

STUDIES IN GLOBAL SOCIAL HISTORY

WORLDS OF LABOUR, TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

REVOLUTIONS AND LABOUR RELATIONS
IN GLOBAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

EDITED BY

PERIN DELANDAL, PRISCILLA KAMALI
& STEPH MULLER



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Worlds of Labour Turned Upside Down

Studies in Global Social History

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*Revolutions and Labour Relations in
Global Historical Perspective*

Edited by

Pepijn Brandon, Peyman Jafari and Stefan Müller



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Introduction: Worlds of Labour Turned Upside Down

Revolutions and Labour Relations in Global Historical Perspective

Pepijn Brandon, Peyman Jafari and Stefan Müller

Revolutions are relatively new, rare and extraordinary events in history, which is perhaps one reason why historians and social scientists alike continue to be surprised and fascinated by them. Although this interest goes back to at least the early modern revolutions in England (1640–1660) and the Netherlands (1568–1648),¹ it was what Eric Hobsbawm calls the “age of revolutions” that inspired the study of the subject in the nineteenth century. The revolutions of this period included the American (1765–1783), the French (1789–1799), the Haitian (1791–1804) and the Irish (1798) revolutions, in addition to the Latin American wars of independence and the revolutions that swept Europe in 1848.² The next upsurge of studies emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, examining the paths of the Russian (1917), German (1918–1919), Chinese (1911 and 1949), Cuban (1953–1959), Hungarian (1956), Portuguese (1974) and Iranian (1979) revolutions. To this list, one should add the anti-colonial revolutions, such as in Algeria (1954–1962), and the revolutions that toppled the Stalinist regimes in 1989.

During the 1990s, the study of revolutions became confined to specialists, but a number of events in the twenty-first century have put it back under the spotlight. The revolution that toppled Suharto’s three-decade rule in Indonesia in 1998 came as a reminder that the end of the twentieth century might not have heralded the end of revolutions. Then came the wave of “colour revolutions” in Eurasia, starting with the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević in Yugoslavia in 2000, and followed by the Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003), the Orange Revolution in Ukraine (2004–2005), the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan (2005) and the Jeans Revolution in Belarus (2006).³ Despite their names, historians and social scientists might find it difficult to define these as revolutions, as they represented regime breakdowns and regime transitions without being

1 Charles Tilly, *European revolutions, 1492–1992* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

2 E. J. Hobsbawm, *The age of revolution, 1789–1848* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

3 Lucan Way, “The real causes of the color revolutions”, *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008); Lincoln Abraham Mitchell, *The color revolutions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

accompanied by the long period of social ferment or the structural transformations of political, social and cultural life usually associated with the term. They did, however, revive the debate on the nature of revolution.

A similar impetus came from two other developments. First, in the West, mass movements emerged in the twenty-first century as a reaction to neoliberal globalization, war, austerity politics and environmental degradation. These movements have been far from revolutionary, but they have signalled the return of contentious politics on a mass scale and revitalized political imaginaries of radical social change.⁴ Second, mass uprisings did reach a revolutionary scale in a number of Arab countries in 2011, including Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya and Syria. These events too, led to a debate about revolution and its changing character in the twenty-first century, as some stressed their revolutionary dynamics,⁵ others their “leaderless” aspect and the role of social media,⁶ while yet others defined them as “refolutions”, conceptualizing them as movements that have transcended the historical divide between reform and revolution and combine elements of both.⁷ While the “colour revolutions” of the early 2000s seemed to open up the possibility of rethinking revolution as a largely non-violent, but relatively controlled and limited phenomenon,⁸ the Arab Spring and its violent repression seemed to reaffirm more traditional scenarios, in which revolutions comprise several distinct phases of the rise and fall of mass mobilization, intense battles over the political direction of protest, the active dismantling of existing power structures and the threat or actuality of brutal counter-revolution.⁹

Last, a number of anniversaries have fuelled the renewed interest in revolutions. These include the centennial in 2017 of the two Russian revolutions – arguably among, if not the most momentous events of the twentieth century – and of the German Revolution in 2018.¹⁰ The same year saw the bicentennial

4 Paul Mason, *Why it's kicking off everywhere: the new global revolutions* (London: Verso, 2012).

5 Gilbert Achcar, *The people want: a radical exploration of the Arab Uprising* (London: Saqi Books, 2013).

6 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, “Arabs are democracy’s new pioneers”, *The Guardian*, 24 February, 2011.

7 Asef Bayat, *Revolution without revolutionaries: making sense of the Arab Spring* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017).

8 Julia Gerlach, *Color Revolutions in Eurasia* (Cham etc.: Springer, 2014).

9 Brecht De Smet, *Gramsci on Tahrir: Revolution and counter-revolution in Egypt* (London: Pluto Press, 2016).

10 See also the fourth edition of Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Yuri Slezkine, *House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Stephen A. Smith, *Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis, 1890 to 1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). With regard to the German Revolution, see *Germany 1916–23: A Revolution in Context*, ed. Klaus

of Karl Marx, the most famous theorist and advocate of revolution, followed in 2019 by the fortieth anniversary of the Iranian Revolution.¹¹

1 Historiographical Approaches to Revolution

Along with the ebb and flow of the revolutionary tide, the historiographical and theoretical approaches to revolutions have also changed. As mentioned above, one change concerns the very definition of revolution and the debate about whether particular events can be conceptualized as such. Most historians and social scientists have now shaken off the inclination to measure revolutionary events by the yardstick of the “great” English, French, Russian and Chinese revolutions, and are more prone to understand the modality of revolutions in their changing historical context. As Fred Halliday aptly notes:

Definitions of revolution are, like all definitions in social sciences, conventional: revolutions are not – any more than are nations, classes, even events or dates – objectively given “things” waiting to be unearthed or identified like objects of natural science. They are phenomena which human subjects choose to group, on the basis of criteria of significance and recurrence, into one category rather than another.¹²

It is therefore not surprising that approaches to revolutions have changed when new events have presented themselves as possible candidates and new theoretical and methodological insights have emerged. This has been reflected, for instance, in the endeavours to analyse revolutions as processes rather than as single events in time. With regard to Russia, it is now common for historians to speak not only of the two revolutions of 1917, but to situate them in a revolutionary process running from 1905 to at least the end of the Civil War.¹³ Another change in the study of revolutions has been the shift from a

Weinhauer, Anthony McElligott and Kirsten Heinsohn (Bielefeld: Transcript/Columbia University Press, 2015).

