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theorizing socialism: a prologue to the “transition”

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Although the embers still glow beneath the ashes of what was so lately (in Rudolf Bahro’s phrase) “actually existing socialism” in eastern Europe, it is not too soon to take analytic stock of that system.¹ Even before the final months of 1989, eastern Europeans anticipated the system’s end with the joke that socialism was the longest and most painful road from capitalism to capitalism. The collapse of Communist party rule there brought suddenly into being a new phenomenon for social scientists to flock to: the transition from socialism, or at least from its hitherto institutionalized Marxist-Leninist variant, to the diverse societal forms that will succeed it.² In the study of this process, anthropologists will have a major part to play.

The unprecedented opportunity that the transition from socialism offers social scientists will bear more fruit, I believe, if our research is informed by conceptualizations of the social order that went before. In this essay, I hope to contribute to research on the transition by setting forth the theoretical model of socialism used in my own work on socialist Romania and in that of others (notably Stark [1990] and Burawoy [1985, 1991] on Hungary). By no means do all area specialists accept the analysis I offer below. The majority of political scientists, for example, have worked with a variety of models rather different from this one. What distinguishes those models from the one presented here is that the former are largely of U.S. or western European provenance and emerge from the values underlying western polities—“rational choice” theories, “interest group” pluralist theories, modifications of the earlier “totalitarian” model, general political-process models in which one-party systems constitute merely a different set of values on a familiar set of variables, and so on. The conceptualization I present, by contrast, is a composite of ideas developed by several eastern European social theorists, most of whom work not from the models of liberal western political theory but from modifications of a Marxist analysis, adapted to the realities of eastern European socialism.

The Hungarian and Romanian scholars³ whose work I describe developed their theories on the basis of long-term immersion in socialist societies. They had data vastly superior to those of western researchers, whose access to the social processes of socialism was at best intermittent and of necessity highly selective. These eastern European economists, sociologists, and philosophers were actively criticizing or seeking to modify the societies in which they lived at the time of their writing.⁴ Although their ideas were for the most part not published in their own countries at that time,⁵ these people were central participants in a larger movement of critique

The startling transformations of eastern European polities during 1989 offer anthropologists a remarkable opportunity: firsthand observation of the “transition from socialism,” the process by which the internal organization of these societies and their place within western political and economic circuits will be reconfigured. As a contribution to conceptualizing the possible forms of the transition, this article offers a theoretical model of the “socialism” from which these societies begin their departure. The article concludes by suggesting some research problems that follow from the model. [theory, socialism, eastern Europe, political economy, cultural politics, social change]

that at length undermined eastern European socialism by exposing its mechanisms and increasing resistance to it. In a very important way, the theories discussed below are part of the transition itself, not prior or external to it.⁶ Whether this fact fortifies or impedes their analytic utility is for the reader to decide.

The framework I set out can be used to analyze—henceforth, as historical questions—many aspects of life in socialist societies: processes of economic production (see, for example, Burawoy 1985), politicking within the bureaucracy, the parameters of daily experience and social relations (Verdery In press), or intellectual politics in the production of culture (Verdery 1991). This kind of model can also illuminate already published ethnographies of socialism, such as Caroline Humphrey's extraordinary monograph on collective farm life in Buryatiya (Humphrey 1983). The framework I offer is useful for more than simply retrospective analysis, however. First, in purporting to characterize what eastern European societies are "transiting" from, it illuminates certain areas as critical for research in the coming decade. I will briefly mention some of these in my closing pages. Second, because the nature of a system often appears most clearly with its decomposition, we can expect to learn more about socialism during the transition than we have to date. Rendering explicit what we think we now know about it is essential to testing and perfecting our theories as fuller knowledge emerges henceforth.

Like all ideal-type models, this one describes no real socialist society perfectly. Moreover, it emphasizes tendencies of the societies as formally constituted rather more than the forms of resistance they engendered. It is also silent about the many forms of improvisation and spontaneity (see Rosaldo 1989) to which people were driven by the center's expropriation of all capacity to plan. At best, the model indicates certain social processes as fundamental, while acknowledging that these were not the only processes at work and that they were more evident in some cases than in others. The model is especially suitable for the highly centralized, "command" form of socialism, best exemplified by the Soviet Union under Stalin and Brezhnev and by Romania during most of the 42 years of Communist party rule there; it is least applicable to Yugoslavia after 1948 and to Hungary after 1968. (The fact that Hungarians contributed most to these critical theories nonetheless shows its continuing relevance there.) Scholars concerned with the Asian socialisms are better qualified than I am to judge its applicability to those societies; the events of 1989 suggest that those may have become the only cases, if any remain, that approximate the terms of this theory. Notwithstanding the theory's seeming obsolescence, in discussing it I use the present tense, as is common in the presentation of abstract models. I illustrate with examples from Romania, the country of my fieldwork.

the dynamics of "real socialism"

socialism's basic "laws of motion" I dispense with a thorough review of literature on the nature of socialism and move directly to works analyzing the fundamental mechanisms of socialist systems, particularly the writings of the Romanian scholar Campeanu (1986, 1988) and the Hungarians Kornai (1980), Konrád and Szelényi (1979), and Fehér, Heller, and Márkus (1983).⁷ The most fruitful beginning on the question of socialism's "laws of motion" was Konrád and Szelényi's *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (originally written in 1973; English edition 1979). Seeing the significance of private property ownership in capitalism as a matter of ideological legitimation and, hence, of system integration (cf. Polanyi, Arensberg, and Pearson 1957), the authors explored the integration typical of socialism. What, they asked, legitimated socialism's appropriation of the surplus (Konrád and Szelényi 1979:48)? They answered that the central legitimating principle was "rational redistribution," the ideology through which the bureaucratic apparatus justifies appropriating the social product and allocating it by priorities the party has set. From this they defined the "motor" of socialism as the drive to maximize redistributive power (in contrast to capitalism, whose "motor" is the drive

to maximize surplus value) (Szelényi 1982:318). I rephrase this as “allocative power” and speak of bureaucratic allocation rather than redistribution, so as to avoid confusing socialist redistribution with forms more familiar from economic anthropology.

Fehér, Heller, and Márkus offer a somewhat more cumbersome phrasing: “the maximization of the volume of the material means (as use-values) under the global disposition of the apparatus of power as a whole constitutes the goal-function governing the economic activities of the state” (1983:65). They aim to emphasize that maximizing allocative power does not necessarily mean maximizing the *resources available for allocation*, that is, the social surplus itself. To the contrary: these scholars argue that the “rationality” specific to socialist economies includes their often *sacrificing* an expanded total output, thereby diminishing the potential pool of resources to allocate. What is more important, systemically, than increasing the pool of resources is having the most important ones—especially the resources that generate *more resources—under the apparatus’s control*; as a result, resources generated within the society will remain, insofar as possible, within the bureaucratic apparatus rather than falling out of it into consumption (Fehér et al. 1983:67–68). When these systems appear to us to behave “irrationally,” they are in fact piling up resources that enhance the bureaucracy’s capacity to allocate. The best example is the “irrational” emphasis of socialist economies on building up heavy industry (which produces numerous resources that can be centrally controlled), at the expense of consumer industry (whose products fall out of central control into the hands of consumers). This systemic “preference” is, of course, one cause of the long queues for consumer goods, so characteristic of most socialist societies, and of the widespread cultivation of personal ties (which westerners usually call “corruption”) through which people strive to procure consumption items made “scarce” by the preference for heavy industry.

