" ⁶⁴.

One of the concrete manifestations of this was the growth of popular religious observance following the suppression of the Revolution. In the capital in 1957 the population was considerably more assertive about its perceived right to celebrate Christmas than it had been in previous years. In spite of popular requests the government denied workers four days holiday over the Christmas period causing a good deal of resentment, in many Újpest factories many workers simply remained at home on both the 23rd and 24th December. For midnight mass and for the Christmas day

⁶³ - For the contents of the leaflet see MOL M-Bp.-1f.1957/43ö.e., pp.16-7; on propaganda in the Dunai Vasmű see FML MSZMP FMBA ir.9f.1957/14ö.e.; *B.M. Fejérmegyei Rendőrfőkapitányság Politikai Nyomozó osztálya*, p.2; on the commemoration of the first anniversary of the Revolution across the country see the documents in János Kenedi (ed.) *Kis Állambiztonsági Olvasókönyv: október 23.-március 15.-június 16. a Kádár-korszakban. Első kötet*, pp.9-68, Magvető, Budapest, 1996; on rumours prior to 23rd October 1957 see MOL M-Bp.-1f.1957/45ö.e., p.243; on the general picture see MOL M-Bp.-1f.1957/45ö.e., pp.264-8; MOL M-Bp.-1f.1957/46ö.e., p.46

⁶⁴ - MOL M-Bp.-1f.1958/134ö.e., p.290

services the churches in many "working class" districts of the capital were reported to be full, according to one party official "there hasn't been such attendance (at church) for years". In contrast to the pre-Revolution years when church congregations in the capital had been made up of elderly women, during Christmas 1957 in one industrial district 25 to 30% of the congregations were aged between 18 and 20. In another similar district some 60% of those attending the Christmas morning service were male manual workers. During 1958 it was noticed that a significant minority of manual workers in one district spent ten minutes in their local church before and after work each day. Furthermore in schools in the same districts some the parents of 38% of children from worker households opted for religious education. In Zala, a county which in general was much more conservative than the capital, a similar situation existed, indeed "the worker-peasants (in the oil and clothing factories) are under the influence of religion and that influence has increased since the counter-revolution. The majority of the girls in the clothing factory attend church" reported the party committee in 1957 ⁶⁵.

The growth of popular conservatism was often combined with a retreat from the public realm entirely. Alienation from official political activity could be seen among younger workers who tended to develop more individualistic and exclusively material aspirations. One young female commuter who worked in the Zalaegerszeg Clothing Factory illustrated the attitudes of this group. She was described as "exhibiting passivity" as far as political questions were concerned, and refused to participate in any political organisation established in the factory, and her sole ambition was reported

⁶⁵ - On church attendance during Christmas 1957 in Budapest see MOL M-Bp.-1f.1958/41ö.e., pp.38-9; MOL M-Bp.-1f.1958/134ö.e., p.372; for the situation in Zala see ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.1f.1957/24ö.e.; *Néhány megjegyzés a Jelentés az ateista és antiklerikális propaganda helyzetéről és a Tézisnek a vallással kapcsolatos tömegnevelő munka című anyagokhoz*, p.1

to be wanting to become a skilled worker. These attitudes fed through to the newer skilled workers; another party brigade that spoke to three newly trained skilled workers in 1958 found them uninterested and uninformed about politics at all. In many cases interest in things material was strong. After a National Lottery was introduced in 1957, one worker who won in 1958 bought a television causing a sensation on the housing estate where his family lived. Furthermore one other symptom of withdrawal from the public realm after 1956 that was particularly pronounced among male workers was the increase in the already high number of alcoholics and in alcohol related domestic violence as a consequence ⁶⁶.