- 11 See among others the biography on Marx by Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (London: Allan Lane, 2016), and the conference “The Iranian Revolution as a World Event”, organized at the University of Amsterdam in December 2018.
- 12 Fred Halliday, *Revolution and world politics: the rise and fall of the Sixth Great Power* (Houndmills England/Durham, NC: Macmillan Press/Duke University Press, 1999).
- 13 Laura Engelstein, *Russia in Flames: War, Revolution, Civil War, 1914–1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Mark D. Steinberg, *The Russian Revolution 1905–1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

narrow focus on their causes, to their dynamics and outcomes. The closer attention paid to the dynamics of mobilization has created the intellectual space to include, in addition to class, the role of other factors such as ideology, organization, repertoires, networks, strategy, leadership, culture, emotions, and gender and ethnic relations.¹⁴ One of the consequences has been a shift in the treatment of revolutionaries themselves, and of revolutionary ideas such as Marxism. Current historiography tends to treat them less as “organic” expressions or representatives of particular classes, tendencies or interests within the revolutionary process, but also less as the all-powerful shapers of revolutionary events than was once fashionable.¹⁵ Although such approaches have certainly not disappeared entirely from public narratives on revolution, it is interesting to note that even authors who assign great importance to leaders and their ideologies in the unfolding of revolutionary processes, nowadays tend to approach their actions as a complex outcome of contingencies, dilemmas and influences, rather than as the straightforward application of a “right” or “wrong” set of revolutionary recipes.¹⁶

The divergent outcome of revolutions has also come under closer scrutiny.¹⁷ Some of these theoretical and historiographical shifts were well described by one of the eminent scholars of revolutions, Jack Goldstone, who has distinguished four generations in the studies of revolutions.¹⁸ While the first

14 See for example Charles Tilly and Sidney G. Tarrow, *Contentious politics* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2007); Michelle Chase, *Revolution within the revolution: women and gender politics in Cuba, 1952–1962* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Jean-Pierre Reed, “Emotions in context: Revolutionary accelerators, hope, moral outrage, and other emotions in the making of Nicaragua’s revolution”, *Theory and Society* 33, no. 6 (2004); John Foran, *Theorizing revolutions* (London: Routledge, 1997).

15 While the former approach was of course favoured by many Marxist historians, the latter was very fashionable among Cold War opponents to the very notion of revolution as anything but an ideology-driven scheme devised by minoritarian leaders. For an example of the first approach, see Christopher Hill, *Lenin and the Russian Revolution* (London: The English Universities Press, 1949), for an example of the second, see Bertram D. Wolfe, *Three who made a revolution: A biographical history* (New York: The Dial Press, 1948).

16 For example, Tariq Ali, *The dilemmas of Lenin: Terrorism, war, empire, love, revolution* (London and New York: Verso, 2017).

17 Jack A. Goldstone, “Rethinking revolutions: Integrating origins, processes, and outcomes”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 29, no. 1 (2009); Jeff Carter, Michael Bernhard and Glenn Palmer, “Social revolution, the state, and war: How revolutions affect war-making capacity and interstate war outcomes”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 3 (2012).

18 Jack A. Goldstone, “Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory”, *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, no. 1 (2001).

generation of theories about revolutions were mainly descriptive,¹⁹ the second generation focused on causal factors through various approaches (psychological, structural-functionalist and a combination of both that emphasizes the unevenness caused by rapid modernization). The third generation of revolution theories started to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s. They drew intellectual inspiration from a structuralist interpretation of Karl Marx' writings on the mode of production and class struggle, but also on De Tocqueville's views concerning the French Revolution.²⁰ The pioneering work of Barrington Moore stressed the changing relations among peasants, the state, landlords and a nascent bourgeoisie during the transition to capitalist agriculture.²¹ A decade later, one of Moore's students, Theda Skocpol, modified his structural approach and underpinned it with Weberian notions of state autonomy and multicausality. Following a comparative historical analysis, Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* argues that "social revolutions should be analysed from a structural perspective, with special attention devoted to international contexts and to developments at home and abroad that affect the breakdown of the state organizations of old regimes and the build-up of new, revolutionary state organizations".²²

In reaction to this structuralist turn, and the inadequacies of *States and Social Revolutions*, which Skocpol conceded in relation to the Iranian Revolution, scholars moved in new directions, calling for greater attention to be paid to the roles of agency, ideology and culture in shaping revolutionary mobilization and objectives, and emphasizing the role of contingency in the course and outcome of revolutions. This ushered in the fourth generation of revolution theories, which has been in the making for the last two decades. In this strand of literature, structural causality is replaced by a more complex understanding in terms of multiple causalities that involve structural and agency-driven factors. As a result, research about revolutions has entered into a dialogue with social

19 See for example Lyford Paterson Edwards, *The natural history of revolution* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1927); Clarence Crane Brinton, *The anatomy of revolution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1938); George Sawyer Pettee, *The process of revolution: Studies in systematic political science and comparative government*, vol. v (New York: Harper, 1938).

20 Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, trans. John Bonner (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1856), <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gdc/scd0001.00004399286> [11 November 2019].

21 Barrington Moore, *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy: lord and peasant in the making of the modern world* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993 [1966]).

22 Theda Skocpol, *States and social revolutions: a comparative analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 5.

movement studies, which are concerned with similar processes such as mobilization, ideological contestation and confrontation with authorities.²³ Another development that has had a marked influence on the newer generations of studies of the history of revolutions has been the “global turn”, through various trajectories. One of these has been the increasing attention paid to the international context since the late 1970s. The international system, for instance, looms large in Theda Skocpol’s classic work, *States and Social Revolutions*.²⁴ A more recent trend has postulated an “intersocietal” approach that views the international factors as a *constituent* part of revolutions.²⁵ Others have opted for a transnational approach to revolutions in order to explore the circulation of ideas, people, commodities, practices, etc., as well as the connections between different locations. This approach has produced an impressive body of literature on, for instance, the revolutionary Atlantic in early modern times and studies on particular revolutions from a transnational perspective.²⁶

2 Revolutions and Labour Relations: A Lens to Reconnect Structure and Agency

A strict division of the theoretical and historiographical approaches to revolutions, such as the four-generational approach, is of course somewhat crude. It would be hard to argue, for example, that attention paid to the complex dynamic between structural processes and collective and individual agency, or to the intricacies of ideology, contingency and revolutionary cultures, are absent from such classical accounts of revolution and counter-revolution as Karl Marx’s writings on France in 1848–1851 and 1871, or Leon Trotsky’s *History of the*

23 Goldstone, “Toward a Fourth Generation”, 141–142.

24 Skocpol, *States and social revolutions*.

25 Alexander Anievas and Kamran Matin, *Historical Sociology and World History: Uneven and Combined Development Over the Longue Durée* (London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016); George Lawson, “Revolutions and the international”, *Theory and Society* 44, no. 4 (2015), 299–319. For an application of this approach in a historical study, see Peyman Jafari, “Oil, labour and revolution: a social history of labour in the Iranian oil industry, 1973–1983” (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2018).