Campeanu’s phrasing of essentially the same point is the leanest: socialism’s fundamental dynamic is to accumulate means of production (1988:117–118). His way of approaching the question helps to explain why goods produced in socialist economies are so often of low quality and have difficulty competing on world markets. For a system accumulating means of production rather than profits from sales, he suggests, considerations of salability (that is, of consumption) are more an obstacle to accumulation than, as in capitalism, a condition of it: “Stalinist monopoly . . . produces the means of production precisely in order *not* to sell them. Transmitting their non-value to all the salable objects they produce, these unsellable means of production veritably constitute the extra-economic base of the Stalinist economy” (Campeanu 1988:132; emphasis added). That is, because power in this system is tied to social ownership of the means of production, enhancing the means of production so owned enhances the dominance of the political apparatus that controls them.

Although other theorists rationalize it somewhat differently, most share the crucial emphasis: socialism’s central imperative is to increase the bureaucracy’s *capacity* to allocate, and this is not necessarily the same as increasing the amounts to be allocated.

The capacity to allocate is buttressed by its obverse, which is the destruction of resources *outside* the apparatus. Because a social actor’s capacity to allocate resources is relative to the resources held by other actors, power at the center will be enhanced to the extent that the resources of other actors are incapacitated and other foci of production prevented from posing an alternative to the central monopoly on goods.⁸ I draw this idea from Gross’s analysis of the Soviet incorporation of the Polish Ukraine in 1939 (Gross 1988). Calling the Soviet state a “spoiler state,” Gross argues that its power came from disabling actual or potential loci of organization, thus ensuring that no one else could get things done or associate for purposes other than those of the center.⁹ This conception helps to explain, among other things, why the central power in socialist states often persecutes small-scale production, even though this production might increase the resources available to society as a whole: such production constitutes a threat to the central monopoly on allocation.¹⁰ Therefore, research into political processes in socialist states should always look not only for the accumulation of resources at the bureaucra-

cy's disposal but for the destruction or incapacitation of those external to it. (In Nicolae Ceaușescu's Romania, for instance, the sphere of "private" production was stringently contained. Peasants caught selling above the fixed price or found with more than a month's food supply on hand might be punished with as much as five years' imprisonment.) The need to disable all organizations of resources outside the center is apparent from the catastrophic consequences that have followed from the emergence of alternative organizations, such as Poland's Solidarity.

shortage and bureaucratic allocation Two observations should be made about this analysis. First, it should not be seen as a version of earlier western theories of "totalitarianism" or confused with such theories. It addresses socialist systems from a completely different theoretical angle and has very different implications for the analysis of nearly all social processes within them. The second observation concerns conscious intent. Although some party leaders may indeed consciously intend to increase control over means of production, the analysis is concerned less with the conscious intentions of socialist bureaucrats than with the systemic effects of their behavior. On the whole, bureaucrats are not consciously striving to increase allocative power (Márkus 1981:246); most are preoccupied with fulfilling planned output targets. It is the cumulative effects of bureaucrats fulfilling plans that generates the system's central tendency—the accumulation of allocative power—something not consciously strategized as such by any actor.

To see why this is so requires understanding two basic elements of behavior within these systems: bargaining and shortage, on the one hand, and the logic of allocative bureaucracies, on the other. The Hungarian economists Bauer (1978) and Kornai (1980, 1986) have contributed brilliantly to revealing the mechanisms of bargaining and shortage within centrally planned economies. Fundamental to their arguments is that socialism's producing units operate within *soft budget constraints*—that is, firms that do poorly will be bailed out, and financial penalties for what capitalists would see as "irrational" and "inefficient" behavior (excess inventory, overemployment, overinvestment) are minimal. In consequence, socialist firms do not develop the internal disciplinary mechanisms generally characteristic of firms under capitalism.¹¹ Because of this, and because central plans usually overstate productive capacities and raise output targets higher and higher each year, firms learn to hoard materials and labor. They overstate their material requirements for production, and they overstate their investment needs, in hopes of having enough to meet or even surpass their assigned production targets (thereby increasing their incomes). Whenever a manager encounters bottlenecks in production or fails to meet targets, he can always claim that he will be successful if he receives more investment. Processes of this sort go on at every level of the system, from small firms up to the largest steel combines and on through progressively more inclusive segments of the economic bureaucracy. At each level, manager-bureaucrats are padding their budgets. Thus, these systems have expansionist tendencies that are not just inherent in growth-oriented central plans but are also generated from below.

Soft budget constraints and access to bureaucratic favor are not distributed uniformly throughout the economy. Planners view some sectors (heavy industry, armaments) as more strategic and will therefore protect them more extensively. Knowing this, managers of strategic enterprises often argue for and obtain higher investment so as to preempt bottlenecks. Claims like theirs set up a gradient of more and less privileged access to investment. In consequence, smaller, less central firms or bureaucratic segments strive to increase their budgets so as to become more strategic and strengthen their claim on investments in the future. Moreover, in times of crisis or in the early phases of certain reforms, less strategic sectors may be released from central subsidy into quasi-market conditions, where they have to fend for themselves under "harder" budgets. In the 1980s, such variability in the hardness of budget constraints was felt even within the sphere of cultural production, in both "command" Romania and the "reforming" Soviet Union (see Sherlock 1988:28; Verdery 1991:chs. 5 and 6).

The result of bargaining and hoarding by enterprises is an “economy of shortage” (Kornai 1980). Hoarding at all levels freezes in place resources that are needed for production somewhere else; all producing units want more inputs than they can get. Shortages are sometimes relative, as when sufficient quantities of materials and labor for a given level of output actually exist, but not when and where they are needed. Sometimes shortages are absolute, owing to the nonproduction that results from relative shortage (or the export of items needed locally, as in 1980s Romania). Because what is scarce and problematic in socialist systems is *supplies*, rather than *demand*, as in capitalist ones, Kornai calls socialist systems supply- or resource-constrained (as opposed to demand-constrained capitalism). The cause of supply constraints is not some planning error but the investment hunger inherent in socialist planning. The combination of expansionist tendencies and insatiable investment demand is the main reason why the productive forces grew so incessantly during socialism’s early phases (Kornai 1980:201–202)—feeding, in this way, the central drive of the system as described above, which is to accumulate means of production and allocative capacity.

The systematic shortage that results from these expansionist tendencies and from accumulations of means of production has an additional consequence, so pervasive in socialist societies that it achieves the status of a central tension within them. Shortages, of consumer goods above all, provoke a variety of strategies by which people seek to acquire needed goods or income from *outside* the official system of production and distribution. The state in fact permits some of these responses; others are more or less illegal; together, they are generally termed the “second” (or “informal”) economy. The second economy is analytically subdivided into several distinct categories—illegal “black market” exchanges and sales, the “private plots” legally allotted (within formal constraints) to collective-farm members, moonlighting for extra pay, personalism and corruption in distributive networks (the clerk who hides goods under the counter for friends and relatives or for a bribe, for instance), and the like (see Gábor 1979, 1989; Sampson 1987). These various forms have in common the parasitic use of the official economy as a source of the goods, materials, tools, status, and so forth that are essential to secondary economic activity. That is, the two economies are integrally tied to each other, the organization of the formal economy both necessitating and enabling the informal sphere.

These petty efforts to obtain goods operate at odds with the center’s accumulation of resources and with its efforts to fortify its allocative capacity by *disabling* resources. As a result, the center in each socialist country normally persecuted such second economies (more so in some countries and periods than in others). To suppress them completely, however, was not wholly advisable, since consumers who could not acquire what they needed for livelihood were difficult to motivate and to control; not all party leaderships considered it wise to alienate the public by cutting off all access to secondary economies. In each socialist context, therefore, there remained a constant tension between suppressing and permitting a certain amount of secondary economic activity, which meant a constant threat to the allocative monopoly of the center. The social space of the second economy—even though it was in some sense the *result* of how the formal sector was organized—came to represent a space of opposition to that sector, a space which developed parallels in other spheres, such as the sphere of culture.

allocative bureaucracy versus party center The two previous paragraphs illuminate one contradiction of socialist systems, rooted in the production and distribution of goods and services. A second is to be found in the workings of bureaucratic allocation. Allocation is the business of what nearly all theorists of socialism call the “apparatus” and/or the “bureaucracy” (without always being very explicit about what they mean by this). The apparatus is not, however, a unitary organism. Most theorists make a distinction that I think is crucial for understanding some of the contradictory tendencies in these systems. Fehér et al. speak, on the one hand, of the bureaucratic apparatus, an all-embracing mono-organizational entity, and, on the other, of its “pinnacle,” a “small circle of the political elite, the Party leadership, where all the basic-

orientative decisions concerning the overall distribution of social surplus are made" (1983:51, 70). Kagarlitsky speaks of the "bureaucracy" versus the "statocracy" (1988:123–124, n. 20), Konrád and Szelényi of the bureaucracy versus the party elite (1979:153), and Campeanu (1988:143–157) of the state bureaucracy versus the "global monopoly" or "supreme entity."

