

The Irrelevance of Ideology: The Fall of Marxism and the Rise of the Last Man

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Hungary has, since the end of World War II, staggered from a slavish obeisance to Soviet directives; through a heretical and violent outburst in 1956; an innovative, yet failed plan to decentralize industry and generate efficiency and profit; to a current impasse, which sees centralized controls returning, while the doctrinal laxity generated in Kádár's famous dictum, "those who are not against us, are with us,"¹ has fostered a situation in which official declarations of socialist solidarity meet with a public ennui supported and accompanied by the inscrutability of macro-economic theory linked to dialectical postulates.

Wandering around the streets of the inner city of Budapest, does not give the casual visitor the impression that he is in the centre of a society in which the austere maxims of Marx and Lenin really touch the lives of many people. The chic young men and women staring at the window displays on Váci utca, the murmur of the polite and often multi-lingual conversations in the crowded coffee shop of the Duna Intercontinental Hotel, and the musty chandeliered, decaying elegance of the Gerbaud, now the Vörösmarty café, where an older clientèle dip into their creamy cakes, sip their brandy, and fondle their glasses of soda water while in heated discussion about the results of the latest soccer game, defines this second city of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as surviving in its own way despite the alien and imposed constraints enforced by the presence of Soviet troops. The wags of the city, cheerfully and with a droll cynicism characterize Hungary as, "the best barracks in the whole camp."

To a North American, the crowded and yet frequently available buses and the streets busy with shoppers carrying net bags full of an assort-

ment of groceries, is an archaic and nostalgic sight. The form of the city mirrors Vienna, with its ring streets and broad avenues. The older homes of the departed aristocracy, now largely transformed into embassies and offices for official state enterprises, line Népköztársaság út (Avenue of the People's Republic), which is still called Andrásy út, because its socialist nomenclature is too awkward, much as 6th Avenue in New York City has never been fully accepted as "The Avenue of the Americas." Further away in the hilly region of Buda, is Rózsadomb, another centre of the grand style of the late 19th century, now more fittingly an area where the new rich and powerful graciously display their achievements. In this area on frequent occasions, the black, chauffeur driven Chevrolet of János Kádár passes on its way to deliver the aging leader of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party to his residence high in these hills, or to take him to the headquarters of the Party on the banks of the Danube.

The apparent political and economic tranquility is to a considerable extent symbolized by Kádár, once the hated courier of Soviet intervention in 1956, who has been instrumental in calming the fractious elements, both in the Party and outside it, into accepting the reality of Soviet domination, while yet allowing a considerable degree of internal laxity in the definition of what socialism entails. Kádár is the central figure in a peculiar drama in which the stage is set by the Soviet Union. The actors, props and stage hands are the Hungarian Apparatus, and the sparse audience, the Hungarian population, watching and critically commenting on the performance in hushed whispers, so as not to distract the players, and hoping, if not for a happy ending, at least for a pleasant diversion.

Kádár's popularity in Hungary is unmatched by any other leader in the Soviet Bloc. He has managed to all but erase the memories of the depredations of the Rákosi regime, and to enhance the separation between public and private spheres, which increases the distance between an imposed socialism and the bourgeoisie value sub-structure which continues in spite of strenuous attempts to alter it.²

This enterprising compromise of Hungary's has not been a simple matter to achieve. The major instrument in this alteration has been the emphasis on planning and coördination, managed by experts who have replaced inexpert functionaries who were loyal to the demands of the Soviet Union. With this emphasis on planning, a dual Hungary³ is in process of forming, in which the state and society are two separate entities with little attention paid by the masses to public pronouncements unless they intrude on the defences constructed to insulate and protect their privacy.

This duality and the protective distancing developed, is most visible in the activities of the 'political planner', who is no longer the committed Party worker informing on the indiscretions of his co-workers, but a management expert using the tools of the social sciences to acquire useful information to enhance productivity, irrespective of what may be felt and thought by those performing the tasks. This rôle of expertise has fostered the generation of research institutes in which data gathering on attitudes and opinions is seen as a prime mechanism for the ultimate achievement of an enhanced commitment to socialism.

