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CONTRADICTION AND CHANGE IN STATE SOCIALISM

By STEPHEN WHITE

EAST European scholars have become increasingly willing to concede that the official doctrine of 'moral-political unity' conceals important aspects of the political process.* Wiatr, for instance, has pointed out that the control of the state 'by no means implies that the rulers can undertake their decisions concerning the directions of social processes in an absolute vacuum'. In addition to parties, several other occupational, representational and cultural organizations are of political importance; and they have 'with increasing frequency [been] treated . . . as equivalent to interest groups functioning in the political systems of capitalist countries'.¹ The official view that there is no need or room for Western-style lobbying has been described by another Polish writer as naive and unrealistic. Lobbies may be seen on the contrary as a common characteristic of modern life necessary for the promotion of progress.² Shubkin has more guardedly drawn attention to the complexity which is characteristic of the concrete analysis of social processes. Social analysis, he has argued, cannot limit itself to the study of economic relations, forms of property and material wealth. It must embrace 'not only productive, but other relations; not only classes, but groups; not only objective, but also subjective phenomena and processes'.³

Western scholars have been less inhibited by official doctrine; and they have been more willing to postulate élite and élite conflict theories. Among the more favoured of such theories has been that which posits a cleavage between party officials, or *apparatchiki*, and the managerial élite, or 'technocrats'. Increasingly, it is argued, the development of productive forces and especially of science and technology will render the making of policy the preserve of the expert rather than of the politically orthodox. Such a transfer of political power is necessary if social and economic development is not to be obstructed. Equally, however, it must

* I am grateful to Dr. David Lane (University of Essex) for his comments on an earlier version of this paper.

¹ Jerzy J. Wiatr, 'The Hegemonic Party System in Poland' in Wiatr (ed.), *Studies in [the] Polish Political System* (Warsaw, 1967), pp. 110, 118.

² W. Fijalkowski in *Kultura* (Warsaw), 20 August 1972, p. 12.

³ V. Shubkin, 'O konkretnykh issledovaniyakh sotsial'nykh protsessov', *Kommunist*, 1965, no. 3, p. 49.

lead to a 'secularization' of political leadership to which the *apparatchiki*, virtually by definition, cannot remain indifferent. This functional differentiation, it is suggested, is incapable of resolution within the framework of the existing order, since the party's claim to rule is based upon the ideology which in turn legitimates the regime. No such contradiction, however, is thought to threaten Western capitalist regimes, whose élites are both functionally and subjectively more unified, and where the institution of private property provides a unitary system of values which contributes to the maintenance of social and political solidarity.

It will be suggested in what follows that this theory suffers from a number of important and ultimately crucial shortcomings. An examination of the educational and occupational composition of the CPSU membership and of its leading bodies suggests that no sharp distinction can be made between the two groups; and that the relation between managers and *apparatchiki* may more accurately be seen as one of interpenetration and mutual absorption. The theory, moreover, obscures important—if largely latent—cleavages between party and managerial élites, considered as a single group, and other sections in society, in particular the industrial worker group, as the experience of economic reform in the USSR appears to demonstrate.

An emphasis upon cleavage, however, latent or otherwise, may easily be exaggerated. Important and countervailing sources of stability in the Soviet political system—notably socialization, party recruitment policy, and ideology—must not be overlooked. The Soviet social order—which is taken here as paradigmatic for socialist systems—may indeed be generative of cohesion and stability to a greater extent than Western capitalist regimes, which are faced with contradictions of a very different nature.

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The most uncompromising statement of the 'élite cleavage thesis', perhaps, is provided in Parry's study *The New Class Divided*. The question to which the book is addressed is whether the group of scientific-technical-managerial personnel is 'essentially a group distinct, or potentially distinct, from the Party zealots', and whether one might expect an 'emerging political influence and a rising political role for such technocrats' in opposition to the party bureaucrats. The conclusion offered is that the further enhancement of the manager's position at the expense of the party's prestige and strength is 'not to be doubted Increasingly, the Party needs the professional élite far more than the élite needs the Party'. The professional élite might indeed be seen as a 'countervailing force—and potentially a competitor of the Party, a contender for control of the nation'.⁴

⁴ A. Parry, *The New Class Divided: science and technology versus communism*

A more recent statement of the thesis (which similarly fails to distinguish consistently between the élite groups under consideration) has been provided by Parkin.⁵ In capitalist countries, it is suggested, 'in so far as the bourgeoisie remains the socially, economically and politically dominant class, then the stratification order is in equilibrium', and no internal tension exists which has to be resolved through 'radical social transformation'. In state socialist societies, however, the seizure of power created disequilibrium in the stratification order where previously there had been none. In such societies, the 'key antagonisms occurring at the social level are those between the party and state bureaucracy on the one hand and the intelligentsia on the other'. The power of the former rests upon their control of the political and administrative apparatus of the state, giving them effective legal guardianship of socialized property. The social power of the latter group inheres rather in 'its command of the skills, knowledge and general attributes which are held to be of central importance for the development of productive and scientific forces in modern industrial society'.