26 Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001). See in continuation, Janet Polasky, *Revolutions Without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015); Christian Helm, *Botschafter der Revolution: Das transnationale Kommunikationsnetzwerk zwischen der Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional und bundesdeutscher Solidaritätsbewegung 1977–1990* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

Russian Revolution.²⁷ The separation into four generations might also conceal some of the ways in which these older accounts continue to inform present studies. It was a serious engagement with his notorious predecessors that led Charles Tilly, for instance, to develop his own ideas on revolutions, which are difficult to fit into the four described generations. Tilly's analysis of collective action in *From Mobilization to Revolution* is explicitly linked to the dynamics of capitalism, for which he drew heavily on Marx: "Over the long run, the reorganization of production creates the chief historical actors, the major constellations of interests, the basic threats to those interests, and principal conditions for transfers of power [that is, revolutions]".²⁸ Tilly stresses the importance of interests, organizational resources and opportunity in the conflicts between different groups (states, elites and challengers).

In his later writings, Tilly studied revolutions as specific instances of "contentious politics". Through the works of many scholars, this approach has come to encompass various concepts, such as mobilization structures, political opportunity, framing, protest cycles and repertoires of contention.²⁹ From this perspective, a revolution is a specific form of "contentious politics", in which contenders advance exclusive competing claims to control of the state, a significant segment of the population is committed to those claims, and the rulers are unable or unwilling to suppress the contenders.³⁰ This definition is inspired by Lenin's classic formulation about revolutionary situations, of course. According to Lenin, such a situation arises under three conditions:

(1) When it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change; when there is a crisis, in one form or another, among the "upper classes", a crisis in the policy of the ruling class, leading to a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth. For a revolution to take place, it is usually insufficient for "the lower classes not to want" to live in the old way; it is also necessary that "the upper classes should be unable" to live in the old way; (2) when the

27 For recent editions of these classical texts in English, Karl Marx, *The Political Writings* (London and New York: Verso, 2019); Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008).

28 Charles Tilly, *From mobilization to revolution* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1978), 194.

29 Doug McAdam, *Political process and the development of Black insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in movement: social movements, collective action and politics* (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious politics*.

30 Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious politics*, 158.

suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual; (3) when, as a consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses ... [who] are drawn both by all the circumstances of the crisis *and by the "upper classes" themselves* into independent historical action.³¹

For Marxist revolutionaries like Lenin, the core subject of this book – the relationship between revolution and labour relations – might have seemed perfectly self-evident. A strong connection would have been assumed between all three conditions for revolution that he outlined, as well as profound disturbances in the world of labour. In fact, determining the nature of this relationship became central to some of the defining debates between proponents and opponents of a directly revolutionary strategy within the confines of the second, socialist International of that period. The famous controversy over the “breakdown of capitalism”, for example, was predicated on the notion that fissures within the ruling class could only have truly revolutionary consequences if they sprang from deep, potentially existential crises within the capitalist mode of production itself. In the same way, Marxist writers and activists of this period tended to take for granted that the self-activity of the working masses during revolution would lead to a transformation of labour relations by, or at least in favour of, these working masses as the logical outcome of revolution. The experience of the twentieth century has cast doubt on the notion of such straightforward connections between revolution and (shifts in) labour relations. The reasons and potential implications for this are discussed at length, and far better than the editors are able to, in the opening essay by Marcel van der Linden. Here, suffice it to say that this doubt concerned each of the times at which a relationship could be traced between labour relations and revolution. At the level of preconditions, for a long period until the very recent return of discussions about the “end of capitalism”, to talk about the “impossibility” for the rulers or the ruled to continue living in the old way seemed fanciful, at least in the Western world. At the level of activity, revolutions in which the “independent historical action” of the masses acted as the prime mover of the entire process, not just particular episodes, were the exception rather than the rule. In terms of leadership and ideas, even many of the twentieth-century revolutions carried out under Marxist banners that loudly proclaimed the centrality of the industrial working class, were in practice led by, and infused by

31 V. I. Lenin, “The Collapse of the Second International”, cited from the version on the Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/csi/ii.htm> [23 August 2019].

the desires and prejudices of groups ranging from poor peasants and guerrilla forces to army officers and segments of the existing state apparatus. Lastly, at the level of outcomes, political regimes claiming their basis in revolution, such as those in Eastern Europe or China, more often than not did manage to accomplish changes in labour relations, without fundamentally reducing exploitation, repression and alienation at the point of production or in society as a whole.³²

The apparent lack of a clear relationship between labour relations and revolution in twentieth-century practice, combined with the deep scepticism of grand narratives and structural explanations beyond the structures of language and imaginations promulgated across fields by the cultural turn, and finally the declining influence of Marxism within academia as well as within actual revolutionary events, all contributed to the marginalization of the “social question” in revolution studies. The essays in this volume, however, are part of reinstating its centrality. The chapters cover a wide range of revolutions of an equally wide range of types: “classical” cases such as the Finnish Revolution of 1918 (an extension of the Russian Revolution) and the Iranian Revolution of 1979, as well as anti-colonial struggles in South America in the nineteenth century and Africa in the twentieth century; revolutions from above (such as the immediate post-war Eastern European experience) as well as revolutions from below (such as the Hungarian Revolution of 1956); near revolutions or “revolutions that did not happen”, such as the negotiated transition from Apartheid in South Africa and the East German transition of 1989–1990; and “revolutions within the revolution”, such as the workers’ uprising against the Bolsheviks in Izhevsk in 1918 or the Cultural Revolution in China. All of them in their own way illustrate that the lack of a *straightforward* relationship between labour relations and revolution does not signify the lack of *any* meaningful and enduring relationship between the two. Further, all of them also show how bringing the issue of labour relations to the fore, by necessity involves both questions of structure (from the chokepoints in pre-revolutionary forms of industrial organization to the impact of demography on revolutionary warfare) and agency (from the role of individual militants in single workplaces to the impact of the presence or absence of a revolutionary programme on the possible horizons of the transformation of work).