This shift in emphasis began a few years after the Kádár régime consolidated its hold, when in 1960 the acceptability of social science research was announced with the publication of three articles, one on social science methodology, another on the reaction of young people to jazz, and a survey on the uses of leisure and moral and political concerns.⁴ In the ensuing years, both a Sociological Research Institute and a Public Opinion Research Centre linked with the Radio were established. The formation of the Sociology Institute was initially placed in the hands of András Hegedüs, the Prime Minister during the final months of the Rákosi regime. However, the transformation of Hegedüs from an unquestioning and loyal servant to a critic of Soviet policy culminated in 1968, when he signed with others a proclamation condemning the Warsaw Pact nations' invasion of Czechoslovakia. At this point Hegedüs was replaced at the Institute by Kálmán Kulcsár, a more acceptable, if apolitical figure, who is still at the helm of the Institute.

Hegedüs brought into the Institute a number of young people, who were not all formally trained in the social sciences, amongst whom were several students of György Lukács. Hegedüs and his staff saw the alternatives which Sociology could adopt in its milieu,⁵ and his leadership was based on a toleration for a diversity of perspectives. In recent years, however, some of the researchers have concentrated inordinately on the contradictions within the policy formulations of the Party, which has resulted, for some, in exile, and for others, enforced silence. Consequently it has become increasingly obvious that the desired and acceptable stance of the social sciences in Hungary is that of a handmaiden to the Apparatus in its desire to eliminate ideologically based criticisms, and to achieve a greater commitment to socialist values. This end-of-ideology approach has not, however, resulted in the attainment of the planned enhancement of social cohesion. On the contrary, the available data show if anything a conscious lack of personal investment in socialist shibboleths. The basis for this assertion is founded on a range of studies completed to date, especially in the area of Public Opinion, which show a clear and unmistakable lack of interest on the part of most

sectors of the population in the nature, form and substance of the governmental machinery to which they are subject.⁶ It would, however, be premature to see this indifference as an indicator of the essential illegitimacy of the political form of the nation. Rather these responses may simply be defined as a measure of the distance between what most people would see as important issues which concern them directly, as opposed to those that are fixed and consequently not subject to debate or discussion.

In spite of the lack-lustre evidence produced to date, these studies continue to be supported by the Agit-Prop directorate of the Central Committee. Several possible explanations for this are given by the workers in the area. One is that the development of the critical faculties of the people has not had a sufficient time to develop,⁷ and consequently these studies should not be halted by circumstances which will be altered in time. There is also an awareness on the part of researchers in the field that the population is quite suspicious about the uses to which such information may be put. The breaking down of this wariness to respond is also seen as requiring time.⁸ Finally, these studies continue, even given the dearth of useful data, as they are defined as contributing to the development of more refined and accurate methodological procedures.⁹

As long as these studies do continue, they are indicators of the dominance of the 'liberal' component in the leadership structure, who care less about day-to-day ritual allegiance and more about long-run macro-economic and social developments.

This gap in information and the general thrust of development on the part of Hungary's leadership suggests that there is a covert conflict between the assumptions implicit in the original Marxian postulates concerning the 'new man', combined with the planner's desire to generate an informed and aware public, and the announced lack of interest in these issues exhibited by the population. The ideological directives designed to develop this ideal, appear to have actually enhanced the privatized and publicly irresponsible individual Nietzsche called the Last Man.¹⁰

No shepherd and one herd! Everyone wanteth the same; everyone is equal; he who hath other sentiments goeth voluntarily into the mad-house.

We have discovered happiness . . . say the last man and blinketh thereby.

The unanticipated outcome of this new emphasis on manipulation has reopened the door to a virile return of extreme bourgeois-like individualism,¹¹ in which political and economic controls are seen by many

as hurdles to be vaulted, rather than as guidelines and constraints enhancing the development of a higher moral order.

Given the inert public audience, and the continued attempts to cajole it into a concern with the commonweal on the part of the Agit-Prop and its technically proficient yet ineffective consultants, the outcome obviously disappoints those inclined toward a pristine Marxian orthodoxy. However, it is possible to see in this, that the rational emphases with a coordinated society linked to the distant achievement of utopian goals, displaces the concept of morality with cooptation, while ethical action is replaced by a systemic concern in which the major stress is on technical manipulation and management.¹² Man in this guiding perspective becomes an exterior creature, devoid of substance, who fulfills his quotas, and readily accepts his place, and who never reacts in any way but those defined from above as acceptable. The growth of this simplistic creature devoid of passion and desire, who conforms to both the formal and substantive criteria of rationality, returns us to the 'iron cage' of organization that so overwhelmed Max Weber.¹³

In Hungary, this separation of the world of the planners and the people simply confirms the irrelevance of the initial visions of the end of the divisiveness of toil and the isomorphism of the general and individual wills. These issues are distant from the programmatic demands of coordination, and it is largely left to Western Marxist scholars to continue the debate over these critical issues.¹⁴ The dissociation of ideology, efficiency and morality from the private concerns of the population has fostered in Hungary an alienation from public policy pronouncements which is only relieved by a traditional fatalism and a cynical coffee house humour in which individuals seek solace and relief from the stresses imposed by removing themselves from the battleground and focusing on simpler, immediate and more mundane pleasures.¹⁵

The appeal of this Hungarian resolution is widespread among the populations of the other Soviet Bloc nations, and tourists from East Germany, Poland, and the Soviet Union flock to the sophisticated delights of Budapest.