It was through encouraging consumerism and increasing living standards that the Kádár regime sought to appeal to the industrial workers, rather than attempting to revive any commitment they might have had in the past to socialist ideals as such. In this regard almost immediately after Kádár government came to power it radically abandoned Stalinist economic policy. The economic programme of the government explicitly criticised the policies of the Rákosi and Gerő era's stating that "the basic mistake of our economic policy over recent years, and for this reason the Second Economic Plan was also a mistake, was that the goal of the plan was not to improve the living and working conditions of the workers, but its basic goal was to expand the productive capacity of the economy through industrialisation". A continuous rise in workers' real incomes was placed at the centre of economic policy, and furthermore it placed several labour market and social policy goals at the heart of its programme. In addition to increasing wages it sought increases in family allowances (*családi potlék*) to

66. ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.1f.1958/12 ö.e.; *A tapasztalatok összefoglalása*, p.12; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.1f.1958/12 ö.e.; *Feljegyzés a Zalaegerszegi Ruhagyár pártszervezetének agitáció munkájáról*, pp.5-6; MOL M-Bp.-1f.1958/134ö.e., p.294; MOL M-Bp.-1f.1958/134ö.e., p.29

help large families, it promoted the creation of a minimum wage in industry, and increases in pensions. Alongside the increases in cash incomes it sought to boost the social wage that had been largely neglected in the Rákosi years, through a major flat building programme, improvements in the provision of public transport, major investment in public health services and greater cultural provision for youth ⁶⁷.

As a result of this immediate shift in policy priorities real incomes increased substantially in the years following the suppression of the Revolution. These increases, especially in the incomes of industrial workers, were fundamental to the political consolidation of the Kádár regime. By the end of 1957 as a result of planned wage increases, the abolition of peace loans and the removal of the childless persons tax the average income of a working family in Budapest was 18% higher than it had been a year previously ⁶⁸. In 1958 in Újpest it was reported that there was much greater satisfaction with wage rates than there had been several years earlier though workers still complained about the problems of stoppages in production due to raw materials shortage and isolated complaints were experienced relating to "the lack of social esteem for skilled workers". The last complaint reflected the fact that not everything had been solved on the wages front, yet this feeling was not peculiar to Újpest. In the Zalaegerszeg Clothing Factory Kádár's policies had a similar effect; in 1952 the average wage of workers in the factory stood at 703 Forints per month, which was extremely low and well below the industrial average, by 1957 the average wage level had risen to 1,147 Forints per month. The problems of the wage system for the workers on the production line changed little. Though the

⁶⁷ - For the comment on the mistakes of the past see MOL M-KS-288f.23/1957/29ö.e., p.35; for these aims and objectives themselves see MOL M-KS-288f.23/1957/29ö.e., pp.36-7

⁶⁸ - MOL M-KS-288f.23/1957/34ö.e., p.34

intensity of work was reduced, and the situation with raw material provision improved, as wages were raised many of the problems of the wage systems remained. In 1958 skilled workers complained that as a result of the wage system many unskilled and semi-skilled workers were able to earn more. The visible improvements in living standards had led to the development of a degree of trust between the government and industrial workers by the time Kádár handed over the Premiership to Ferenc Münnich to concentrate on the party secretary's position in January 1958 ⁶⁹.

It would be a mistake to overestimate this degree of trust, however. It certainly was not complete trust, nor could it be said that Kádár was popular among industrial workers. Indeed the memory of the 1956 Revolution among industrial workers was never far below the surface in 1958. Many workers attributed their improved financial situation as due in a large part to the 1956 Revolution; in one textile factory it was reported that workers believed the events of 1956 had "certainly improved the situation". Workers, furthermore, remained to some extent distrustful and were uncertain as to what extent the increases in living standards were a kind of temporary phase before the wage increases were withdrawn and the state reverted to Stalinism. In Újpest it was reported that "the influence of old, bad experiences still has a big impact on people, fluctuations in earnings, even the slightest falls in wages that are pretty frequent cause disquiet, discontent and distrust among the workers" ⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ - MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/20ö.e., pp.252-3; MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/23 ö.e., p.502; ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.1f.1958/12 ö.e.; *Feljegyzés a Zalaegerszegi Ruhagyár pártszervezetének agitációs munkájáról*, pp.25-6; this degree of trust can be clearly discerned from the reports relating to the climate of opinion at the time of the change in the composition of the government see MOL M-Bp.-1f.1958/42ö.e., pp.49-52

⁷⁰ - MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/22ö.e., p.241; MOL M-KS-288f.21/1958/20ö.e., p.250