Campeanu theorizes the distinction between what I will call "bureaucracy" and "apex" more explicitly than others. He attributes it to the division characteristic of monopolies of all kinds, including capitalist ones, between ownership and management. Most *ownership* functions, he argues, are monopolized by the apex; the role of the bureaucracy is to *manage*. This division suggests ways of discussing a source of the conflicting tendencies within socialism, based in the different interests of the body that owns/controls and the body that manages. The contradictory tendencies have something to do, I think, with "reform"—ideas about decentralization, market socialism, and so forth, which, before they changed the system definitively (and unexpectedly) in the 1980s, had appeared a number of times before.¹² Whereas the apical "owners" of socialized means of production can persist in policies whose effect is to accumulate means of production without concern for things like productivity and output, the bureaucratic managers of the allocative process *must* be concerned with such things. There are two sets of reasons for this: processes involving bureaucrats' prestige, and the realities of their role as "allocators."

Behind the bureaucratic expansionism-within-shortage described above are competitive processes perhaps analogous to the dilemmas faced by the entrepreneurs in capitalism.¹³ Constrained by demand, capitalists strive for ever-greater domestication (predictability) of the demand structure, through such devices as advertising and through softening the budget constraints of consumers via credit and consumer debt. In a supply-constrained system, by contrast, what must be domesticated is supplies: everyone scrambles for access to the pot.¹⁴ At all points in the system, jobs or bureaucratic positions are used as platforms for amassing resources. Personal influence, "corruption," and reciprocal exchanges are some of the major mechanisms. This sort of behavior goes on throughout the society but is especially important for bureaucrats, whose entire reputation and prestige rest upon their capacity to amass resources. Any bureaucrat, any bureaucratic segment, tends to expand its own domain, increasing its capacity to give—whether the "gift" be education, apartments, medical care, permission and funds for publication, social welfare, wages, building permits, or funds for investments in factory infrastructure. Throughout the bureaucracy, then, there is rampant competition to increase one's budget at the expense of those roughly equivalent to one on a horizontal scale, so as to have potentially more to disburse to claimants below. That is, what counts most in the competition among social actors within allocative bureaucracies is *inputs to one's segment*, rather than outputs of production (Stark 1990:17).

In the redistributive systems commonly described by anthropologists, chiefs redistribute goods to their followers, just as socialist bureaucrats allocate social rewards. The limits on a chief's power, as on a socialist bureaucrat's, come from the power of other chiefs to siphon followers away by giving—or creating the impression that they *can* give—bigger and better feasts or more generous loans. Like chiefs in such redistributive systems, bureaucrats are constantly under pressure not to be outdone by other bureaucrats: they must continue to strive for influence, amass more resources, and raise the standing of their segment of the bureaucracy. The form of competition specific to socialism consists of always trying to get more allocable inputs than others at one's level, so that one can move up closer to the privileged circle that always gets what it asks for (the Soviet military, for example, until the mid-1980s).

This discussion of inputs suggests a problem, however. As I argued earlier, maximizing allocative *capacity* is not the same as maximizing the actual surplus—the concrete disposable resources over which a bureaucrat makes allocative decisions. But at some point, real resources do have to be delivered, and for this a bureaucrat's allocative reputation is not always enough. This is especially true in the domain of economic production, heavy industry above all. Without

actual investments and hard material resources, lower-level units cannot produce the means of production upon which both bureaucracy and apex rely. Productive activity cannot be so stifled that nothing gets produced, or the prestige of those who supposedly allocate will enter a crisis. We might call it a crisis of “overadministration,” as distinct from the crises of “overproduction” more common in capitalism.

Thus, I suggest that when central accumulation of means of production begins to threaten the capacity of lower-level units to produce; when persistent imbalances between investment in heavy industry and investment in light industry, between allocations for investment and allocations for consumption, and so on cause a decline in the accumulation of actual allocable goods; and when attempts by the apex to keep enterprises from appropriating surplus on their own actually obstruct the process of production itself: then pressure arises for a shift of emphasis. The pressure is partly from those in the wider society to whom not enough is being allocated and partly from bureaucrats themselves whose prestige and, increasingly, prospects of retaining power depend on having more goods. One then hears of decentralization, of the rate of growth, of productivity—in a word, of matters of *output* rather than of the inputs that lie at the core of bureaucratic performance. Bureaucratic calls for market reform sometimes enter an overt or de facto alliance with the independent activity in the second economy. The problem is, of course, that concern with output introduces mechanisms inimical to the logic of bureaucratic allocation; these include, above all, freer markets, which socialism suppresses precisely because they move goods *laterally* rather than vertically toward the center, as all redistributive systems require.

Inherent in the demands that management—as opposed to “ownership”—of social resources places on an allocative bureaucracy, then, is the necessity to see to it that resources are actually generated, and not merely by more coercive extraction: that the centralization of means of production does not stifle production altogether. Thus, quite aside from the second economies that flourish at the edges of the command economy, one finds within the apparatus of management itself an interest in mechanisms that subvert the system’s central logic. As in capitalism, where, in Marx’s view, the goal-function of the economy is to maximize surplus value but the subjective aim of capitalists is to maximize profit (not the same thing)—that is, subjective intention feeds something different from what accumulation objectively requires—so in socialist systems the goal-function of the economy is to maximize allocative capacity and control over means of production, but the subjective aim of at least some bureaucrats and enterprise managers some of the time is to maximize production of a disposable surplus.¹⁵

This introduces into the system a subordinate rationality not wholly consonant with the overriding logic, a rationality based in recognition that the center cannot dictate values out of thin air, as if there were no such thing as production costs. Sometimes this subordinate rationality becomes amplified, such as when international credits and indebtedness to western banks bind socialism’s dynamic with that of capitalism, requiring hard-currency exports premised on *salability* (which socialist economies generally ignore, as argued above). The tension between the central logic of command and the subordinate “counterrationalities” will then increase, sharpening the conflict between command and market, centralization and decentralization, investment and consumption (Fehér et al. 1983:270–271).¹⁶ Campeanu summarizes the resulting tensions between apex (“supreme entity”) and bureaucracy as follows:

Thus a potential for revolt against the supreme entity is inscribed in the genetic code of Stalinist bureaucracy. Actualized in the hidden form of imperceptible but formidable daily pressures, this potential has drawn the bureaucracy into all the major conflicts which, from 1956 to the present, have shaken Stalinist societies. On each of these occasions, its inherent ambiguity has regularly divided its ranks into one segment which defended the supreme entity and another which contested it. . . . This potential for revolt nourishes the organic mistrust the supreme entity has of its bureaucracy, which in turn nourishes their historical tendency to transform their separation into conflict. [1988:148]

From these tensions, I believe, emerged Mikhail Gorbachev’s attempt to reform the Soviet system and the eastern European socialisms along with it. The unintended effect of his backing

potentially reformist bureaucratic segments in the other socialist states was ultimately, of course, to fracture monolithic Communist parties, exposing their actual or potential fragility to restive publics and destroying party rule. The series of progressively more dramatic confrontations through which this came about culminated in the violent overthrow of Ceaușescu's communist dictatorship in Romania, its violence fed precisely by the relentlessness with which this party apparatus, above all others in the bloc, had gathered social resources into its own hands, devastated productive capacity, and left the public destitute.¹⁷

weak states and the mode of control In the preceding sections I have treated socialism's "laws of motion" and some of its bureaucratic politics. In this section I discuss some features of socialist states, particularly their inherent weakness and their principal modes of controlling their populations. Prior to 1989, a few scholars were suggesting what at the time was far less patently obvious than it soon became: that contrary to the original "totalitarian" image, socialist states were weak. Arguments to this effect had been emerging not only for eastern Europe but for China as well.¹⁸ Although it is now less necessary to justify this view, I might nonetheless suggest why these states proved as weak as they did.