32 Interestingly, there are significant parallels and overlaps here with the notion of an immediate link between social structures and revolution in another historical timeframe, that of the “Bourgeois Revolution”. See Neil Davidson, *How revolutionary were the bourgeois revolutions?* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012).

3 This Volume

This volume comes out of the 53rd International Conference of Labour and Social History (ITH) that was held in Linz, Austria, in September 2017. The organizers of that conference were of course well aware of the significance of discussing the question of labour relations and revolution on the occasion of the centenary of the Russian Revolution. Nevertheless, as both the proceedings of the conference and this volume that emerged from it show, their inclination from the start was to problematize this relationship rather than to take it for granted. This requires taking on challenging questions. For example, how to explain the apparent mismatch between aims and outcomes in cases such as the Russian Revolution and the revolutions in the (later) satellites, where the “emancipation of labour” was inscribed on revolutionary banners, but the new state soon turned to promoting new forms of (Taylorist) work discipline. When does revolution – in the process of state-led transformations in labour relations – end and when does the central dynamic become one of post-revolutionary consolidation or even counter-revolution? What is the role of larger, perhaps even global cycles of change, such as the one instigated by the eighteenth-century Age of Revolution that saw the spread of both revolutionary and moderate variants of abolitionism, or the global critique of Fordism and Taylorism that emerged around the year 1968? And how do working-class politics during revolutions reflect such wider cycles?

The conference, in the same way as the current volume does, took an expansive view of where to look for connections between labour relations and revolution. Accepting the main thrust of the programme of “Global Labour History” as pursued by the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam among others, it did not assume that the question of labour’s role in revolutionary processes is confined to that of industrial wage workers, or tends to become confined to that of the advance of global capitalism.³³ For instance, the revolution of the slaves of Saint-Domingue in 1804 has to be seen as a prime example of a directly labour-related upheaval (figuring as the iconic example of so many revolts and attempted revolutions by those bound by commercial slavery).³⁴ Equally, the importance of labour relations can also be found in the

33 See among others, *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers*, ed. Dirk Hoerder, Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk and Silke Neunsinger (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Karl Heinz Roth (ed.), *On the Road to Global Labour History. A Festschrift for Marcel van der Linden* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

34 For the huge amount of literature on Saint Domingue/Haiti, see Paul Cheney, *Cul de Sac: Patrimony, Capitalism, and Slavery in French Saint-Domingue* (Chicago: University Press, 2017).

Arab Spring, including both the rising level of militancy of traditional groups of industrial workers in countries such as Egypt in the course of the 2000s, and the struggles of informal or precarious labourers and those working in civil service jobs.³⁵

Given the origins of the volume and the timing of the conference from which it sprang, it might appear strange that the Russian Revolution itself is only featured through two events at its periphery. Exploring the possibilities of reintroducing labour relations as a key factor in the study of revolutions, requires in our view a relatively broad approach to both what constitutes a revolution and to what counts as a connection between revolutions and labour relations. In selecting the chapters for this volume, we have not restricted ourselves to those “classical” cases in which revolutions demonstrably comprised the entire gamut of a deep social crisis preceding the revolution, sustained mass involvement during the revolution, and large scale social changes as an outcome of the revolution. For example, the French Revolution of the eighteenth century with its deep impact on landed property and rural social relations, the Haitian Revolution that abolished slavery or the Russian Revolution as seen from the factory. Focusing on those events would certainly have created the opportunity to re-envision one particular mode of the relationship between political and social revolution. The limits of such an enterprise, however, are made clear by Van der Linden’s introductory essay. A far greater number of revolutions and semi-revolutions in the twentieth century and beyond include some elements, but not all. By including discussions of a wide-ranging selection of successful and unsuccessful attempts to challenge existing political regimes, and by including connections with changes in labour relations – both at a very profound and at a more limited level – the volume suggests the many ways in which a focus on labour relations can bridge questions of structure and agency in revolutionary processes. This wide selection of cases also means that the volume is less concerned with The Social Revolution than it is with instances of the social *in* revolutions.

The chapters that follow Van der Linden’s introductory essay are not primarily theoretical or historiographical in nature, but present particular revolutions for which rigorous study of class dynamics is combined with attention paid to one or more aspects of the relationship between political events and labour relations highlighted above. Rather than summing up the content of each of the chapters here in the same order, we will let them speak for themselves and

35 See Joel Beinin and Frédéric Vairel, *Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

merely stress the findings in them that are most surprising or challenging for the overall theme of the volume. Gabriel Di Meglio discusses the relationship of popular classes, revolution and labour relations in the Argentine war of independence during the first decades of the nineteenth century. It is remarkable that although the Argentine War of Independence would not frequently figure in a general overview of labour-relations driven revolutions, in fact Di Meglio's overview of the revolution most explicitly deals with the "classical" question of the role of contending social classes in political upheaval. However, as he shows, support for the revolution and support for emancipation from oppressive labour relations were not at all aligned in a simple or direct way. In fact, he stresses that it was often the Argentine elites who pushed for the transformation of labour relations in order to exploit economic opportunities for the new state in the making. The labourers on the other hand could sometimes use this for their own interests, as was the case with slaves who used the army as a road to emancipation, but more often people were opposed to these changes due to the detrimental effects they had on their living conditions and autonomy.

In the case of Argentina, therefore, revolutionary war was connected quite centrally to transformations in labour relations, but this was to an important extent a vector of the activity of employers, not just the workers, who sometimes resisted. The activity of workers with the aim of changing labour relations in their own favour is represented most explicitly in the two chapters that deal with events immediately following the 1917 revolution. Although there is ample literature showing the role of workers in that revolutionary year, the two chapters shift the focus to a very different location. In a highly engaging chapter written originally in Russian by Dmitriy Churakov, and translated and reworked for the purpose of this volume, the author deals with the largest revolt of industrial workers against the Bolsheviks, which took place in Izhevsk in the summer of 1918. The chapter describes in great detail how workers responded to the contradiction between the high hopes created by the revolution and the dire circumstances that the new regime soon found itself in. Workers were certainly not the passive instruments in a power struggle between Bolsheviks, oppositional socialists and the Whites. Instead, as Churakov shows, their disenchantment was the real cause of the temporary loss of power by the Bolsheviks in Izhevsk, but ironically for very similar reasons to the defeat of their adversaries that followed. Tiina Lintunen and Kimmo Elo also focus on workers fighting in the frontlines of a revolution, this time in Finland, which up to 1918 had been part of the Russian Empire. Their chapter is particularly important for highlighting the role of networks of committed socialist women, inside and outside the workforce, in recruiting the "workforce of revolution"

itself, namely the women working mostly behind the frontlines of the red battalions. Interestingly, although the sources for this chapter originate from the trials in the aftermath of a bloody civil war, Lintunen and Elo manage to bring out how strongly the creation of the red army's female component relied on pre-revolutionary everyday organizing, and how much supporting the labour of revolution during the civil war consisted of mundane tasks, sometimes performed out of high ideals and sometimes just as a job.