The dominant attitude towards the Kádár regime among industrial workers by the Summer of 1958 could best be characterised as one of "conditional tolerance" rather than one of support. In short the workers were prepared to tolerate the Kádár regime provided it provided for gradual improvements in the standard of living. Behind this attitude lay an acceptance of the defeat of the political goals of the Revolution, an unwilling recognition of the reality of Soviet hegemony in the region combined with a considerable fear of a return to Stalinist policies ⁷¹. In many senses it was this attitude of "conditional tolerance" a combination of an awareness of the limited potential for political change in Hungary, together with the pursuit of intelligent economic and social policies by the regime designed to promote political consolidation that were to form the basis of relations between industrial workers and the regime down to the mid-1980s.

71 - I have borrowed the concept of "conditional tolerance" from Darryl Reed, see his *Tangled Roots: Economic Reform and the Emergence of Political Democracy in Hungary*, PhD. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1995; for the fear among industrial workers of a return to Stalinism see MOL M-Bp.-1f.1958/42ö.e., p.111; MOL M-Bp.-1f.1958/43ö.e., p.162

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the interaction between industrial workers, the Stalinist state and the process of socialist industrialisation in post-war Hungary during the immediate post-war period. Industrial workers have been examined as a group in order to analyse the interaction between social transformation and state formation under socialist conditions. In contrast to well-worn theories of "totalitarianism" and "atomisation" relations between the state and society have been shown to be much more than one sided; the destruction of a legally protected civil society autonomous from and independent of the state between 1947 and 1949 never entailed the destruction of society nor autonomous social action as such. To argue that politics under state socialist regimes can be rethought as the dynamic interaction of state and society, whilst true, does however beg an important question about the precise nature of those dynamics. In other words the question of how the state sought to transform society needs to be posed together with that of how society responded if the central dynamic of such relations is to be grasped.

The socialist state attempted to create a society based upon productive labour. Work, as was stressed throughout Part One, became the basis of socialist citizenship, whilst membership of the collectivity of "working people" (*dolgozó nép*) became the passport to full membership of socialist society. Added to this was the regime objective of integrating the whole of the *dolgozó nép* into socialist labour, which the state came to define as working within the socialist sector, whether that was in state or co-operative ownership. A policy of rapid industrialisation was combined with the goal of building a society based upon productive labour. The industrial worker was therefore given at least at an ideological level a central role in the process of social transformation and state formation. One can speak of a

distinctive state socialist project that aimed to transform Hungary from a gentry capitalist, into an industrial society characterised by post-capitalist social relations.

The new state sought to realise this programme under specific social and political conditions. The country's "liberation" by the Red Army and the beginnings of the Cold War in 1947 ensured that in Hungary the new state would "build socialism" by importing the Stalinist model of centralised economic planning supporting a process of socialist primitive accumulation in which the state expanded industrial capacity by attacking the living standards of large sections of the population. As Chapter 1 of Part One showed the imposition of this centralised model on Hungarian industry with refined production targets and one man management was profoundly hierarchical and ensured in and of itself the creation of a dictatorship over industrial workers at the point of production. The intensification of the Cold War was matched by the paranoia of the Soviets who constantly increased the pace of Hungary's industrialisation drive in an attempt to ensure a heavy industrial sector that could match the demands of Soviet military strategy in the event of an outbreak of war.

Under these conditions the industrialisation drive created an economy characterised by endemic shortages, shortages that were not merely felt in production but in almost every area of social life. Production was disrupted, earnings fluctuated wildly, queues developed outside shops as towns went sometimes without basic food provisions, and living standards slumped. The result was generalised discontent among much of the population with the state, though industrial workers often had specific grievances these were often subsumed under general opposition to a state that, it was felt, was draining the lifeblood of the Hungarian population in the interests of a highly ideological programme of social transformation.