The most notable example of weakness in system integration, of which this conflict is the social expression, is the attempt to modify the now dysfunctional command economy without eroding the party's 'monopoly of political authority'. Party apparatus and state administration figures have been the strongest opponents of economic reform, since their personal authority would be seriously undermined by a radical switch from plan criteria to market criteria. The controversy over the economy is 'most sharply expressed in the form of conflict between the apparatus and the intelligentsia, respectively the main opponents and advocates of reform'.

The intelligentsia is seen as an 'ascendant class closely identified with the transformation and capable of pushing it through' and as the 'social embodiment of those scientific, economic and creative forces which are felt to be indispensable to the quest for modernity and social progress'. It is not, however, the class which holds political power. Equilibrium in the social order can be restored only by the accession to political power of the intelligentsia and the displacement of the *apparatchiki*, Parkin concludes, leading to changes from plan towards market criteria in the economy and towards an end to the political control of knowledge, a problem 'irresolvable within the existing order'.

To what extent can the party *apparatchiki* in fact be distinguished from the supposedly ascendant class which confronts them, the 'white-

(London and New York, 1966), pp. ix, 5, 300, 301, 302.

⁵ F. Parkin, 'System Contradiction and System Transformation', *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, vol. XIII, no. 1 (1972), pp. 45-62. The summary which follows is based on Parkin *passim*.

collar specialists'? It is clear, at least, that at the level of social background and training no cleavage can be found between the two groups. The evidence suggests, moreover, that at least in the USSR the typical member of the party apparatus is by no means generally of peasant stock and 'with no formal education beyond the elementary level'.⁶ He is likely, on the contrary, to have had a higher education, and typically it will have been technologically-oriented.

It has been shown that every member of the 1971 Politburo had received advanced training under the Soviet regime. In contrast with the position 20 years previously, moreover, as many as 80% had had some measure of technical training, generally at the tertiary level.⁷ The full members of the Central Committee had similarly in more than nine cases out of ten completed their education above the secondary level. As many as 62% of the full members with a non-military, non-party higher education had received degrees in engineering and other industry-related fields. A smaller but significant proportion (18.7%) had been trained as specialists in the agricultural field. Among the 'most striking findings' of one enquiry was the 'high level of educational attainment of the élite, and the concentration of this training in fields relating to management of the economy'.⁸

At the important oblast level, only five of the 139 first secretaries did not have a higher education in 1966; and three of these five had had an incomplete higher education. The two obkom secretaries with no more than secondary education were 'atypical of the group as a whole'. The type of higher education the obkom first secretaries had received, moreover, was 'overwhelmingly practical and utilitarian, falling mainly into the categories Agricultural-technical or Industrial-technical', giving the great majority of the group 'some expertise in one or other of the main areas of production'. Taking together all secretaries of party obkoms, kraikoms and central committees of republican parties, in 1967 as many as 97.6% had received a complete higher education. Higher education, it has been suggested, is 'now a virtual precondition for holding executive office in the Party'.⁹

Party officials may in many cases be of peasant stock; but in the USSR their education level is typically high, and technologically-oriented. There is little evidence, moreover, to suggest that the skills and attributes of the political bureaucracy are useful 'mainly for the maintenance of the apparatus which is its own creation', and that the group lacks the skills

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁷ T. H. Rigby, 'The Soviet Politburo: A Comparative Profile 1951-71', *Soviet Studies*, vol. XXIV, no. 1 (July 1972), p. 11.

⁸ R. H. Donaldson, 'The 1971 Soviet Central Committee', *World Politics*, vol. XXIV, no. 3 (April 1972), pp. 391, 393, 408.

⁹ P. Frank, 'The CPSU Obkom First Secretary: a Profile', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 1, no. 3 (April 1971), pp. 182, 183.