While acknowledging that the working class is not limited to industrial workers in factories, and therefore that labour-related struggles have many venues outside the main industrial centres, most chapters in this volume still focus on precisely that social setting. Even in the chapter by Lintunen and Elo, which focuses more on family relations, the shape of these networks was still in large part moulded by factory work and trade union activity. However, in their chapter on the Portuguese Carnation Revolution of 1974–1975, Raquel Varela and João Carlos Louçã consciously shift away from this terrain. They argue that the revolution started not in the Lisbon of the early 1970s, but in the Portuguese colonies of the 1960s. Instead of treating the history of the Portuguese Revolution on the one hand and the anti-colonial wars on the other hand as separate, the authors emphasize an entanglement that went deeper than simply the fact that defeat overseas led to demoralization in the army. Varela and Louçã pay much attention to forced labour as one of the core grievances leading to prolonged contestation against the regime. With their question about the impact of resistance against coerced labour on the revolutionary movement, they widen the historiographical perspective on Portuguese and colonial history.

Partly as a result of the centrality of the Eastern European experience in rethinking the history of socialism, workers and revolution, and partly due to the more contingent reason that historically, *ITH* has brought together historical researchers from across the Iron Curtain, the complicated legacy of state socialism when trying to connect labour relations and revolutions features very prominently in this volume. Adrian Grama opens his essay with what perhaps is the fundamental question in this respect: "How might the experience of East European workers between 1945 and 1989 fit into a general history of the left in the twentieth century?" His own contribution to answering this question is a wide overview of the conflicting tendencies in Eastern European labour management, which included both substantial autonomy for skilled workers in the production process and the use of wage incentives as a means of subjecting them to the rationale of centralized plans. His nuanced reading of the conflicts arising out of the particular forms of organizing industrial work under Eastern European state socialism connect remarkably well with the detailed case study presented in the chapter by Zsombor Bódy. In his chapter on the Hungarian

Revolution of 1956, Bódy analyses the events in a single Hungarian plant before, during and after the revolution: the Ikarus bus factory. He examines the conflicts that escalated in the plant during the revolution from the perspective of the careers of the main leaders of the Ikarus workers' council and the tensions between different groups among the workers, technical employees and managers of the enterprise. Bódy concludes that the conflicts that came to the fore during the revolution grew in part out of earlier tensions between the management and the workforce, the potential and limits of the production technology in use, and the work culture (and *Eigensinn*) of the skilled labourers and engineers.

Felix Wemheuer's lively sketch of the massive changes in labour relations in China during the Maoist epoch shed light on another communist country, but also a country that was still in the grip of semi-colonial conditions. Wemheuer deals with a historical experience that included transformations in the world of work at a scale that no other case study in this volume comes close to. The sevenfold rise of the workforce in state enterprises alone gives an impression of the social mobility that was intended, but that was also feared by the Communist Party for its potentially destabilizing effects. The resulting rifts led to the mass mobilizations and strikes of the late 1960s and early 1970s, accompanying the so-called Cultural Revolution. Wemheuer argues (against the dominant narrative) that the rebellion of temporary workers was to some extent a success, and that the workers were not merely an instrument of the Party's left-wing faction. In that respect, the Chinese dynamics differed markedly from those of Eastern European labour policies before 1989.

All the chapters that deal with state socialism have to grapple with the contradictions of the regimes' ideological claims to represent working-class interests, or even workers' power, and the starkly different realities of workers' disenfranchisement in the factories. However, that such contradictions are not entirely unique to socialist regimes is shown by Peyman Jafari in his chapter on the Iranian Revolution. Jafari traces the history of the rise and fall of the *Show-ras* (workers' councils in the oil industry) as an organizational expression of workers' influence on the political conjecture opened by the fall of the Shah. At one level, this seems to represent a somewhat traditional example of workers' self-activity as a revolutionary force, and its defeat at the hands of a counter-revolution in the form of the consolidation of the Islamic state. However, this account is given greater depth by Jafari's multi-level treatment of the complicated relationship between different tendencies within the Islamic state and the workers, which often included claims about both overlapping and conflicting interests between the oil workers and the state.

In general, the chapters described so far illustrate the difficulty in strictly separating phases of revolution, post-revolutionary consolidation and even

counter-revolution, which in many historical examples has been dressed up as an extension and deepening of the very processes that in practice were cut short or derailed by them. In his chapter, Knud Andresen adds a further layer to this, by asking whether the developments in South Africa can be described as a negotiated revolution. Andresen examines the relations between trade unions and multinational companies in the process of dismantling Apartheid. He argues that as a result of the internal and external crisis of the regime, the exclusion of black workers gradually became an economic problem, and demands for reforms were made by these multinational employers. In parallel with this process, non-racist trade unions emerged and their negotiating position grew significantly. Andresen posits that in a similar way to many other revolutions, change in South Africa was not reached simply by the activity of the most suppressed or desperate groups of workers, but that a very large role was played by those groups of workers who, because of their position of strength, managed to achieve some social gains, but at the same time remained excluded from power.

While Andresen's chapter deals with a situation in which the factors favouring revolutionary action by workers were strongly present, but were channelled into a more negotiated trajectory of change, Renate Hürtgen's chapter illustrates a case of political revolution in which the potential for the working class to enter the revolutionary stage in an organized and independent form remained largely latent. Focusing on the experience of workers' self-organization in the 1989–1990 revolutionary transition in the GDR, she highlights the organization and demands of workers' committees in the German *Wende*, in which the language of class was sidelined as belonging to the old regime. Thus, the analysed independent shop floor initiatives were not successful and did not survive beyond a brief period in the autumn and winter of 1989–1990. So strong was the process of reframing workers' demands of this period into the safe, non-revolutionary direction of a longing for more consumer choice and of their organization into the structures of West German trade unionism, that all memory of workers' activity during this period has largely faded.