It was against this background that the state began to implement its policy of proletarianisation, the integration of the population into the socialist labour force. In industry where the enterprises had been nationalised between 1946 and 1949 this entailed the transformation of existing shop floors, of mergers between plants, and of attempting to create a consciousness of production as an essentially political act, of labour as an explicit act of support for the institutions of the socialist state. In agriculture the state pursued two parallel policies; the first was to coerce and persuade individual smallholders into the agricultural co-operatives, the second was to encourage the agricultural population to enter industry. Given the extremity of the attack both on living standards and the smallholder lifestyle in rural Hungary those formerly employed in agriculture who went to industry, as Chapter 4 of Part One shows, did so in spite of their distrust of the state and often simply because they and their families could no longer survive in the villages.

The dynamics of shortage and the individualisation of production that the introduction of centralised economic planning entailed had created a fragmented workforce with little sense of unity. Often, as Chapter One of Part Two of this thesis shows, the competition for work and for favourable treatment between workers had corrosive effects on solidarity at the point of production as individuals or small groups of workers sought to survive by developing informal control over their remuneration. Many of the "new" workers from agriculture, as Chapter 4, shows were pushed to the periphery of the workforce as they were often systematically excluded from the networks within the workplace through which informal control over remuneration was developed. Despite this social mobility within the workforce did lead to its re-composition as Chapter 4 shows.

As labour was the basis of citizenship for industrial workers the factory became the basic unit through which worker-citizens were to participate in "their" society. Labour competition, socialist emulation campaigns and production related propaganda constantly emphasised that achievement in production was in part an act of support for the Stalinist state. Industrial workers, both individually or collectively, had very little reason to support this state. Their living standards had declined dramatically, what they could afford was more often than not unavailable, their workplaces were unsafe, the intensity of work was much greater than prior to 1948, and they were constantly faced with the threat of brutal state repression if they protested. Those with kinship, or other connections, to agriculture, who made an ever greater proportion of the industrial workforce as socialist industrialisation progressed were witness to a parallel process. Large sections of the rural populations faced pauperisation as the state's demand for food increased taxation and compulsory deliveries for those engaged in agriculture.

The interaction of socialist ideology, and the politicisation of production that flowed from it, with the bleak reality of socialist industrialisation in post-war Hungary, produced an emphatic rejection of the state by its worker-citizens. It was seen as a "blood sucking government" basing its rule on the exploitation of the population. By 1953 as Part Two shows Hungary was characterised by considerable antagonism between the state and the overwhelming majority within society. This manifest antagonism was to prove the fatal weakness of the Stalinist state. Open collective opposition was merely held in check by state repression and the fear of it. When that fear receded, when the state was challenged and its authority crumbled in the Autumn of 1956 that manifest antagonism exploded on to the streets destroying a socialist regime, which could only then be restored by the intervention of Soviet tanks.

Whilst the opposition of the population was held in check by the state security forces, considerable discontent fused with the need to survive in a shortage economy to produce considerable "infra-political" opposition. Yet as Chapters 1 and 2 of Part Two show such strategies and forms of opposition were deeply corrosive of the kinds of generalised social identities that might have been capable of generating real political alternatives to the socialist regime. Surviving the queue was dependent on personal connections or access to resources denied to all but a small group of people, as was participation in the informal economy, or for that matter self-sufficiency. David A. Kideckel's conclusion for Romania in the 1980s, that such networks shaped "a solitude within an intense social field" ¹ holds for Hungary in the 1950s. The paradoxical combination of this "solitude" and the negative solidarity between workers, and citizens, against the socialist state is described in Chapter 2 of Part Two with the example of the foreman who stole copper from his factory stating that it was done by everyone and that they did it "often without saying a word to each other" ².

Built onto this lack of association and solidarity was the marked particularisation of social identities among industrial workers. The fight for a favoured position within the distribution of raw materials and remuneration in a socialist factory closely paralleled the dependence of those participating in informal economic activity on personal connections, in the sense that both strategies were dependent on small networks, or groups that were often necessarily exclusive of others. Informal bargaining often consisted of asserting a claim to be a "better" or more "skilled" worker than one's work mates. In a situation of shortage this could not fail to deepen shop floor tension, yet bargaining was often under-pinned by cultural claims about

¹ - Kideckel *The Solitude of Collectivism*, p.228

² - Lomax "The Working Class in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956", p.32

notions of skill, or who were good or bad workers. Such cultural claims were often based on essentialised notions based around ideas of gender, generation, ethnicity or social origin. Whilst they served to particularise social identity among workers, the growing official acceptance of such claims had corrosive effects. In a productivist state in which work was the primary means of official social participation notions which separated workers into "good" and "bad" on the grounds of their generation, gender or ethnicity did not merely particularise worker identity but served to ingrain particular social inequalities and lead to the pursuit of policies that would perpetuate them. Indeed this would become more apparent as the socialist era progressed in Hungary, though the history of this process still remains to be written.