For those few within Hungary who are unable to quietly tolerate the contradictions, ostracism has been refurbished as a technique for removing potential dissidents. For yet others, defection to the West remains an alternative, when and if the opportunity presents itself. Among those who remain, silence is acknowledged as the most effective posture in coping with the charade of benevolent domination.¹⁶

Nearly 150 years ago, De Tocqueville in viewing the United States feared the potential for despotism in a nation committed to individual-

ism. In Hungary today, the managed, humanized socialism which has developed illustrates more the outcome, rather than a prelude to totalitarianism.¹⁷

Each of them, living apart, is a stranger to the fate of all the rest; his children, and his private friends constitute to him the whole of mankind. As for the rest of his fellow citizens, he is close to them, but he does not see them; he touches them, but he does not feel them; he exists only in himself and for himself alone; and if his kindred still remain to him, he may be said at any rate to have lost his country.

Other Variations

The Hungarian practice of inadvertently encouraging an alienation from public involvements is an extreme, yet effective mechanism for keeping Hungary quietly within the socialist camp. The examples of some of the attempts to bring public concerns and private interests together have not been lost sight of in Hungary. For example, the attempt in Czechoslovakia to re-establish ties to its Social-Democratic past resulted in invasion and a renewal of Soviet-defined orthodoxy. None of the other alternatives which have developed come close to affording the privacy available to Hungarians. Roumania has, for example, forcefully maintained a high order of internal orthodoxy and control, while its foreign policy links to Israel symbolize a search for a modicum of autonomy from the Soviet presence. In Poland the strong religious tradition embodied in the Roman Catholic Church's defense of Polish nationality against the encroachments of the Protestant, Germanic West, and the Russian Orthodox East, remains the one potent moral force containing the strains of an inefficient economy. The Church retains a powerful capacity to minimize the potential repression which might be used by the hand-maidens of the Soviet Apparatus to ensure acquiescence to their directives. This tie between the Polish Party and the Church remains all the more anomalous, as publicly the Church is the standing challenge to the Marxist faith.

East Germany presents the unique case of successfully combining doctrinal orthodoxy and public involvement with industrial and agricultural efficiency. The reconsolidation of the East German Apparatus and the Trade Unions after 1956, and the subsequent building of the Berlin Wall has led to the development of a more sectarian and garrison-like posture, more closely tied to the Soviet Union's aspirations than anywhere else in the Bloc. There are several possible reasons why the leadership of the GDR is as successful as it is. Firstly, there is the ever-present model of the good bourgeois life provided by West Germany and the felt necessity to develop a more stringent and cohesive ideologi-

cal argument to buttress doctrinal purity. East Germany's comparative poverty contrasts with the abundance of its Western neighbour, and provides a niche for more pristine emphases.¹⁸ Secondly, there is the severe limitation on travel imposed on the citizens of the GDR, which prevents them from savouring alternatives.¹⁹ Finally, in the GDR the remnants of Prussian respect for authority may simply combine readily with the latest accretion of totalitarianism.

Yugoslavia and Albania present two heretical postures, one based on relative affluence, the other on poverty. In the case of Yugoslavia, an early decision was made to establish its own fellowship, in which the leadership of Moscow was rejected. With the aging of Tito, overtures to bring these errant souls back into line are repeatedly suggested, but Yugoslavia remains too involved with its own problems to be easily courted. In Albania, isolation and poverty have combined to foster an extreme set of controls in which the orthodoxy of the Soviet Union looks bland and compromised.