'intrinsically necessary to an industrial society'.¹⁰ Two-thirds of the present Politburo have worked with their hands for wages; and there has been a 'striking extension of managerial experience'. Two members had served in junior managerial positions for a year or so; five members had from three to five years of managerial experience; and a further three had from eight to as many as 12 years of such experience. The careers of most current Politburo members, it has been noted, have been 'highly specialized in a particular direction, namely, organizational activity aimed at maximizing economic production'.¹¹

Not only have a substantial proportion of the political élite been trained for skilled work in the economy: a significant number of them have actually worked in such positions. Almost one-fifth of the full members of the Central Committee in 1971 had at some point been involved in work in the agricultural sector of the economy; a further 36.6% had had experience in a white-collar management position in a factory. The CPSU cadre, at least at its top level, has 'become a collection of highly trained persons, experienced in performing tasks of direct management of the economy as well as of political supervision'. Another study of Soviet *apparatchiki* has found that in recent years specialist training has played a significantly greater role in contributing to advancement in the *apparat* than has either a general education or Party School preparation. There has been a steady increase in the number and percentage of persons co-opted into the higher echelons of the *apparat* who had functional specializations in the economic sector of Soviet society; and the proportion of production-oriented specialists in the industrial sector has increased 'most sharply'. Those who spent their entire careers in the *apparat* without developing a technical specialization appeared to have a decreasing chance of moving to the top.¹²

Recent studies of interest-group activity and policy formation, moreover, have undermined the familiar picture of cleavage between the *apparatchiki*, the strongest opponents of reform, and the technical intelligentsia, its strongest supporters. Party officials in the USSR, it is clear, cannot be seen as dogmatic supporters of existing policies, or even as their most vigorous proponents. The regional first secretaries may actually be among those most in favour of the initial steps in

¹⁰ Parkin, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹¹ Rigby, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-22.

¹² Donaldson, *op. cit.*, p. 393; M. Gehlen, 'The Soviet Apparatchiki', in R. B. Farrell (ed.), *Political Leadership in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (London, 1970), pp. 145, 147, 148-9. It should be added that the homogeneity of the *apparatchiki* and the technical intelligentsia is by no means confined to education, career patterns and material benefits. Increasingly, as Churchward has pointed out, members of the local 'leadership group' tend to belong to similar friendship circles, to attend the same cultural functions and even to go on holiday together (L. G. Churchward, *The Soviet Intelligentsia*, London, 1973, pp. 71-72). Such aspects of élite cohesion and self-perception have so far received insufficient attention from scholars.

economic reform; and their resistance to sociological and economic research may be less than that of most academic political economists.

Although there is ample room for a distinct 'party position' on many issues, Hough has noted, it is 'not at all clear what that position is or, indeed, whether one actually exists. Certainly there is little evidence that the specialized party officials, even the ideological ones, are always the spokesmen for the dogmatic, "ideological" position on a given issue'. Every occupational group, in fact, with the possible exception of the secret police, is divided into opinion groups, with 'reformists' and 'conservatives' in each of them. Each group will contain a wide and changing spectrum of opinion.¹³

Indeed, the continuation of experiment in the management of the economy indicates that the party leadership is not opposed to appreciable change in this field. (If the party authorities, as Parkin has held, are in a position of total domination of society and also the strongest opponents of reform, it is difficult to account for the adoption of, for instance, the Kosygin reforms. In Hungary the New Economic Mechanism was indeed promoted by the party and met with considerable opposition from managers and technical specialists.) Recent developments include the launching of a new series of books on 'The New in Production Management Abroad', and the establishment of an Institute for the Management of the National Economy, at whose opening ceremony Kosygin made a speech of cordial endorsement.¹⁴ Brezhnev pointed out at the XXIV Party Congress that 'life is continuously making greater demands on cadres. We need people who combine a high level of political consciousness with a sound professional training, people who can knowledgeably tackle the problems of economic and cultural development and are well-versed in modern methods of management'.¹⁵ The endeavour to introduce scientific principles ever more broadly into economic management, Shelest added the following August, was a 'characteristic feature of the activity of party committees and of primary party organizations'. The 'chief task' of communists was to bring all reserves of production into action. Towards this end scholars must 'intensify the elaboration of the scientific principles, methods and means with which it is necessary to arm our cadres'.¹⁶

It has been argued that the skills and attributes of the *apparatchiki* are highly specific to one particular version of industrial society, giving this group as a whole an 'obvious stake in the preservation of the existing order'.¹⁷ This is belied by the apparent willingness on the part of the political élite to countenance and even initiate experiment and innova-

¹³ H. G. Skilling and F. Griffiths (eds.), *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (Princeton, 1971), pp. 69, 70, 78, 395, and *passim*. ¹⁴ *Pravda*, 13 August 1971. ² February 1971.