We can conceptualize socialism's weak states from three different angles, each employing a different definition of power. Gross makes one kind of argument, based on a notion of power as the capacity to get things done. Gross contends that "[t]o gain a fresh insight into the essence of the political process under communism we must revise our notions about the monopolization of power by communist parties" (1989:208). Because socialism's "spoiler" states insisted on monopolizing power by devastating the capacity of all *other* organizations to get things done, he argues, these states undermined *their own* capacity to get things done and, therefore, their power. "The image of Stalin's Russia as a gigantic, all-powerful, centralized terror machine is wrong": a state that denies power to any other social actor may gain *absolute* power, but it is not an *all-powerful* state, and it crumbles the instant an effective social challenge arises (Gross 1988:232–233). To the extent that Stalin's state appeared all-powerful, in Gross's view, the reason was a pervasive "privatization" of the instruments of coercion, which—far from being concentrated somewhere at the top—were made available to everyone, through the mechanism of the *denunciation*. "The real power of a totalitarian state results from its being at the disposal of every inhabitant, available for hire at a moment's notice" (Gross 1988:120). This is a dispersed kind of power, and the kind that remains at the center is purely the vacuum left after all foci of organization around the center have been destroyed—"h]ence the perplexing 'weakness' of these all-powerful regimes" (Gross 1989:209).

A second argument for the weakness of socialist states defines power as a relationship of dependency: if a social actor depends heavily upon another for a crucial resource or performance, it is not powerful, no matter how many means of coercion lie at its disposal (Emerson 1962). Bauer (1978) and Rév (1987) argue, for example, that the supposedly plan-forming political center in socialism is too weak to plan: the reason is that for the production figures necessary to planning, the center is utterly dependent upon reports from the point of production, where central control is minimal. But lower-level units *never* deliver reliable figures, either because they fear the consequences of failed targets or because they wish to continue inflating their investment requests (see also Kagarlitsky 1988:80). Because central agencies have inadequate information, they cannot easily detect excessive investment claims, which makes it impossible for them both to plan and to resist the expansionist drive from below. Moreover, bargaining and hoarding by firms in the "economy of shortage" make labor a scarce item within socialist economies; structurally speaking, that is, labor has considerable implicit leverage, as Solidarity and the Soviet miners' strikes made very clear. This source of leverage, even when it is not overtly manifest, is structurally debilitating to the state.

These two definitions of power are sometimes mixed together, as when power is seen as a capacity (to enact policies) mitigated by the center's dependency (on intermediate and lower-

level cadres). Policies may be *made* at the center, but they are *implemented* in local settings, where those entrusted with them may ignore, corrupt, overexecute, or otherwise adulterate them. This sort of argument is especially common in the work of anthropologists, who have observed at close range some of the many ways in which local executors of central policy bend and redefine it in accord with their own styles of leadership, their capabilities for enforcement, and so on (see, for example, Kideckel 1982; Sampson 1984).

A third argument focuses less on power per se than on its cultural definition or legitimation. A state may be seen as strong to the extent that it effectively creates itself as a *cultural relation* with its citizen-subjects (see Ghani In press), to the extent that the terms through which it legitimates itself enter into daily practice more or less unproblematically, and to the extent that its symbolization is not widely challenged. By this definition, there is no doubt that eastern European socialist states were weak. Marxism-Leninism remained for most people an alien ideology unintegrated into consciousness and practice except in a wholly superficial manner, and challenges to official symbolization were rife.¹⁹

Whatever argument one prefers, each brings to the fore a basic question about socialism's mode of domination: how can a relatively weak state control its subordinates—particularly the populace, who, unlike bureaucrats, are poorly served by the system and might therefore threaten its continuity? Control over the means of production and power to limit consumption give socialist leaderships extensive command over labor in the aggregate and do much to keep subordinates passive, but these are not sufficient. Because leaders cannot use labor markets, firings, lockouts, unemployment, bankruptcies, and so forth, the means for disciplining labor under socialism are much less subtle and varied than those available to capitalists. Even (perhaps especially) in regimes of maximum coercion, such as Romania in the late 1980s, workers do not necessarily perform as the center might wish. Numerous empirical studies show the problematic nature of incentives and coordination in the workplace (for instance, Galasi and Szirácki 1985; Sabel and Stark 1982; Stark 1986). This invites us, then, to problematize the notion of “control” and to inquire into the various forms through which socialist regimes have sought to achieve it.

Several scholars have approached this problem by looking specifically at the mechanisms for controlling labor power and the labor process. To the extent that many different groupings in society (households, firms, the bureaucracy) compete for the “scarce” labor power that generates their resources or wealth, control over the labor of others is a crucial component of social power (see, for example, Böröcz 1989; Humphrey 1983:124, 300–316, 370). Sociologists Böröcz and Burawoy point to two main modes of exercising social control over labor in socialism: the market and “political means” (Böröcz 1989:289). Burawoy (1985:12) nuances these “political means” by talking of production regimes that produce varying degrees of consent or coercion. This brings to mind Skinner and Winckler's (1969) treatment of “compliance succession” in China, a treatment which, while not pretending to model socialism, contains a helpfully differentiated view of social control. Skinner and Winckler suggest that at any given time, a complex organization—of which socialist bureaucracies are an example—may be pursuing one or more of three kinds of strategies to gain the compliance of subordinates: remunerative (relying on material incentives), coercive (relying on force), and normative (relying on moral imperatives, societal norms, or other ideological appeals). I find this typology of strategies, which I will call “modes of control,” useful for analyzing domination in socialism's weak states. I modify the argument only by calling the third control strategy “symbolic-ideological” rather than normative, to underscore the normative instability of “real” socialist societies.

Within the bureaucratic mode of domination characteristic of socialism, then, we can look for these three modes of control, the prevalence of any one of them within any given society reflecting the balance of forces within the party and the bureaucracy. Remunerative strategies entail giving markets a role in allocating goods and labor; such strategies have formed the heart of most efforts by Communist party leaderships to reform the system. Coercive strategies entail

not just systematic use of police and security forces but attempts to minimize nonofficial or market-derived sources of income, for these reduce people's vulnerability to coercion. Symbolic-ideological strategies entail value-laden exhortations, as well as attempts to saturate consciousness with certain symbols and ideological premises to which subsequent exhortations may be addressed. We can further subdivide symbolic-ideological strategies by the values to which they appeal: norms of kinship and friendship, important in organizing informal networks and local solidarities; various tenets of Marxism-Leninism, such as the emancipation of the proletariat or the values of science and knowledge in creating a just society; standards of living and material comfort; or patriotism and sacrifice for the nation. The third of these, sometimes referred to as "the new social contract," was an important auxiliary to the remunerative mode of control used in Hungary during much of the 1970s and early 1980s, as well as at various times in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland under Gierek. Appeals to patriotism and national values (alongside ineffective appeals to Marxist-Leninist norms), by contrast, were the foundation of party rule in Romania of the 1970s and 1980s.