After 1956 the socialist state moved decisively to secure the political consolidation of the system. Its leaders were particularly eager to ensure that the sharp antagonism between the state and the vast majority of Hungarian society was not allowed to open up to the same degree that it had done during the country's Stalinist years. In order to do this it moved to create a situation in which society would consent to continued existence of the restored regime, even if they did not actively come to support it. The Kádár regime was able to successfully create what György Földes has termed a "national settlement" between regime and people by the middle of the 1960s. This entailed "conditional tolerance" of the regime by the population, in exchange for improvements in the standard of living³. The construction of Kádár's national settlement entailed policy changes in three major areas that impacted directly upon industrial workers; the first was the conscious promotion of "socialist consumerism" from 1957 onwards, the second represented the major expansion of the social wage that

³ - For the concept of a "national settlement" see Földes *Hatalom és mozgalom*, Chapter 4; for the concept of "conditional tolerance" see Reed *Tangled Roots*

accompanied it, and the third was wage policy that played a changing role in labour policy during the post-Stalinist years.

"Socialist consumerism" entailed firstly the increase in both the availability and ownership of consumer goods. During the Stalinist and New Course years the large purchases a household might make tended to be a bicycle or a radio, during the 1960s items such as fridges, washing machines and televisions became widely available. This was accompanied by a slower spread in private car ownership and during the late 1960s the development of a socialist consumer society in the country. The development of consumerism was combined with a modification of Stalinist state attitudes towards private wealth institutionalised in measures such as the introduction of a National Lottery in 1957. The expansion of the social wage throughout the late 1950s and 1960s formed another corner of the post-Stalinist "national settlement". The initial measures taken in 1957 to increase the social wage were noted in Chapter 3 of Part Two above. During the 1960s class based discrimination in the access to services was ended, and health care became a citizens' right for the first time, whilst eligibility to cash benefits such as pensions and family allowances were extended. Indeed the social wage increased during the 1960s at a greater rate than monetary wages. Wage policy furthermore was based after 1957 on steady year to year increases but this was combined with a radical change in the system of remuneration in the economy ⁴.

⁴ - On the availability of consumer goods see Boldoczki et al. *Az életszínvonal alakulása Magyarországon 1950-1975*, p.80; for the National Lottery see Chapter 3 above; on the expansion of the social wage see Gál et al. *Szociálpolitikánk Két Évtizede*; Boldoczki et al. *Az életszínvonal alakulása Magyarországon 1950-1975*, pp. 44-6; on the greater increase in the social wage see István Monigl "Életmódváltás és életkörülmények" in Henrik Vass (ed.) *Válság és Megújulás. Gazdaság, Társadalom és Politika Magyarországon az MSZMP 25 éve*, p. 153, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1982; for post-1956 wage policy see Bonifert Donát *A Bérszabályozás. Hogyan kezdődött ? Hová jutott ? Merre Tart ?*, pp.55-60, Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1987

The change in the system of remuneration represented a qualitative abandonment of the notion of the subject of planning as the individual producer. The conceptual background to this shift has been described by Földes as the growing realisation that the total amount of social labour could not be translated to the sum of the contributions of each individual producer and that labour and indeed products would have to be conceived in a limited sense at least as commodities for the purpose of planning. This entailed a recognition that an enterprise could be conceived as the autonomous subject of planning, capable of organising its own production within the constraints set down by the ministries. Within the constraint that some form of payment-by-results system be adopted enterprises were free to decide on their own wage structures and forms, but within the constraint that the average wage in the enterprise had to meet a level set by the state ⁵.