¹⁵ *XXIV S'ezd KPSS: stenograficheskii otchet*, vol. 1 (M., 1971), p. 125.

¹⁶ *Pravda*, 20 August 1971.

¹⁷ Parkin, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

tion in economic management. The political élite's high and increasing level of industrial experience and expertise, moreover, suggests that its skills and attributes are by no means destined for obsolescence. (Why in any case should the political articulators of values become useless?)

Indeed, a number of powerful factors should range the political élite as a whole on the side of economic reform. The Soviet *apparatchik* is presumably no less anxious than his counterpart in a capitalist country to make concessions where possible to popular and consumer pressures, thus enhancing system stability and thereby strengthening his own position. Further economic reform—to the extent to which it would diminish central control—would increase local autonomy, and thus the power and freedom of initiative of party functionaries at intermediate and local levels. Regional first secretaries in particular are to an important degree dependent upon and thus responsive to the interests of individual enterprise directors, who will largely determine plan fulfilment in their area, and they appear to be to a greater extent than the central *apparat* exposed to popular, consumer-oriented pressures.

Even the central *apparat* would be likely to retain its present function, the making of strategic economic decisions, under any conceivable 'market' system. Not less important (and this is a point to which we shall return), as possessors of technical and other skills and as members of the élite as a whole, the party *apparatchiki* stand to gain substantially from the increased income differentials with which the reforms have, historically, been associated. As Hough notes, there is 'not the slightest evidence to support the hypothesis of a party apparatus united on a conservative policy position—and a great deal of evidence to indicate that the hypothesis is wrong'.¹⁸

It need not occasion surprise that the white-collar intelligentsia should have assiduously promoted the view that they are, indeed, the social embodiment of the scientific, economic and creative forces indispensable for modernity and social progress. Zabelin, in his *Chelovek i chelovechestvo*, has gone so far as to claim that the working class 'came to power to cede its place in the historical arena to the intelligentsia, the class of the intelligentsia'. The major contemporary revolutionary class, in his view, had become the intelligentsia, 'the varied activities of which change and define the fate of countries and peoples'.¹⁹ We should not overlook the extent to which the intelligentsia's general claims reflect their sectional interests. In this case, as Bauman has put it, the experts are able to 'identify their group interests with the seemingly suprapartisan values of technical rationality'.²⁰

¹⁸ J. F. Hough, 'The Soviet System: Petrification or Pluralism?', *Problems of Communism*, vol. 21, no. 2 (March-April 1972), p. 27.

¹⁹ I. Zabelin, quoted in *Oktyabr*, 1972, no. 4, pp. 199, 200.

²⁰ Z. Bauman, 'Twenty Years After: the Crises of Soviet-type Systems', *Problems*

Advocates of the 'élite cleavage' theory have perhaps overlooked the important degree of consensus uniting party and state officials and the white-collar intelligentsia. This is a consensus founded not only upon shared values—the goal of communism, nationalization of the means of production, distribution and exchange, a single-party system—but also and not less importantly upon common interests, as joint beneficiaries of existing inequalities of income and privilege. There seems so far no reason to suppose that the adoption of 'market' reforms, which would maximize these inequalities, should be resisted by either group. Such a reform would have, indeed, at least one striking advantage: income inequity and privilege would be transformed thereby from consciously planned decisions, and thus decisions open to criticism and accessible to political control, into apparent properties of 'the market', for which the political leadership could not be held responsible. Inequality could be turned, in Marx's terms, into a 'social hieroglyphic'; and the relation between men and their labour could be presented as a 'relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour'.²¹ It appears likely (to extend this analysis) that such a mystification of exploitative social relations is a major bulwark of bourgeois hegemony in capitalist countries. Yet the experience of the reforms, by the same token, exposes another contradiction altogether more salient to system stability and transformation: that between the élite as a whole and the working class. This contradiction we shall now consider.

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The point, in fact, emerges particularly clearly when a second and, it has been argued, even more important contradiction is considered: the direct political censorship of social knowledge and information which detracts from official versions of reality in the interests of the party's 'claim to the monopoly of truth'.²² For direct contact with Soviet academics and a reading of the press and journals indicates that most Western social science and technical literature is readily available in at least the major institutes and libraries. The jamming of Western radio broadcasts is from time to time abandoned, at little visible cost to party ascendancy; and academic exchange and contact has become much more commonplace.²³ Recent translations of Western sociology and

of Communism, vol. 20, no. 6 (November-December 1971), p. 49. Habermas provides an illuminating discussion of this point in his *Technik und Wissenschaft als 'Ideologie'* (Frankfurt, 1968): translated in *Towards a Rational Society* (London, 1971).