The greatest deviation from Soviet orthodoxy is not to be found within the boundaries of its satellite states but in the rise of Communist Parties in Western Europe, where the possibilities of assuming power are imminent. The announced intentions of these parties is to seek their own paths rather than follow the model provided by the Soviet Union. The combination of a volatile political tradition in such countries as Portugal, Spain and Italy, which have been subject to the totalitarianism of fascism, and the moral emphasis visible in their uncontaminated and untried Marxism, suggests that their pronouncements may well enhance the confusion and perplexity of what is entailed in socialism. It is perhaps not surprising to see that János Kádár will be among the first of the satellite leaders to go to Italy to discuss the dimensions of what portends to be another schism in the fabric of socialist solidarity.²⁰

The extent of the variations so far developed, illustrates the visible forms of compromise taken to reduce the strains and alter the impact of directed economic growth. The continued existence of the myriad problems faced by these countries and the variations in the interface between technique and naked domination point to the general complexities in the struggle for control and the strange allies that will be sought out in order to maintain hegemony by the Party.

Resolution

There is no precise way to describe the many possible scenarios that may be forthcoming from these modifications in doctrinal emphasis. If Hungary's example is, as suggested, an extreme yet acceptable position,

within the defined limits, then the two elements, bureaucratization and privatization, pose a tenuous resolution to the unsolvable problems of ideological control and the hopes for the development of a new and higher socialist morality. It should not be forgotten that one of the central sources behind the modifications in orthodoxy results from the effort to raise the level of living. The achievement of relative affluence has had a greater impact in calling into question the traditional controls than any other single result of the technical efforts directed within Eastern Europe. The paradox of affluence in these societies, as in the West, is that it has neither generated the hoped for relaxation in social divisiveness, nor enhanced the moral component of social relations. On the contrary, the rise in the standard of living has fostered an unbridled individualism in which crass manoeuvring for advantage seems a likely if undesired outcome. With this loosening of constraints over individual action, the problem of control becomes, to the governing body, one in which private excesses ought to be regulated so as to provide for the common good. This regulation and manipulation take the place of individual belief and commitment. Yet regulation without a common value core provides the seed of its own ultimate destruction. No contract was ever created which does not contain enough loop-holes for the artificer to wander through in maximizing his own interests. The rise in the standard of living through technical means is a prime factor in the transition from sectarian exclusiveness to churchly laxity. This change in organizational style increases the distance between ideology and organization, and minimizes the expressive involvements of individuals in the very structures which control and regulate their instrumental energies. The result appears to portend what Durkheim called the 'moral mediocrity'²¹ of an unrestrained individualism in which the vitality of the social sphere is replaced by Faustian excesses which are unconstrained by normatively internalized limits. This is a perplexing outcome for those who look for more in humanity. Yet this separation of the public and private spheres of meaning has captured the interest of many in the West who also see a decline in the coherence of liberal political structures.²²

To those in Eastern Europe to whom the assertion of creating a 'new society' and a 'new man' carry reminders of the murderous deprivations of the past combined with crass and empty moralizing, the option of substituting private meanings for public irrelevancies does offer, if not the same range of options as in the West, the possibility of a lonely yet euphoric sense of deliverance. How far this can go is, of course, a moot point. Much as the Reformation created Weber's 'iron cage' of con-

formity, there are no doubt traps in this alienating construction. While we can see the deadening social outcomes to the masses in the Soviet Union and its satellites, who are burdened with the organized unaccountability of totalitarianism, and who have only begun to savour the possibilities of carving out their lonely, private niches, the challenge is inviting.