The final point, drawn from Hürtgen's contribution, raises an important issue for all the chapters in this volume. Workers' self-activity as a driving force of revolution, and as potentially the most powerful challenger of prevailing social conditions, has historically been repressed in a double way. The first is in the actual history of revolution, either by direct defeat at the hand of counter-revolution or through a more complicated and mediated process in which post-revolutionary regimes create new oppressive labour relations or resurrect old ones. The second is in writing the history of revolution, in which the agency of workers – waged or otherwise – is often belittled or denied. The aim of

this volume is to contribute to the resurrection of the notion that labour relations, and the struggles that swirled around them, are crucial in understanding the phenomenon of revolution in all its complexity.

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Workers and Revolutions

A Historical Paradox

Marcel van der Linden

The concept of “revolution”, which derives from astrology and astronomy, became more widely known after Copernicus published *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* in 1543, in which he used the term to describe both the rotation of the planets around the sun and that of the Earth around its axis.¹ In the three centuries that followed, huge social changes became increasingly described as revolutions.² Often, such changes encompassed all aspects of life and were supposed to lead to a better future.³ Distinguishing different aspects of revolutions easily followed from this: economic, political or social. The term “social revolution” first appeared in a book titled *Considérations sur la révolution sociale*, published by the Comte de Ferrand in 1794.⁴ In this period, revolution was regarded mainly as a conflict between the aristocracy and the increasingly class-conscious bourgeoisie.⁵

Between 1831 and 1848, German intellectuals comparing recent developments in different parts of Western Europe then discovered that the working classes could also figure in revolutions. In 1842, the economist Lorenz von Stein published his book *The Socialism and Communism of Contemporary France*, in which he argued that the rising industrial society either made workers obstinate and malicious or transformed them into dull instruments and servile

1 I would like to thank Pepijn Brandon and Peyman Jafari for their helpful comments on this article's first draft.

2 The first transition identified as a “revolution” was probably the upheaval in the North German town of Emden in 1595. See *Die “Emder Revolution” von 1595*, ed. Hajo van Lengen (Aurich: Ostfriesische Landschaft, 1995).

3 Reinhart Koselleck et al., “Rebellion, Aufruhr, Bürgerkrieg”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 5, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984), 653–788, esp. 655.

4 Antoine François Claude Comte de Ferrand, *Considérations sur la révolution sociale* (London: no publisher, 1794).

5 See e.g. Ralph Miliband, “Barnave: A Case of Bourgeois Class Consciousness”, in *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness*, ed. István Mészáros (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 22–48.

subordinates. He considered personal and hereditary property to be the root cause of this decline of the working classes, since it resulted in the dominant power of some and the unfreedom of others. However, a proletarian revolution was not inexorable. Von Stein proposed a reformist political strategy in which the state guides the redistribution of economic resources so as to prevent class polarization.⁶

In late 1843 or early 1844, Karl Marx characterized the proletariat as: “a class with *radical chains*, a class *in* civil society which is not a class *of* civil society, an estate which is the dissolution of all estates, a sphere which has a universal character by its universal suffering and claims no *particular right* because no *particular wrong*, but *wrong generally*, is perpetrated against it”. The proletariat was the “all-round antithesis” to existing society, which is “the *complete loss* of man and hence can win itself only through the *complete re-winning* of man”.⁷ Gradually, the nature of this proletarian self-emancipation became clearer to Marx. In a fragment from around 1845, written jointly with Friedrich Engels, he asserted that the abolition of bourgeois society would require the collective appropriation of all productive forces. This could be effected only through “a revolution, in which, on the one hand, the power of the earlier mode of production and intercourse and social organisation is overthrown, and, on the other hand, there develops the universal character and the energy of the proletariat, which are required to accomplish the appropriation, and the proletariat moreover rids itself of everything that still clings to it from its previous position in society”.⁸ Moses Hess, the philosopher who together with Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and others worked on *The German Ideology*, wrote in 1847 about the “Consequences of a Revolution of the Proletariat”.⁹ Engels noted in *Principles of Communism*, published the same year: “In all probability, the proletarian revolution will transform existing society gradually and will be able to abolish private property only when the means of production are available in sufficient quantity”.¹⁰

6 Lorenz von Stein, *Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs: Ein Beitrag zur Zeitgeschichte* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1842); Joachim Singelmann and Peter Singelmann, “Lorenz von Stein and the Paradigmatic Bifurcation of Social Theory in the Nineteenth Century”, *British Journal of Sociology* 37, no. 3 (1986): 431–452.

7 Karl Marx, “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”, in *Marx Engels Collected Works* [hereafter *MECW*], vol. 3 (1975), 186, translation corrected.

8 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “The German Ideology”, *MECW*, vol. 5 (1976), 88.

9 Moses Hess, “Consequences of a Revolution of the Proletariat”, in *The Holy History of Mankind and Other Writings*, Moses Hess, translated and edited by Shlomo Avineri (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 128–135.

10 *MECW*, vol. 6, 684 (§ 17).

The discovery of radical labour struggle of course related directly to its growing visibility in the three most important countries in Western Europe. Between 1831 and 1834 the uprising by silk workers in Lyon had instigated a general strike, unique for that era, as well as two very bloody confrontations with the authorities.¹¹ In England, the proletarian Chartist movement for political reform had an enormous impact from 1838 onwards,¹² and in 1844, the rebellion of weavers in Peterswaldau and Langenbielau (Silesia) revealed that the working class was also starting to awaken in Germany.¹³

1 The Marx-Hess-Engels Hypothesis

Marx, Hess, Engels and others believed that the rise of capitalism would bring about continuous expansion of the working class in the decades ahead. Labour would therefore become ever more important in future revolutions, which would soon result in the subversion of capitalist relations. This view seemed to find resounding confirmation in the revolutions of 1848–1849 in France, Central Europe and other regions, which explicitly shifted the focus to the working class as an emergent – albeit not yet dominant – vector in the social and political field of forces.¹⁴ Was this perception accurate?