The limited commodification that occurred, on an ideological level, at least served to begin the de-politicisation of production. Socialist rituals were to continue in both the workplace and in society but they were no longer mechanisms for the mobilisation of workers behind the goals of an over-ambitious plan and conscious rituals of support for the socialist state that they were prior to 1956. One former Stakhanovite was to note that after 1956 "There weren't so many competitions or shifts from that time on like the Stalin shift was in '49" ⁶. Though such a process of de-politicisation took

⁵ - See Földes *Hatalom és mozgalom*, pp.80-3; on the 1957 reforms see Iván T. Berend *Gazdasági útkeresés, 1956-1965*, pp.33-122, Magvető Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1983; for an explanation see Donát *A Bérszabályozás*, pp.55-60; Hegedűs *A Munkabérezés Rendszere Iparunkban*

⁶ - Transcript of Interview with Sándor Szöczsei, p. 16, made by Dr. Ervin Czismadia, 1987; for an account of shop floor socialist ritual at the end of the Kádár era see Burawoy & Lukács *The Radiant Past*, pp.111-42; for visual representation of such ritual see András Gerő & Iván Pető (eds.) *Befejezetlen Szocializmus: Képek a Kádár-Korszakból*, pp.51-60, Tegnep és Ma Kulturális Alapítvány, Budapest, 1997

place within production, participation in the labour force remained a central citizenship obligation, and many social benefits remained tied explicitly to membership of the labour force; in this sense they tended to form more of a social wage than components of a welfare state as such. Furthermore as has been mentioned much of the work discipline legislation remained in place for a considerable time, allowing the state the potential ability to regulate the degree to which labour could become a tradable commodity.

"Socialist consumerism" recast the roles of work for the state and in the informal sector during the 1960s. The expansion of consumerism created demand for goods that could not be met from either the social wage provided by the state or the money wage that came from the enterprise. The result of this situation was the continuing and growing role that the informal economy came to play within the remuneration of industrial workers who had the possibility to participate in it. Increasingly even industrial workers came to spend weekends on allotments, or doing jobs on the side, whilst cutting down on day to day expenditure in order to save for expensive household goods, a car or even a private house. Often the extent to which younger industrial workers bought into "socialist consumerism" in this sense was met with a mixture of despair and ridicule by their elders ⁷.

Many of the phenomena that characterised socialist, or informal labour under Kádár have been attributed to the reformism of the regime that was restored in 1956. In some accounts informal bargaining over remuneration came into being as a result of a laxer social climate, whilst the spaces for worker participation in the informal economy were creations of the post-revolutionary era. Many of these phenomena were a combination of strategies of survival and of resistance invented by industrial workers to

⁷ - Personal interview with T. J-né., Dunaújváros, 5th May 1996; Pittaway "The problems of reconstituting a union", p.362n.

cope with the initial socialist industrialisation drive and the Stalinist state during the 1950s. When during the 1960s following successful collectivisation, further proletarianisation and rising living standards coincided with the promotion of "socialist consumerism" such phenomena were adapted as part of a series of strategies employed by large numbers of industrial workers to gain access to expensive material goods. Kádárist Hungary was unusual in East-Central Europe in the 1960s and 1970s because it recognised and tolerated informal bargaining over wages, and certain forms of informal economic activity, incorporating them into the "national settlement" that came into being around consumerism in the mid-1960s.

Such an account renders problematic accounts of the informal, or second economy which conceptualise it as one of the building blocks of a horizontally organised, associative "second society" that is said to have emerged during the reform decades in opposition to the socialist state ⁸. The sketch of an account that has been presented above would point towards the conclusion that the part of the "national settlement" that related to industrial workers was built on the Kideckel's "solitude" and the highly particular worker identities that emerged during the Stalinist years. By accommodating itself to the phenomena on which such identities and patterns of behaviour were built, or at least tolerating them, whilst ensuring the "conditional tolerance" of the regime among the vast majority in society; the Kádár regime was able to buy itself considerable social peace. It would only be after 1978 that the costs of maintaining such a settlement would become apparent to the regime and the "national settlement" would begin to de-compose over the course of the 1980s. That process of de-composition

⁸ - Hankiss *East European Alternatives*, Chapter 3

however only ended along with the socialist regime itself in the "negotiated revolution" of 1989.