²¹ K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London, 1886—quoted from sixth edition 1900), p. 45.

²² Parkin, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²³ Whereas 1,600 foreign scientists visited the USSR in 1959 as guests of the USSR Academy of Sciences, some 9,000 did so in 1966. More than 3,500 Soviet scientists made foreign trips in the latter year, more than half of them to the non-socialist world; and 865 delegates attended over 130 international scientific conferences and congresses (G. D. Komkov *et al.*, *Akademiya Nauk SSSR* (M., 1968), pp. 210-14, cited in

economics texts (some in small editions) in Eastern European countries include Keynes, Samuelson's *Economics*, Almond and Verba's *Civic Culture*, Nove's *Economic History of the USSR*, and Galbraith's *New Industrial State*. Western mathematical economics and functionalist sociology enjoy a considerable and often inordinate vogue. (A recent Soviet monograph which explicitly proclaims its 'broad use of a structural-functional analysis', for instance, is M. Marchenko's *Politicheskaya organizatsiya Sovetskogo obshchestva i burzhuaznaya sovetologiya*, M., 1973.) Although the tradition of censorship and suspicion lingers on, the *apparatchiki* increasingly make no attempt to seal off such 'competing versions of reality'. Indeed (and although the logic of this point may not be generally appreciated by them), they have no need to do so, for such studies generally justify or assume the rule of a privileged minority mediated by market relations, and have understandably little appeal for broader sections of society. They are, in fact, entirely functional to the rule of a party-state élite.

Such is not the case, of course, with regard to revolutionary Marxist literature appealing for working-class support; and this—whether of Maoist or Trotskyite provenance—is much more rigorously controlled. The latent contradiction which this exposes, moreover, between the élite as a whole and industrial workers, is precisely that which the reforms have threatened to make manifest and upon which they have generally foundered. Viewed in this light, the failure of the Soviet leadership to implement the Liberman reforms cannot be explained by the threat, as yet a remote one, that they might alter the balance of authority between the political bureaucracy and the white-collar intelligentsia. The explanation should perhaps be sought in the rather more real danger that the reforms might precipitate working-class unrest and political change of a far-reaching character.

The effect of the reforms in the USSR to date has been to underline this point. The institution of bonuses from the material incentive fund, in particular, has increased the incomes of white-collar and engineering-technical personnel relative to those of industrial workers. In enterprises which transferred to the new system in 1966, these groups increased their incomes over the previous year by 10.3% and 8.2%, but workers only by 4.1%. Bonuses (excluding those from the wages fund) paid out of profits in the fourth quarter of 1967 accounted for more than 20% of the average wages of these two groups, but for only 3.3% of the average wage of workers.²⁴

Churchward, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–58). Some 38% of university staff members and scientific research workers in Hungary made a trip abroad in 1970, one-third of them to the non-socialist world (I. Lang, 'European Scientific Cooperation and Hungary', *Co-Existence*, vol. 10, no. 1 (March 1973), p. 63).

²⁴ N. E. Drogichinsky and D. E. Tsarev, *Khozyaistvennaya reforma: opyt perspektivy*

A subsequent study of the operation of the new incentive system in a number of enterprises in Kiev concluded that most had used the material incentive fund 'chiefly to improve the earnings of engineering and technical staff and white-collar employees'. Bonuses as a percentage of earnings in three enterprises considered rose for workers by 4.7% to 6.4%. For engineers and technicians, however, they rose by 20.3% to 28.1% and for white-collar staff by 20.8% to 23%. 'Not very much was disbursed to workers from the Material Incentive Fund in the form of bonuses'.²⁵

Between 1966 and 1970 the material incentive fund in Soviet enterprises operating under the new system increased from 196 million rubles to 3,900 million rubles, and increased as a percentage of the wages fund of these enterprises from 7.3% to 10%. Granted the present pattern of the disbursement of these funds, however, it is not surprising to find that managerial opinion was almost equally divided when asked whether they had created sufficient material incentive for the workers.²⁶