Coercive strategies are inordinately expensive over the long run. Not only do they alienate the populace more than other strategies, generating sabotage and other forms of resistance that reduce production (and, therefore, state revenues), but they necessitate paying a far larger personnel corps than the other modes require. The corps of this repressive apparatus generally receives very high pay as well. In Romania of the 1980s, for example, the ratio of Secret Police operatives to population is thought to have been around 1 to 15, and the salary of a Secret Police colonel could be as high as 16,000 lei per month (compared with approximately 3500 lei for a skilled worker or 5000 for a university department chair).²⁰ Remunerative modes of control, with their invitation to independent economic activity, avoid this costly apparatus and its alienating effects but have the drawback of undermining the center's monopoly on allocation and, thus, its control. Symbolic-ideological strategies have therefore played a very important, if varying, role in all socialist societies to date, even where reliance on coercion was also high. This impels the sphere of symbolization and cultural production—a sphere in which anthropology claims preeminence—to the center of any analysis of socialism. In the following section I will briefly show why "culture" became the site of so much contestation, in eastern European socialist societies, and gave the intellectuals who produce culture such prominence that they achieved the very presidencies of two eastern European countries, during the "revolutions" of 1989.²¹

socialism and "culture"

While the theorists discussed above have much to say about political, economic, and social life under socialism, they tend decidedly toward the inarticulate on the subject of culture and its production. They rarely pursue the implications of their new-class theory, ownership theory, or goal-function theory for how *meaning* is produced and controlled in socialist systems. Literature on cultural production in other social orders is not much help, for such thinkers as Bourdieu (1984, 1988) and Williams (1982) frame their analyses explicitly in terms of capitalist markets; yet the suppression of the market in socialist systems means that except when reforms reintroduce market mechanisms into its sphere, culture ceases to be a commodity.

The following arguments concerning the role of meaning and its official producers—intellectuals—must therefore be seen as exploratory. They aim to suggest what the properties of socialist systems might imply for the production of culture—here, specifically "high" culture—as well as for the relation of intellectuals to power within socialist society.²² Since adequate treatment of this subject would exceed the space available, I restrict definitions to a minimum. In brief, I follow such scholars as Bauman (1987b), Bourdieu (1988), and Foucault (1980) in defining intellectuals, first, by the kinds of claims and resources they employ in social struggles

(invocations of knowledge, truth, or expertise as a form of social superiority; or position resting on symbolic/cultural capital as against political or economic capital) and, second, by their role in societal legitimation (see also Verdery 1991:introd.). The terrain they occupy is not exclusive but overlaps with that of persons we might call party bureaucrats and apparatchiks; during the course of social contests, given persons may cross the fuzzy boundary between these statuses, according to the kinds of claims they are making in a wider field of claims or the values upon which they stake their position. “Intellectual” as I use it refers more to a social space than to a category of people (cf. Bauman 1987b:19), a space whose relation to the political is illuminated by the discussion above.

We might begin with a 1988 observation from a Romanian émigré: “Of all the social strata of today’s Romania, the only one whose aspirations bring it into touch with that domain which power considers inalienable is the intellectuals” (Solacolu 1988:28). How is this so? One answer comes from Konrád and Szelényi: the legitimating myth of the system, “rational redistribution,” gives the party a monopoly on “teleological knowledge,” the knowledge necessary to setting and implementing goals for society, knowledge of the laws of social development and of the path to progress (cf. Szelényi 1982:306). Yet at the same time, the party creates educated persons—a larger pool than it requires, so as to permit selection. Some of them specialize precisely in knowledge of society and social values, and not all of these people become (or want to become) apparatchiks. These two theorists see the intellectuals as a class-in-formation for this very reason: that is, that the form of intellectuals’ work makes them basic to reproducing the inequality on which the allocative bureaucracy rests. By sharing with intellectuals a legitimation resting on claims to knowledge and by creating a stratum of knowledge-empowered persons, the party reinforces a privileged situation for intellectuals, even as it reinforces its own. As Zygmunt Bauman puts it, “The communist revolution explicitly proclaimed and ostensibly practiced the unity of power and knowledge, the innermost core of the intellectual idiom” (1987a:177). One need scarcely look further than the slogans “The party knows best” and “The party is always right” to see, in their most blatant form, knowledge claims that intellectuals can easily contest, having the means to posit alternative values that might influence how resources are allocated and goals set.

Socialism’s intellectuals are therefore both necessary and dangerous: necessary because their skills are implied in setting social values, and dangerous because they and the political center have potentially divergent notions of what intellectual practice should consist of. When—as often happens—these notions do not agree, a conflict emerges over who has the authority to define intellectual work: those who *do* it, or those who *order* it. For those who order it, matters are clear. From the heyday of Stalin’s culture-czar Zhdanov onward, party bureaucrats have seen cultural production as a minor category of ideological activism, with art serving to indoctrinate. Writers report endless exchanges with censors, who call into question everything from words used to the artist’s judgment in framing a story: “Why does the hero die at the end? What do you mean, he’s killed? A crime? But crimes are not representative of our socialist spirit. . . . Hey, you can’t hang the fellow, he’s the driver for the collective farm!!” (Solacolu 1988:28). In this we see the tangled relation between a party that thinks of itself as directing all aspects of society according to specialized knowledge and the potential revolt of those whom it has created to help with that task.

These examples merely underscore a more abstract point concerning the nature of intellectuals: their work necessarily involves them in processes of legitimation, which are of vital concern to a bureaucracy needing performances and compliance from its subjects. All intellectuals operate with subjectivity-forming symbolic means. Their talents are essential to power, and above all to any leadership or any period in which a symbolic-ideological mode of control predominates. The nature of intellectual work is such that all new regimes must seek to capture its producers and its products; socialist regimes are no exception. To the question of whether socialist systems show a special form of this general truth, I have suggested that the double

legitimation of party and intellectuals via knowledge constitutes one peculiarity in the party's relation to intellectual work. Another comes from socialism's "laws of motion."

I have proposed as socialism's "motor" the systemic drive to accumulate allocative power, rooted in accumulating means of production. Is there some way in which *culture's* means of production are also susceptible to this tendency? If one asks what constitute the means of cultural production, one immediately thinks of (besides such things as printing presses, paper, paints, and the other material means) certain forms of accumulated knowledge that serve as bases of further cultural production: dictionaries, encyclopedias and other compendia, published documentary sources, treatises and works of synthesis—such as the official four-volume history of Romania (Constantinescu-Iași et al. 1960–64) published in the 1960s and intended as the point of departure for all subsequent writing in that discipline. In socialist eastern Europe, all such repositories of knowledge have been produced by large collectives, in public institutions, benefiting from huge allocations of funds for culture.²³ The importance of these cultural equivalents of heavy industry requires that they be produced by "reliable" institutions under the guidance of the party; cultural bureaucracies in all socialist countries have made certain to maintain control over them.

There is another means of cultural production, more basic even than the ones just mentioned: language. For a party bent on transforming consciousness, control over language is vital. Gross captures an aspect of this when he writes that communist rule changes language so that it no longer reflects or represents reality; metaphor becomes more important than prosaic discourse, and magical words replace descriptive and logical ones (Gross 1988:236–238). But whereas Gross sees in this the destruction of language, I see in it the retooling of language as a means of ideological production. I would develop this thought further with Bakhtin's discussion of authoritative discourse—any religious, moral, political, or parental discourse that demands we acknowledge it and make it our own. "We encounter it with its authority already fused to it" (Bakhtin 1981:342). This discourse is not one to be selected from a range of equivalent possibilities: it imposes itself and demands unconditional allegiance. The semantic structure of such discourse is static, and its terms have been cleansed of all but one meaning; it is often marked by a special language or a different script (Bakhtin 1981:343).²⁴ This description fits very well the special "wooden language" of socialist officialdom, so well captured by Thom (1989), with its repetitive adjective-noun clusters and its impoverished lexicon. Gross might have said, then, that communist rule seeks to make all language authoritative discourse, to reduce the meanings of words, to straitjacket them into singular intentions, and to preclude any use of language that permits multiple meanings.