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- 11 Fernand Rude, *Les Révoltes des canuts, novembre 1831- avril 1834* (Paris: Maspero, 1982); Maurice Moissonnier, *La Révolte des canuts, Lyon, novembre 1831* (Paris: ed. Sociales Messidor, 1958). The best monograph in English is Robert J. Bezucha, *The Lyon Uprising of 1834: Social and Political Conflict in the Early July Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).
 - 12 The body of literature about the Chartists is vast. See e.g., Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1984); Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). Marx and Engels were in contact with a few Chartist leaders. See e.g. Peter Cadogan, "Harney and Engels", *International Review of Social History* 10, no. 1 (1965): 66–104; Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement* (London: Macmillan, 1965).
 - 13 Lutz Kroneberg and Rolf Schloesser, *Weber-Revolution 1844: Der schlesische Weberaufstand im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen Publizistik und Literatur* (Cologne: C. W. Leske, 1979); Christina von Hodenberg, *Aufstand der Weber: Die Revolte von 1844 und ihr Aufstieg zum Mythos* (Bonn: Dietz, 1997).
 - 14 Extensive information appears in the journal *La révolution de 1848*, published in France since 1904. *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, later renamed *Revue d'histoire du XIXe siècle*. Studies focusing explicitly on the role of the workers in 1848 include Rémi Gossez, *Les ouvriers de Paris*. Vol. 1: *L'organisation, 1848–1851*. Preface by Jacques Godechot (La Roche-sur-Yon: Imprimerie Centrale de l'Ouest, 1968); Maria Grazia Meriggi, *L'invenzione della classe operaia: Conflitti di lavoro, organizzazione del lavoro e della società in Francia intorno al 1848* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2002); P. H. Noyes,

In answering this question, I apply the broad concept of the working class as elaborated in *Global Labour History* in recent years. In this perception, the history of capitalist labour must encompass all forms of physically or economically coerced commodification of labour power: wage labourers, slaves, sharecroppers, convict labourers, and so on – plus all the labour that creates such commodified labour or regenerates it; that is, parental labour, household labour, care labour and subsistence labour. This broad description enables us to acknowledge the role of housewives (for example as instigators of the February Revolution in Russia in 1917), as well as the actions by cottage labourers or chattel slaves.

The rise of the working class according to this broad perception was of course largely in parallel with the rise of capitalism. After all, capitalism is merely a progressively self-reinforcing commodification of consumer goods, natural resources, means of production and labour power. Labour power commodification became widespread early on in certain urban industries, such as porcelain production in the Chinese city of Jingdezhen, where several hundreds of thousands of workers were employed during the Qing Dynasty.¹⁵ Only a small proportion of this industry was capitalist, because most production was not for the market but for the imperial household. Nevertheless, many conflicts arose here as well:

Disputes, which sometimes led to death ... broke out between workers and kiln owners on the issue of working conditions and wages. The town therefore was often in riot. Indeed, the local gazetteer of Fuliang County

Organization and Revolution. Working-Class Associations in the German Revolutions 1848–1849 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966); Stanley Z. Pech, “The Czech Working Class in 1848”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 9, no. 1 (1967): 60–73; Gyula Mérei, “Le mouvement ouvrier en Hongrie pendant la révolution de 1848”, *Le Mouvement Social* 50 (1965): 71–80; Kåre Tønnesson, “Popular Protest and Organization: The Thrane Movement in Pre-industrial Norway, 1849–55”, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 13, no. 2–3 (1988): 121–139. See also the online encyclopaedia “Encyclopedia of 1848 Revolutions”, <https://www.ohio.edu/chastain/index.htm> [11 November 2019].

- 15 See the eyewitness reports from the Jesuit Francis d’Entrecolles, written between 1712 and 1722. He noted, for example: “The establishments of some of the larger tradesmen occupy a vast area and contain an enormous number of workers. It is generally said that there are more than a million souls here and that ten thousand loads of rice and a thousand pigs are consumed daily. It is over a league long on the banks of a beautiful river and not a heap of houses as you might imagine; the streets are as straight as a bowstring and intersect at regular intervals. All the land is occupied and the houses are too close and the streets too narrow”. Quoted in Michael Dillon, “A History of the Porcelain Industry in Jingdezhen” (PhD diss, University of Leeds, 1976), 47.

attests to this last characteristic, saying that “all kinds of people from across the country were taking refuge in Jingdezhen. One intrigue would cause the whole town to react. This town is difficult to govern”.¹⁶

Labour concentrations in European textile cities in Flanders and Italy were more clearly capitalist from the fourteenth century onwards. From the seventeenth century, relatively large proletarian concentrations also existed in the Caribbean, where entire islands were based on slave labour.

The formation of proletarian concentrations was conducive to rebellious sentiment. John Millar, one of the leading intellectuals of the Scottish Enlightenment, had already observed the consequences of economic growth towards the end of the eighteenth century:

As the advancement of commerce and manufactures in Britain has produced a state of property highly favourable to liberty, so it has contributed to collect and arrange the inhabitants in a manner which enables them, with great facility, to combine in asserting their privileges. ... Villages are enlarged into towns; and these are often swelled into populous cities. In all those places of resort, there arise large bands of labourers or artificers, who by following the same employment, and by constant intercourse, are enabled, with great rapidity, to communicate all their sentiments and passions. Among these there spring up leaders, who give a tone and direction to their companions. ... In this situation, a great proportion of the people are easily aroused by every popular discontent, and can unite with no less facility in demanding a redress of grievances. The least ground of complaint, in a town, becomes the occasion of a riot; and the flames of sedition spreading from one city to another, are blown up into a general insurrection.¹⁷

The first radical proletarian uprisings remained local, as the capitalist concentrations were also local. Nevertheless, such rebellions could acquire a revolutionary logic. Tuscany in the late fourteenth century was a case in point. In those

16 Hsu Wen-Chin, “Social and Economic Factors in the Chinese Porcelain Industry in Jingdezhen during the Late Ming and Early Ching Period, ca. 1620–1683”, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 1 (1988): 135–159, esp. 146.

17 John Millar, “The Advancement of Manufacture, Commerce, and the Arts, since the Reign of William III and the Tendency of this Advancement to diffuse a Spirit of Liberty and Independence”, [c. 1800], in *John Millar of Glasgow, 1735–1801*, ed. William C. Lehmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 337–339.

days, Florence was a very important city with large-scale textile production, ruled by the aristocracy and the *popolo grasso* (the “fat people”: wealthy merchants and bankers). The city had a population of about 55,000. There were 21 guilds, with a total male membership of 4,000 to 5,000. The other working-age males – numbering about 10,000 or 11,000 – never organized; they belonged to the lower strata of the working class, with the wool carders (the unskilled *ciompi*) in the bottom tier. Political tensions existed in the region between factions of the elite, and a large proportion of the working population became increasingly dissatisfied about taxes, debt and irregular employment. The “unorganized” (the *popolo minuto*) were strictly prohibited from convening their own gatherings or forming organizations. Nevertheless, over the course of June and July 1378, they convened secret meetings, where workers took ritual oaths to support each other for as long as they lived, in the struggle against anyone who intended to cause them harm. The resulting underground network was to be decisive in the subsequent course of events.