Not only do the reforms appear to have increased income differentials (although this will be offset to some extent by the raising of the minimum wage): they threaten also to raise prices, and even to lead to planned redundancies. In this connection the 'Shchekino experiment' is instructive. From about 1969, enterprises which have adopted this approach have planned for large-scale and deliberate lay-offs of workers as a means of increasing labour productivity. By mid-1970 62 enterprises with a total labour force of almost half a million were functioning on Shchekino principles. The Shchekino chemical workers' experience in increasing labour productivity 'and freeing manpower in the process' revealed 'great opportunities', wrote a member of the RSFSR State Planning Committee.²⁷ By January 1971 some 121 enterprises with a total work force of nearly three-quarters of a million were reported to be applying the experiment. It was intended to reduce the work force of the enterprises involved by some 65,000 in the course of two or three years; and a Central Committee decree recommended the experience of the Shchekino combine to party committees throughout the country. The Shchekino chemical combine itself, however, its work force reduced by a thousand, was reportedly still attempting to work out a system of material provision for those 'displaced by technical progress'; and

(M., 1968), pp. 241-2; V. V. Sitnin, *Problemy pribyli i khozyaistvennaya rascheta v promyshlennosti* (M., 1969), p. 109; cited in M. Ellman, *Soviet Planning Today* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 139, 140.

²⁵ G. D. Soboleva, 'The New Soviet Incentive System: a study of its operation in Kiev', *International Labour Review*, vol. 101, no. 1 (January 1970), pp. 32, 33.

²⁶ *Planovoe khozyaistvo*, 1971, no. 5, p. 66, cited by Ellman, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

²⁷ *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta*, 1970, no. 27, pp. 3-4; N. Zenchenko, *Pravda*, 19 April 1971.

workers' letters, discussed in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, revealed a 'popular uneasiness about the prospects of unemployment'.²⁸

Soviet workers appear so far to have given little support to the 'democratic' and other oppositional groups. One investigation, for instance, found that workers accounted for no more than 6% of those who had signed petitions calling for liberal reforms.²⁹ Yet working-class opposition has periodically made itself apparent on economic issues, as at Novocherkassk in 1962; and the decision (for instance) to hold down the price of meat by means of a budgetary subsidy is clearly a pre-eminently political one. It is this latent social cleavage which the reforms threaten to convert into the agency of system transformation.

The East European experience offers supporting comparative evidence. In Hungary, for instance, hierarchical income distortions became 'very apparent' during the 1968 distribution of enterprise profit under the provisions of the New Economic Mechanism. A 'considerable difference' resulted in the material benefits accorded respectively to workers, technical staff and managers.³⁰ The Šik reforms in Czechoslovakia similarly proposed to increase income differentials, and to remunerate those with greater responsibility—managers and foremen—in accordance with this responsibility and with the results of their efforts. For all workers, wages and premia would be tied to the quality of the goods they produced, with direct penalties for poor-quality work. There was considerable worker opposition to these measures, expressed in strikes and even in letters to the paper demanding the punishment of those who had introduced them.³¹

The point emerges with even more force from the attempt in Poland in late 1970 to introduce significant increases in the retail prices of food-stuffs in line with proposed reforms in economic management. Working-class opposition led to the cancellation of the increases and to a two-year price freeze (subsequently extended for a further, indefinite period). During 1971 the rise in the real income of workers in large factories is estimated to have exceeded 10%, with further gains from increased government spending on social welfare. The changes in the structure of wages and salaries in December 1970 benefited the lowest-paid most directly, and income differentials were reduced. Managers were specifically enjoined to secure a 'just distribution of bonuses and monetary rewards'.³² The events in northern Poland, moreover, led

²⁸ *Planovoe khozyaistvo*, 1971, no. 8, p. 10; Ellman, *op. cit.*, p. 140; *Voprosy ekonomiki*, 1971, no. 2, pp. 46–47; A. Katz, *The Politics of Economic Reform in the Soviet Union* (New York, 1972), p. 200.

²⁹ A. Amalrik, *Will the USSR Survive until 1984?* (London, 1969), p. 14.

³⁰ *Sociological Review*, Monograph 17 (February 1972), p. 46.

³¹ G. Golan, *The Czechoslovak Reform Movement* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 67, 230, 231. See also Alex Pravda, *Some Aspects of the Czechoslovak Economic Reform and the Working Class in 1968* (*Soviet Studies*, vol. XXV, no. 1 (July, 1973), pp. 102–24).

³² *Polityka*, 11 December 1971, p. 4, and *Polityka-Statystyka*, 27 November 1971,

directly to the downfall of Gomulka and to major changes in the political leadership. The point did not escape the Soviet leadership, and a massive loan (believed to have amounted to 100 million dollars) was swiftly arranged.