NOTES

1. The original religious source of this quotation, Matthew 12: 30, "Those who are not with us, are against us," has a more closed, protective and exclusive character than its newer Hungarian variant. The reversal in the quotation indicates both a movement away from an intolerant sectarian posture in favour of an open accommodation to existing social divisions and a realization that the generation of cohesion will not be advanced by maintaining a divisiveness which defines sectors of the population as enemies of the faith.
2. Bennett Kovrig, *The Hungarian People's Republic*, Baltimore, 1970; Peter A. Toma and Ivan Volgyes, *Politics in Hungary*, San Francisco, 1977.
3. Robert C. Tucker, *The Soviet Political Mind*, New York, 1971, pp. 121-142.
4. Robert Blumstock, "Public Opinion in Hungary" in *Public Opinion in European Socialist Systems*, eds. Walter D. Connor and Zvi Gitelman, New York, 1977, pp. 132-166.
5. W. F. Robinson, "Hegedus, His Views and His Critics," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, April 1969, pp. 124-125.
6. Robert Blumstock, *op. cit.*; Peter Toma and Ivan Volgyes, *op. cit.*
7. Róbert Angelusz, "To a Definition of the Concept and Structure of Public Opinion," in *Public Opinion and Mass Communication-Working Conference*, Budapest, 1971, p. 51.
8. Edit S. Molnár, "Véleményalkotás és Információszerzés" (The Creation of Opinion and the Acquisition of Information) in *Az Információtól a Közéletig* (From Information to Public Life), ed. T. Szecső, Budapest, 1973.
9. Ferenc Békés and Edit S. Molnár, "Az 1971 Évi Omnibusz felmérések módszertani tapasztalatai," *Módszertan*, MRT Tömegkommunikációs Kutatóközpont, Vol. 3, No. 7, March 9, 1972, p. 4. (Methodological Experiences Gained with the 1971 Omnibus Surveys).
10. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spake Zarathustra," *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, trans. Thomas Common, New York, 1927.
11. Bennett Kovrig, *op. cit.*
12. D. H. Wrong, "The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology," *American Sociological Review* 26:2, April 1961, pp. 183-193. Systems analysis is quite popular among sociologists in the Soviet Union. Talcott Parsons, whom many radicals in the West excoriate because of what appear to be his conservative positions, is also very popular in Soviet sociological circles; see A. Simirenko, *Soviet Sociology*, Chicago, 1966.
13. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, New York, 1958, p. 181.
14. The Lukács group, consisting of Ágnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, Mihály Vajda, and György and Marissa Márkus, and András Hegedüs, even though the latter was not technically a student of Lukács, have all been silenced and dropped from the Party. At the moment Hegedüs is the only one living in Hungary.

15. One of the visible manifestations of stress is the fact that Hungary has the highest suicide rate in Europe. However, this rate has been high for the last 100 years, but only now is this reaching the awareness of the general population. See Mihály Gergely, *Röpirat az Öngyilkosságról* (A Flyer on Suicide) Budapest, 1972.
16. In addition to the silencing of the Lukács group, Iván Szelényi, a sociologist, was 'invited' to leave Hungary and is now Chairman of the Department of Sociology at Flinders University in Australia. A writer, György Konrád, was allowed to stay, but on the condition that he refrain from publishing any new work which might be contentious. He is currently travelling in Europe and North America.
17. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, New York, 1954, Vol. 2, p. 336.
18. "Communist Party Membership by Occupation" in L. J. Cohen and Jane Shapiro, eds., *Communist Systems in Comparative Perspective*, New York, 1974, p. 526. Proportionally there are more members of the Communist Party in the industrial labour force in East Germany than elsewhere in the Soviet Bloc.
19. This presents an interesting example of an attempt to maintain sectarian principles by isolation.
20. *New York Times*, April 24, 1977. Section 1, p. 12.
21. E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J. W. Swain, London, 1957, p. 427.
22. T. Luckmann, "Belief, Unbelief, and Religion," *The Culture of Unbelief*, Berkeley, 1971, pp. 21-38; T. Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, New York, 1967.

Searching for Land: The First Hungarian Influx into Canada

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It is a well-established fact that the first groups of Hungarian immigrants to the Canadian West¹ came from south of the border, where they had found employment and often spent several years working in coal mines, foundries, and factories mainly in Pennsylvania. In this context, the question arises as to what compelling reasons had prompted these people to leave their jobs in the United States and undertake the strain and expenses of a transfer to the west of Canada. The study of the newspapers from the mining areas in the eastern United States reveals the main characteristics of an economy free in the extreme from social and safety legislation of any kind. In conformity with the leading ideas of the age the American business magnates firmly believed that their task was practically exhausted in the achievement of the greatest possible profit and that it was up to the individual worker to protect and represent his interests as best he could. Consequently, what we would nowadays call industrial disputes were the order of the day. In the ensuing strikes and violence the Eastern and Central European immigrants, including, of course, the Hungarians, were usually thrown in between the two warring camps of the workers and the employers. As a rule, it was the immigrants who had to bear the brunt of any fight. Thus the employers could use newly arrived immigrants to become strike breakers and force a settlement with the strikers. On the other hand, it was not unusual for the trade unions to utilize immigrant miners or factory workers as shock troops against sheriffs and suffer severe losses when shooting occurred. As to job opportunities, the inexperienced and untrained immigrant, often illiterate and usually without any command of English, was last to be employed and first to be dismissed particularly during times of economic recession or depression. Moreover, owing to the same qualities it seemed natural for him to receive the most dangerous and therefore least desirable assignments in factories, foundries or underground in the mines. Yet in view of such circumstances, it would have been cheaper, if not more humanitarian, to employ persons with skill and greater com-