While one could argue that all regimes are concerned with language to some extent, I would hold that socialist ones lie at an extreme on this dimension. For, unlike the western European societies that benefited from several centuries of slow evolution in which consciousness came to be formed more through practice than through discourse (Bourdieu 1977; Foucault 1978), eastern European communists came to power with the intention of rapidly revolutionizing consciousness and with precious few means of doing so.²⁵ Popular resistance to many imposed practices made language the principal arena for achieving this end. The social power deriving from control of the representations of reality became truly vital for rulers who disposed of relatively few such means. Language, and the cultural production that takes place through it, thus became crucial vehicles through which socialist leaders hoped to form consciousness and subjectivity and to produce ideological effects.

Indeed, one might say that in these societies, language and discourse are among the *ultimate* means of production.²⁶ Through discourse even more than through practice, their rulers may hope to constitute consciousness, social objects, social life itself. We see here another reason, then, for the special place of intellectuals in socialist countries: any political regime as fragile as these, where discourse has a disproportionately productive role—and especially any regime whose self-proclaimed task is to change society—*must* incorporate the producers of discourse

into itself. Indeed, the argument about socialism's "weak state" suggests that it is often only through discourse that the power and unity of such a fragile regime can be achieved (cf. Anagnost 1988; Castoriadis 1987).

For these reasons, one finds an extraordinary politicization of language in socialism, as the state's attempt to create an "authorized" language brings all speech under contest from those who resist the centralization of meanings. One hears constantly of writers and censors haggling over the specific words to be allowed in a text. The words that are prohibited vary from one time period to another, reflecting changes in the issues that are delicate or troublesome from the party's point of view, and they concern far more than what we might think of as the obviously "political." For example, Romanian writer Norman Manea (1990) reports that in the 1970s, relatively few of the words that the censor repeatedly struck from his manuscripts pertained to the overtly political sphere; they tended, rather, to be about unpleasant states of mind—sadness, discouragement, desperation, despondency. These words were, nonetheless, highly political for a party that had claimed to usher in a utopian world. By the 1980s, the ax was falling on words of a different kind: those relating to the unpleasant specifics of life under Ceaușescu's austerity policies of that decade. Censors now found deliberate provocation in such words as "coffee" and "meat" (impossible to find), "cold" and "dark" (the state of people's apartments), "informer" (what many around one were likely to be), "dictator" or "tyrant" (what everyone saw in Ceaușescu). Also interdicted were "nazism," "fascism," and "anti-Semitism" (the party leadership and its associated intellectuals having come to resemble all too closely the interwar Right). Certain things remained constant, however: during both periods, words offending the party's puritanical morality and atheism were excluded—sex, breasts, homosexuality, God.²⁷ Evident in this, as in the Polish censorship rules extensively documented by Curry (1984), is the effort to control reality by circumscribing the ways it can be discussed. "Pollution," for instance, is not a social problem if it is not named. (The disastrous legacy of this prohibition has now become all too clear.)

Language and meanings are contested not merely between agents of party rule and intellectuals as a group but also among intellectuals themselves, competing for access to the bureaucratic favor essential to securing the resources for cultural production. Since the educational system of socialism produces more intellectuals than its "ideological apparatus" can absorb and more than its resources for culture can sustain, this struggle can become exceedingly fierce. Its stakes are one's access to meaningful livelihood and to outlets for one's talents. In Romanian historiography during 1984, for example, a heated argument arose as to whether a particular historical event was best termed an "uprising" or a "revolution." Each position argued that different values should be central to historiography and promoted different institutions of history writing (see Simmonds-Duke 1987; Verdery 1991:ch. 6). Similarly, in the 1970s and 1980s Romanian literary criticism was riven by competing views as to what values Romanian literature ought to implement. One set of views, which echoed certain emphases of the party leadership, gradually gained its advocates greater control over key publications and greater access to resources such as paper, press runs, and permission to publish (Verdery 1991:ch. 5). In both cases, the conflict was not chiefly between "dissident intellectuals" and "party" but among more-or-less professional historians and literati, whose field of production had been wholly politicized by the party's obsession with culture.

Another consequence of this pervasive politicization of culture is the emergence of a cultural equivalent of the second economy: the creation of unauthorized foci of cultural production, in the form of *samizdat* literature circulated in typescript or even, as in Poland during the 1980s, whole underground publishing operations that produced upward of a thousand books a year in press runs of respectable size. As with many forms of second economy, socialist leaderships have generally attempted to fortify their monopoly on the production of meaning by disabling these independent foci of cultural activity, persecuting those who engage in it. The epitome of

such persecution was to be found in Romania, where all typewriters had to be registered with the police, who could then readily trace any underground text to its hapless author.

Such persecution of unauthorized symbolizing created dissidents of intellectuals who, in many cases, wanted only to be allowed to write their books. Instead of disabling them and enhancing its own power, the party made of them heroes and future postcommunist leaders. Even those it expelled, such as the writers of some texts discussed earlier in this essay, contributed to its downfall (thus proving the aptness of their analyses of socialism's "laws of motion" not only to politics and the economy but also to the cultural sphere). The party's inability either to disable these intellectuals as independent foci or to secure its control over them shows the fundamental and problematic link between socialism and culture.

researching the transition

As of 1989, the societies whose workings I have described above made a radical break with the model presented here. The most important changes have been the Communist party's loss of monopoly control over both the bureaucratic apparatus and the political sphere; the rise of competing political parties and nonstate organizations; the actual or projected divestiture of much public property into a newly emerging "private" sector; and the intention to decentralize economic and political decision making, as well as to allow a much increased integrative role to the market. If even a fraction of these projected changes are realized, societies fitting the image provided in this essay will cease to exist. Whether their successors will be best described through amendments to this model or through models of a wholly different kind will become clear with time.

Numerous fascinating research questions suggest themselves. Phrased at their simplest, they include the following. How will viable political parties be formed? More important, how will people long taught to be incapable of holding informed political opinions learn to hold such opinions? How will the process of "privatization" proceed, and what will be the role of foreign capital in that process? Will the growth of the market and more "efficient" production erode habits of personalism in daily life? How will collective farms be broken up (rather like latifundia after the abolition of serfdom and slavery)? Who will be judged suitable recipients of the land and with what will they cultivate it? By what mechanisms will rural differentiation reemerge in the wake of egalitarian propertylessness? How will persons privileged under the socialist order fare under the new circumstances, and how will the older forms of inequity continue to constrict people's chances? To what extent have socialist ideas about classlessness and equality entered into people's thinking, despite their categorical rejection of socialism overall, and what effects will this have?

One could string out such questions indefinitely. Most of them emerge from a seat-of-the-pants understanding of how socialism was organized, not from any complicated theories about it. To conclude, I will briefly suggest five research problems that follow directly from the model presented in this essay, so as to illustrate the directions in which it points.

One of the most vital processes to take place in eastern Europe will involve building up what many refer to as "civil society," something on which an extensive literature is already emerging, with eastern Europeans and émigrés among its contributors.²⁸ I take the creation of civil society to mean the populating of an intermediate social space—between the level of households and that of the state itself—with organizations and institutions not directly controlled from above, such as (in western contexts) political parties, voluntary associations, independent trade unions, educational institutions more or less free of state control, and all manner of neighborhood, professional, charitable, special-purpose, and other groupings. The near-emptiness of this space in most socialist societies was the direct consequence of the absorption of resources into the political apparatus and of the disablement of all organizations external to it. A

party bureaucracy that coexisted with universities, trade unions, or other parties independent of it would have been a party bureaucracy that did not monopolize social allocation—and that, according to the argument of this article, was antithetical to the operation of socialist systems. It was their nature to swell their own funds of resources and to incapacitate all others. In consequence, the social space of most socialist societies consisted of a mass of atomized households at the bottom and a massive bureaucratic and repressive apparatus at the top, with a near-vacuum in between.²⁹ State-oriented institutions made it *appear* that this intermediate space was filled—with state-controlled trade unions, state-directed religious activity, state-created organizations for national minorities, state-sponsored folk festivals, and so on—but in fact it was virtually empty, devastated by the actions of socialism’s “spoiler” states.