'Market' reforms in the economic mechanism, then, appear to presage a system transformation of a rather different and more radical kind than an analysis focused upon intra-élite differences would suggest. Such reforms, however, are a policy option, not an ineluctable necessity: as the GDR demonstrates, the existing economic mechanism can hardly be said to have exhausted its possibilities. Moreover, the apparent material interest of the élite as a whole in promoting the reforms is balanced by a number of countervailing and constraining factors which tend to contribute to system stability. These will now be considered.

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The agencies of political socialization and control over recruitment to party and élite positions lie in the hands of the party leadership, and constitute a significant resource at their disposal. A pervasive network of party schools and political study circles, as well as the mass media generally, can be harnessed to the task of communicating party policy and mobilizing support for it. Between 1959 and 1965, for example, institutions of political education are reported to have become more 'mass' in character, and to have increased their enrolment from six to 20 million. Nearly a quarter of a million people were enrolled in the universities of Marxism-Leninism, and party officials, directors and managers were typically well represented among them.³³

More recently a seminar has been established under the auspices of the Central Committee of the Armenian party body for the leading personnel of literary and cultural institutions. It is stated to form part of a 'systematic work on the ideological and theoretical upbringing of the literary intelligentsia'.³⁴ Efforts of a similar nature have been reported from Dagestan and Kaunas. A department of party propaganda and political information has been established within the Academy of Social Sciences attached to the CPSU Central Committee in order to improve the work of such institutions. The proportion of party propagandists with higher education has also risen from 60-70% (in 1966) to 85-90% (in 1969).³⁵

p. 4, cited in *ABSEES*, April 1972, pp. 217, 219; D. Lane and G. Kolankiewicz (eds.), *Social Groups in Polish Society* (London, 1973), pp. 316-7.

³³ M. P. Kim (ed.), *Sovetskaya intelligentsiya (istoriya formirovaniya i rosta 1917-65 gg.)* (M., 1968), pp. 424, 425. An up-to-date discussion of the system of officially-sponsored political education in the USSR, from 'elementary political schools' and 'schools of the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism' to the much more selective Higher Party Schools is E. Mickiewicz, 'The Modernization of Party Propaganda in the USSR', *Slavic Review*, vol. 30, no. 2 (June 1971), pp. 257-76.

³⁴ *Partiinaya zhizn'*, 1973, no. 3, pp. 56, 57.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1972, no. 7, p. 18; 1972, no. 8, p. 36; 1972, no. 14, p. 11; *Voprosy teorii i metodov ideologicheskoi raboty*, vypusk 1 (M., 1972), p. 65.

The party's aims have not invariably been achieved.³⁶ There appears to be evidence, however, that these institutions, and especially the mass media, have generally been 'very successful agents of political socialization'. Most people are exposed to the important political messages, and there are indications that most Soviet citizens 'basically do not question the legitimacy of the regime and most of its political messages'.³⁷

Party recruitment policy, equally, can be biased in favour of groups whose disaffection appears possible. Substantially more than half of the new members of the CPSU admitted between the XXIII and XXIV Party Congresses, for instance, were reported to have been workers. In large industrial areas such as Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, Gorky and Karaganda the proportion was as high as 60-70%.³⁸ Workers accounted for 45.4% of new party members in 1966. By 1970 this proportion had risen to 55.4%, and in 1971 it rose further to 56.9%. Some three-quarters of new worker candidate members in this period were occupied in industry, transport, communication and building; and a 'significant proportion' of them were engaged in heavy industry.³⁹ By the beginning of 1972 workers accounted for 40.5% of the party membership as a whole, as against 37.3% five years previously. Even in Moscow, where recruitment policy is constrained by the large numbers of governmental, scientific and educational personnel working in the capital, the proportion of workers in the oblast party organization has risen from 46.5% to 50%.⁴⁰ There is clearly little evidence for Schwartz's assertion that workers are being 'steadily thrust into the background' in the party.⁴¹

However limited the decision-making power of local party bodies, such a trend in recruitment must tend to draw a potentially disaffected group to a greater extent towards established modes of political action. Symbolically, moreover, and in association with a greater recognition in the media of (in this instance) the leading role of the working class in Soviet society,⁴² it represents an endorsement of the legitimacy of the

³⁶ See, for instance, 'Partiinaya zabota o nauchnoi i inzhenerno-tekhnicheskoi intelligentsii', *Partiinaya zhizn'*, 1972, no. 9, pp. 3-7.

³⁷ G. D. Hollander, *Soviet Political Indoctrination* (New York, 1972), p. 187.

³⁸ *XXIV S"ezd KPSS* . . . (see footnote 15 above), pp. 117-18.