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és alapszervezetei, 1957-1960 (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party,
Party Committee of the Nagylengyel Oil Works and its party cells)

ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 25f.

Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, Bazakerettye Olajüzemi Pártbizottsága és alapszervezetei, 1957-1960 (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, Party Committee of the Bazakerettye Oil Works and its party cells, 1957-1960)

ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 26f.

Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, Lovászi Olajüzemi Pártbizottsága és alapszervezetei, 1957-1960 (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, Party Committee of the Lovászi Oil Works and its party cells, 1957-1960)

ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 34f.

Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, Dunántuli Kőolajipari Gépgyár Üzemi Vezetősége és alapszervezetei, 1957-1960 (Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, Factory Leadership of the Transdanubia Oil Industry Machine Factory and its party cells, 1957-1960)

ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 57f.1.

Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Zala Megyei Bizottsága, Titkári iratai, 1948-1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party, Zala County Committee, secretarial papers, 1948-1956)

ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir.57f.2.Agitprop

Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Zala Megyei Bizottsága, Agitációs és Propaganda osztály, 1948-1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party, Zala County Committee, Agitation and Propaganda Department, 1948-1956)

ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 57f.2.lpar

Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Zala Megyei Bizottsága, Ipari osztály, 1948-1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party, Zala County Committee, Industrial Department, 1948-1956)

ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 57f.2.Olajipar

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ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 57f.2.PTO

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ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 58f.1.

Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Zalaegerszegi Járási Bizottsága, Titkári iratai, 1948-1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party, Zalaegerszeg District Committee, secretarial papers, 1948-1956)

ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 58f.2.Agitprop

Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Zalaegerszegi Járási Bizottsága, Agitációs és Propaganda osztály, 1948-1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party,

Zalaegerszeg District Committee, Agitation and Propaganda
Department, 1948-1956)

- ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 58f.2f.Ipar
Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Zalaegerszegi Járási Bizottsága, Ipari osztály,
1948-1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party, Zalaegerszeg District Committee,
Industrial Department, 1948-1956)
- ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 58f.2f.PTO
Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Zalaegerszegi Járási Bizottsága, Párt és
Tömegszervezetek osztály, 1948-1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party,
Zalaegerszeg District Committee, Party and Mass Organisations
Department)
- ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 58f.3.
Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Nagylengyel üzemi pártszervezet, 1951-1956
(Hungarian Workers' Party, Nagylengyel factory party organisation,
1951-1956)
- ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 61f.1.
Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Letenyei Járási Bizottsága, Titkári iratai, 1948-
1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party, Letenye District Committee, secretarial
papers, 1948-1956)
- ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 61f.2.Agitprop
Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Letenyei Járási Bizottsága, Agitációs és
Propaganda osztály, 1948-1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party, Letenye
District Committee, Agitation and Propaganda Department)
- ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 61f.2.Ipar
Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Letenyei Járási Bizottsága, Ipari osztály, 1948-
1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party, Letenye District Committee, Industry
Department, 1948-1956)
- ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 61f.2.PTO
Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Letenyei Járási Bizottsága, Párt és
Tömegszervezetek osztály, 1948-1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party,
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1948-1956)
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1948-1956)
- ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 61f.4.
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- ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 63f.2.Agitprop

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ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 63f.2.PTO

Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Zalaegerszegi Városi Bizottsága, Párt és Tömegszervezetek osztály, 1948-1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party, Zalaegerszeg City Committee, Party and Mass Organisations Department, 1948-1956)

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ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 64f.3.

Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, Dunántuli Kőolajipari Gépgyár üzemi pártszervezet, 1948-1956 (Hungarian Workers' Party, Transdanubia Oil Industry Machine Factory party organisation, 1948-1956)

ZML MSZMP ZMBA ir. 64f.5.

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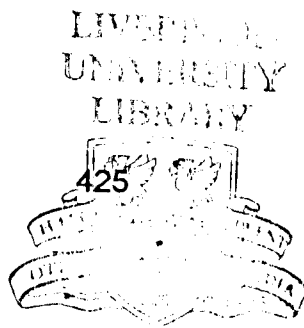
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