The task that various dissident and oppositional groups in these societies took on was to build organizations, however tenuously rooted, that were not controlled by the state and the party. These included, beginning in the 1970s, Czechoslovakia’s Charter 77; Poland’s Committee for the Defense of Workers (KOR) and, later, the Solidarity trade union; transient echoes of the same in Romania (SLOMR and the Goma circle); and Hungary’s independent ecology and peace movements and the voluntary organization in support of needy families (SZETA). While such organizations were often fragile, they gave their members a taste of the experience that will be necessary to filling that intermediate space in society and to increasing social pluralism thereby.

This experience was not, however, widely distributed. The more common experience of eastern Europeans was one of atomization, of alienation from one another and from the sphere of meaningful political or collective activity, and of the expropriation of initiative and a capacity to make plans. Under these circumstances, the restoration of politics as a meaningful sphere and the building of new institutions and organizations—which must take over some of the redistributive functions of the socialist bureaucracy and restrain its resurrection—will be a lengthy and arduous process. To observe it should be a research objective of the highest priority.

Similar arguments pertain to a second area whose significance the western media have already confirmed: ethnic and national conflicts. Eastern Europe is a region long characterized by tense ethnonational relations. Contrary to the view widespread in America, the resuscitation of those ethnic conflicts is not simply a revival of “traditional” enmities from the interwar years—as if the intervening half-century were inconsequential. To begin with, ethnic ideologies were reinforced rather than diminished by socialism’s “shortage economies,” which favored any social device that reduced competition for unavailable goods. Ethnic ideas, with their drawing of clear boundaries between “in” and “out,” are (alongside the more often noted “corruption”) one such device. Second, with the end of government repression, ethnonational resentments flare up in an environment extremely unpropitious to managing them: an environment devoid of any intermediate institutions for settling disagreements peaceably. The Romanian case, in which the former Secret Police apparatus seems to have taken over some of the articulation of Romanian ethnic concerns while Romania’s Hungarians have formed a strong, united new party, suggests both the danger of the situation and the importance of monitoring the efforts to contain ethnic conflict institutionally.

A third significant area involves the decentralization of decision making, which most of the postsocialist governments have expressed as their aim. This process will run up against long-standing bureaucratic practices rooted in the system of centralized command, with its tendency to concentrate resources within the bureaucratic apparatus precisely because bureaucrats have learned to compete by amassing such resources. It is not simply that top bureaucrats will resist the devolution of decision making from their domains; one could easily predict this without the aid of models such as the one presented here. At least as important is that *lower-level* bureaucrats—and even those citizens the bureaucracy once served, however poorly—will resist the dismantling of a structure within which they had become adept competitors or occasional

beneficiaries. For example, in Romania it seemed for a time in the spring of 1990 that the Ministry of Religion was to be disbanded, on the grounds that it was no longer necessary in a society having a normal separation of church and state and having no official atheism that required surveillance over institutions of faith. A delegation of prelates to the Romanian President and Prime Minister, however, requested the reinstatement of such a Ministry and the naming of a Minister; without it (though this was not the reason given), they would have no outlet for their well-honed talents at influencing the Minister in their favor and at securing support for their projects. Otherwise, they would have to learn an entire new repertoire of behaviors requisite to the prospering of their enterprise, and this was not necessarily an appealing prospect.

The concentration of resources within the political apparatus produced a multitude of practices for influencing their allocation. These practices may prove difficult to eradicate, as we know from anthropological studies in which "market penetration" encounters determined resistance from those it threatens. One might expect to see not merely the former top elite but all manner of others—writers, doctors, publishers, clerks, teachers, even perhaps would-be entrepreneurs—calling upon the postsocialist state to take more responsibility for providing resources. In this way they will help to perpetuate a centralized power. The process positively invites its participant observers.

A fourth set of processes worth watching will emerge from the labor shortage endemic to socialism's shortage economies. Like other resources, labor was hoarded within socialist firms, giving rise to the lax labor discipline and overmanning so often remarked by outside observers. This labor shortage was one factor contributing to the potential strength of the working classes under socialism, epitomized in Poland's Solidarity. Now, however, the introduction of market forces is expected to produce massive unemployment, as newly profit-conscious firms release their labor reserves. Workers who learned from socialism of their right to work will have to be persuaded to relinquish that right, and we might imagine they will be hard to convince. Anthropologists could be crucial witnesses of both the efforts to persuade and the resistance to persuasion. The problem will be particularly acute, however, for women, who made considerable strides in the workplace under socialism (even if less spectacularly than was claimed, and often at great cost to them). They too were taught to expect certain rights, which they now stand to lose disproportionately, relative to men. Angry objections by East German women concerning the restrictive abortion and childcare policies of West Germany show one small facet of a much larger reconfiguration that gender economies will undergo during the transition.³⁰

Finally, I argued above that "symbolic-ideological control" and, therefore, "culture" had special significance in socialist systems. Let us assume that increased marketization of the economy will erode this special political significance of culture, as remunerative incentives increase; let us further assume that because Marxism-Leninism will no longer be enforcing transformations of consciousness, consciousness will come to be formed less through discourse and more through practices (now *not* seen as imposed by power). It follows, then, that intellectuals and the cultural production they oversee will enter a new time of crisis. They will discover themselves increasingly irrelevant to politics, rather like their American counterparts, and will find their public prestige in decline. Just as many intellectuals derived real benefit from the socialist state's subsidy of their work, so will they now resist the commodification of their creativity and knowledge (cf. Haraszti 1987). The response of intellectuals to this erosion of their place, in the various eastern European countries, will merit close scrutiny—particularly inasmuch as increased nationalism in the culture they produce is one certain consequence.

These suggestions merely scratch the surface of what researchers might expect to find henceforth in the formerly socialist countries of eastern Europe, now forging a new "articulation" with the world of the capitalist west. Fortified by oppositional theories that emerged from within the socialist order, we can perhaps better comprehend the directions this new articulation may take.

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¹I follow many others in using Bahro's term "actually existing" or "real" socialism (Bahro 1978) to distinguish analysis of the forms of socialist society that existed until recently from utopian discussions of what a possible socialism might look like.

²I do not assume that the end product of the transition will be market economies and "democratic" polities. At least as likely in some of the countries of eastern Europe are anarchy, military dictatorship, or new oligarchic forms, coexisting with varying degrees of continued state ownership. For this reason, I speak of the "transition from" rather than the "transition to."

³Scholars from other eastern European countries have also contributed importantly to this literature. Among the most sophisticated is Poland's Jadwiga Staniszkis. Her principal treatise on "real socialism" (Staniszkis In press) has not yet appeared in English, however, as have the works I describe below.

⁴Konrád and Szelényi were arrested for their critique of Hungarian socialism; Szelényi subsequently emigrated to Australia and now teaches at the University of California, Los Angeles, while Konrád, after a brief period of "exile" in London, returned to a life of surveillance in Budapest. Similarly, Fehér, Heller, and Márkus were eventually driven out of Hungary for the implications of their critique; all three went to Australia, the third remaining there and the first two moving to the New School for Social Research in New York. Pavel Campeanu remained in Bucharest with occasional trips to visit his son in the United States; police harassment of him was increasing in the late 1980s, however, and might have led to his expulsion from Romania had Ceaușescu not been overthrown.