³⁹ *Partiinaya zhizn'*, 1973, no. 2, p. 28.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1972, no. 21, p. 10; *Moskovskaya gorodskaya i moskovskaya oblastnaya organizatsiya KPSS v tsifrakh 1917-70* (M., 1972), pp. 67, 71-72.

⁴¹ S. M. Schwartz in *Survey*, no. 65, October 1967, p. 34.

⁴² See, for instance, N. Kolchenko, 'Rabochii klass—vedushchaya sila Sovetskogo obshchestva', *Partiinaya zhizn'*, 1972, no. 21; Peredovaya, 'Sovetskii rabochii', *Kommunist*, 1972, no. 13; L. S. Gaponenko (ed.), *Vedushchaya rol' Sovetskogo rabochego klassa v tekhnicheskoi rekonstruktsii sotsialisticheskoi promyshlennosti* (M., 1973); K. I. Suvorov (ed.), *Partiya i rabochii klass v usloviyakh stroitel'stva kommunizma* (M., 1973) in which the 'vanguard role of the working class in the building of communism in the USSR is shown'. A recent popular study describes the Soviet working class as (in successive chapter headings) the 'builder of the nation of workers', the defender of the 'achievements of October', 'at the head of technical and social progress', and as 'masters of their country' (N. Lebedeva and R. Khabibulina, *Sovetskii rabochii klass* (M., 1972).

demands of such a group upon the political system: and this in turn can contribute to system stability. Such appears, at least, to be the view of the Polish party leadership, which has attempted in the aftermath of the working-class unrest of 1970-71 to reduce the influence of technical groups within the party and to increase that of manual workers.⁴³ The CPSU similarly recognizes that of the means available to it to increase its leading role in society the 'most important' is the 'individual choice of new members (*popolneniya*)'.⁴⁴ Recruitment policy, then, appears to provide the party leadership in state socialist countries with a political resource of some significance.

Finally, ideology is often perceived as a manipulative device, the exercise of which is the prerogative of the party leadership. It is less often observed that it forms a powerful constraint upon their freedom of action. For, while Marxism-Leninism legitimates communist rule in the state socialist countries, it specifies at the same time a commitment to the advancement of popular, and especially of working-class interests. As Bauman has put it, the 'one thing that the rulers of the system can under no circumstances afford to abandon . . . is the system's identification with the power of the proletariat. The key importance of this element overrules its abandonment, whatever difficulties it imposes on the rulers'⁴⁵

To the ideology may largely be attributed, for instance, the relatively more exalted status attached to 'the worker' in occupational rankings in the USSR.⁴⁶ The ideology, moreover, contains radical and egalitarian elements, and would not legitimate extremes of inequalities, or rewards deriving from inherited wealth rather than from work performed. This may help to explain the fact that income differentials in the USSR, while not negligible, appear to be considerably smaller than those in capitalist countries.⁴⁷

Beyond a certain point, an attempt by the party élite to enhance their material position would detract from the legitimacy, and thus from the security of their rule. Even Stalin knew, as Medvedev points out, that he could keep his power 'only if he declared himself a supporter of democracy, socialism, Marxism-Leninism'.⁴⁸ His successors can less easily escape the constraints which this imposes upon their exercise of power.

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⁴³ Lane and Kolankiewicz (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 317.

⁴⁴ *Partiinaya zhizn'*, 1973, no. 2, p. 28.

⁴⁵ Bauman, *op. cit.* (see footnote 20 above), p. 51.

⁴⁶ Inkeles and Rossi found the occupation of 'worker' rated more highly in the USSR than in the USA, Great Britain and New Zealand (I. Inkeles, *Social Change in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 184). See also M. Yanowitch and N. Dodge, 'The Social Evaluation of Occupations in the Soviet Union', *Slavic Review*, vol. 28, no. 4 (December 1969), pp. 619-43.

⁴⁷ D. Lane, *The End of Inequality?* (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 74, 80.

⁴⁸ R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge* (London, 1971), p. 371.

It would go beyond the scope of the present paper to extend the discussion to capitalist countries as well as to state socialist ones. It seems clear, however, that to bring the industrial worker group within the framework of our analysis renders the apparent absence of intra-élite conflict in capitalist states a less reliable predictor of a corresponding immunity to system crisis and change. For, while the élite in both systems may profess a commitment to popular interests, that within a capitalist state cannot implement its promises if it thereby offends against the *raison d'être* of the system over which it presides, profit and the private ownership of productive resources. The contradiction which is thus posed appears to be one of greater gravity than is faced by the political élite in state socialist countries.

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