As a measure of the changes that have occurred, Szelényi and Konrád are now Budapest property owners, both are very active in Hungarian politics, and Szelényi (who divides his time between Hungary and the United States) is now a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Campeanu is a key member of the oppositional Group for Social Dialogue in Bucharest.

⁵This is not true of the writings of the Hungarian economists Kornai and Bauer, who presented themselves and their work as coming from *within* the confines of their societies and were not regarded by the state as "dissidents." They were not offering a Left critique of socialism as were the "Budapest School" group involving Fehér, Heller, and Márkus but were, rather, searching for ways to improve the performance of socialist economies by greater recourse to the market mechanism. Their writings were published regularly in Hungary. By contrast, the Hungarian party saw the critiques by the "Budapest School" and Konrád and Szelényi as hostile and as grounds for expulsion. Only as of 1989 were their writings being prepared for publication in their home country. The theoretical critiques by Romanian sociologist Campeanu were published only in the United States (initially under the pseudonym Casals); there was also a covert critical message in some of his publications in Romania, but it was much less apparent than in his publications through M. E. Sharpe. The Romanian Secret Police (but not the Romanian public) knew of the existence of his critique—an entire manuscript had been confiscated at the border—and he had been compelled to sign a statement that he would no longer publish abroad.

⁶I am grateful to Daniel Chirot for this point.

⁷Among the works I would include in a fuller survey are Bahro 1978; Campeanu 1986 and 1988; Casals 1980; Djilas 1957; Fehér, Heller, and Márkus 1983; Havel 1985; Hirszowicz 1980; Konrád and Szelényi 1979; Kuron and Modzelewski 1966; Simečka 1984; Staniszkis In press; and Trotsky 1937. Most of these are abstract theoretical works, to which one could add a much longer list of empirical studies of how socialist economies function (including Brus 1975; Horvat 1982; Kornai 1980; and Nove 1983).

⁸An alternative solution, characteristic above all of the Hungarian strategy in the mid to late 1980s, would be to *co-opt* other foci of production rather than to disable them. Good examples are the formation of special work partnerships (VGMKs) in Hungarian factories (see Stark 1989) and the restoration of sharecropping in collective farms.

⁹Gross makes a subtle argument, suggesting both that the *center* strove to prevent association and that much of the effect was actually produced by *individuals*, who, by making private use of publicly available power to denounce and ruin others, caused the social atomization so characteristic of socialism. He points to comparable processes whereby intermediate associations were destroyed in other regimes as well, especially that of the Nazis (Gross 1988:230–231).

¹⁰See my discussion (below) of the "second economy," however, for a qualification to this point.

¹¹The "irrationalities" of capitalist monopoly practices and government bail-outs of major firms make this, of course, a difference of degree rather than a fundamental qualitative divide.

¹²Marx identified in capitalism a constant tension between, on the one hand, the capitalist's desire to accumulate by keeping workers' wages down and, on the other, the necessity for workers as consumers to have enough income to purchase commodities and thus contribute to further accumulation. A major element in the cycles of capitalism, then, is necessary adjustments in the relationship between capital accumulation and consumption. I am looking to define a comparable sort of tension for socialism.

¹³I owe a debt to Jane Collier for influencing the formulation that follows.

¹⁴This sort of behavior tends to characterize bureaucratic organizations generally, but I would hold that it is orders of magnitude higher in socialism's bureaucracies than in those of other kinds of societies.

¹⁵Various scholars would dispute this general characterization. Lovenduski and Woodall, for example, argue that one cannot give a blanket definition of the social groups that will favor or oppose reforms, for these vary by the country and the situation (1987:122–128). Csanadi (1990) offers an argument similar to mine for the dynamics of reform, and so does Winiecki, but the latter identifies the group interests differently, seeing the *ruling apex* rather than the economic bureaucracy as the ones concerned with actual output (1990:67–68). Staniszkis, on the other hand, sees the key contrast as one between those groups who manage socialism's interface with the outside world and those who manage it internally (1990:79–80). Yet another view locates the fundamental tension in the problems of policing an administrative hierarchy when the state and party sectors of the bureaucracy are collapsed into each other (see, for example, Benson 1990:92). Resolution of these contradictory views doubtless lies in close empirical studies, which will probably show that a generic model such as this one cannot capture the particulars that produced reform in the various countries.

¹⁶It is when they are forced by indebtedness to become linked with western economies that socialist systems can no longer remain totally indifferent to the sale of products, as they can more readily when self-contained. Thus, I would argue that the world crisis in capitalism of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when western creditors began solving their problems of overaccumulation by exporting credit and technology to the east bloc, was a main cause of the unusual amplitude of reform attempts within socialism in the 1980s.

¹⁷This does not pretend to be an adequate account of the events of 1989, which with astonishing rapidity brought down Communist party rule in six countries where it had seemed impregnable. For one thing, my discussion overemphasizes the internal contradictions of the socialist system and pays scant attention to the international environment (for one view of the latter, see Boswell and Peters 1990). The subject of this essay does not require a full account of socialism's demise, and the recency of the events precludes it.

¹⁸For eastern Europe, see, for example, Bauer 1978, Gross 1988, Rév 1987, and Simmonds-Duke 1987; for the People's Republic of China, see Anagnost 1988 and Shue 1988. Casals gives a concise formulation of what was wrong with the image of socialist states as strong:

Unlimited power is only the illusion generated by conditions that the regime believes it has created all by itself, without realizing that it has become the object of those conditions. Unlimited power is a basic form of the false consciousness characteristic of Stalinist society. [1980:34–35]

¹⁹I have not advanced an argument using a Foucauldian notion of power, partly because I believe Foucault's characterization of "modern power" is not wholly applicable to socialist states—despite their inclusion in the "modern" world. Rather, state power in socialism had more in common with the forms Foucault describes for earlier periods in the west, before the emergence of disciplinary mechanisms and practices that produced subjection invisibly and effortlessly. The mix of "modern" and "premodern" power in socialism is too complex a subject for inclusion in this essay.

²⁰The exact size of the Romanian Secret Police is not known with certainty, and the number is further obscured by differences in degree of employment inside and outside the apparatus. For instance, one might report to the police and enjoy certain benefits but not draw one's salary solely from that work. The figure of 1 to 15 comes from the somewhat credible report of former police head Lieutenant General Ion Pacepa (Pacepa 1986:182), who defected in 1978. My salary figure of 16,000 lei for a colonel comes from a Romanian colleague; it is probably accurate, but I do not know if it is representative.

²¹I refer to Václav Havel and Árpád Göncz, who became presidents of Czechoslovakia and Hungary, respectively.

²²I acknowledge a debt here to Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu for several long discussions on this question.

²³There is every reason to believe that these projects were won for their institutes through the processes of competition and bargaining described above.

²⁴In Bakhtin's characterization of authoritative discourse one notes a similarity to Maurice Bloch's language of ritual (1975).

²⁵My thanks to Emily Martin for suggesting this point.

²⁶I do not intend this statement to mean that study of the production and exchange of language should replace study of the organization and control of labor, as some "postmodern" theorists would have it. My statement is specific to socialist systems, not a generic formulation, and (as is clear from earlier sections of this article) should be understood in the context of an institutional analysis of power and work.

²⁷My thanks to Norman Manea for this information. See also Manea 1990.

²⁸See, for example, Arato 1981, Keane 1988, Kligman 1990, and Tismăneanu 1990, to name but a few.

²⁹The different socialist countries varied significantly on this dimension, as on all others. For example, the social space of socialist Poland contained several independent or quasi-independent organizations and groups, especially the Roman Catholic Church and the uncollectivized peasantry, later joined by the Solidarity trade union. In Romania, by contrast, the principal church was controlled by the state, there was essentially no uncollectivized peasantry, and the trade unions were completely dominated by the party.

³⁰I am grateful to Hermine De Soto for making me aware of this problem, in a proposal for research on the topic.

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