On 21 July, a crowd of about 7,000 workers and guildsmen (from all except the elitist wool guild, which was in fact an employers’ organization) marched to the city palace, the Bargello. While some of the insurgents on the lower floors destroyed the records of investigations and convictions of workers, others hung the flag of the blacksmith’s guild from the tower. This flag depicted tongs, intentionally symbolizing violence. The flags of all the guilds (except the wool guild) were hung from a lower floor. The message was clear: the revolution was the work of the community as a whole.

Three new guilds were formed for all those who had not yet organized, thereby ensuring that the entire working population was represented on the city council. During the weeks that followed, the new administration took forceful measures. For the next two years, nobody was any longer to be imprisoned for indebtedness, the flour tax was abolished and the salt price reduced. To stabilize employment, the industry as a whole was required to produce at least 2,000 wool cloths (*panni*) a month, “whether they wanted to or not, or suffer great penalties”. In addition, needy families were to receive a bushel of grain per head, and money was to be provided to those in need who resided within a three-mile radius of the city limits.

These measures were less effective than envisaged, however, because employers undermined them at every opportunity. The *ciompi* in particular urged a tougher approach. Their ongoing criticism led the other guilds – when a large crowd of *ciompi* gathered in the Piazza della Signoria on 31 August – to violently chase them from the city and disband their association. The other two recently founded guilds of dyers and doublet makers continued to exist, and formed a Government of the Minor Guilds that lasted for a few more years.

Their rule ended on 19 January 1382, when the soldiers of the wool guild and patricians toppled the administration.¹⁸

The revolt in Florence could certainly be considered as an attempt at a proletarian revolution. Nevertheless, other cases of rebellious workers are known, and in at least one other instance they achieved lasting change. I mean the slave uprising in Saint Domingue (present-day Haiti) between 1791 and 1804. The island was among the most profitable colonies in the world, and accommodated a great many lucrative sugar cane plantations, based on slave labour. Of the total population (about 640,000), nearly 570,000 were enslaved. The other inhabitants were white people and free blacks. Inspired by the French Revolution, many slaves staged an uprising. They drove out the plantation owners and withstood French and British invasions. Their uprising was, as Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker aptly described it, “the first successful workers’ revolt in modern history”.¹⁹

In both Florence and Saint Domingue, these were true social revolutions driven by large numbers of workers; wage workers in Florence and enslaved labourers in Saint Domingue. The revolution in Florence was defeated, but the one in Saint Domingue prevailed, despite very lengthy and strong opposition by foreign powers. Social revolutions are here understood as historical situations in which (i) fundamental contrasts exist between social classes that (ii) lead to a revolt by subordinate classes aimed at seizing political and economic power, in order to (iii) achieve a dramatic change in social relations. This description does not necessarily mean that a successful change leads the subordinate classes to be the main beneficiaries of such change. Alvin Gouldner even argued that this process followed a general pattern:

18 This description is based on a compilation of data from “Diario dello Squittinatore”, in *I ciompi – cronache e documenti. Con notizie intorno alla vita di Michele di Lando*, ed. Giuseppe Odoardo Corazzini (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1887), 19–92; Alfred Doren, *Die Florentiner Wollentuchindustrie vom vierzehnten bis zum sechzehnten Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des modernen Kapitalismus* (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta’sche Buchhandlung Nachf., 1901), 241–242; Richard C. Trexler, “Follow the Flag: The Ciompi Revolt Seen from the Streets”, in *Power and Dependence in Renaissance Florence*, vol. 3: *The Workers of Renaissance Florence*, ed. Richard C. Trexler (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1993), 30–60; Samuel Kline Cohn, *Lust for Liberty: The Politics of Social Revolt in Medieval Europe, 1200–1425* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 59–62; John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200–1575* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 160–165.

19 Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 319. While much has been written about the slave rebellion of Saint Domingue, the best book on the event remains C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (New York: The Dial Press, 1938, several re-editions).

The *Communist Manifesto* had held that the history of all hitherto existing society was the history of class struggles: freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, and, then, bourgeoisie and proletariat. In this series, however, there was one unspoken regularity: the slaves did not succeed the masters, the plebeians did not vanquish the patricians, the serfs did not overthrow the lords, and the journeymen did not triumph over the guildmasters. *The lowliest class never came to power.*²⁰

This argument seems overly adamant. In Saint Domingue the slaves achieved abolition, although it must be admitted that they did not fully seize societal control. Nonetheless, Gouldner's position contains some truth. Revolutions moreover normally follow a complicated course, and there is hardly ever a "clear-cut" situation where two classes (for example the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie) diametrically oppose one another in closed ranks. There will always be more than two classes, and ordinarily (temporary) multi-class blocs arise. In addition, classes are dynamic relationships, and oppositions will also exist *within* separate classes; a section of the struggling classes will consistently stay outside the conflict. Revolution may even come about "from above", in that a part of the elite wants radical change, such as in Japan during the Meiji Restoration from 1868.²¹

20 Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), 93. This seems to relate in part to the thesis of Alex Callinicos that bourgeois revolutions need not be achieved by the bourgeoisie: "Bourgeois revolutions should not be conceived as revolutions which are made consciously by capitalists, but as revolutions which promote capitalism. The emphasis should not be placed on the class which makes the bourgeois revolution, but on the implications of such a revolution – for the class that benefits from it. More particularly, a bourgeois revolution is a political transformation, a change in state power, which is a condition for large scale capital accumulation and the establishment of the bourgeoisie as dominant class. This definition therefore requires a political change with definite consequences. It does not say anything about the social forces which carry through the revolution". Alex Callinicos, "Bourgeois Revolutions and Historical Materialism", *International Socialism*, Second Series, no. 43 (1989), 113–171, esp. 124.

21 Ellen Kay Trimberger, "State Power and Modes of Production: Implications of the Japanese Transition to Capitalism", *The Insurgent Sociologist* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 85–98; Jamie C. Allinson and Alexander Anievas, "The Uneven and Combined Development of the Meiji Restoration: A Passive Revolutionary Road to Capitalist Modernity", *Capital and Class* 34, no. 3 (October 2010): 469–490; Mark Cohen, "Historical Sociology's Puzzle of the Missing Transitions: A Case Study of Early Modern Japan", *American Sociological Review* 80, no. 3 (June 2015): 603–625.

2 Workers as Auxiliaries

The relentless capitalist expansion never led to proletarian concentrations that were as dense nationally as they had become in the smaller settings in Florence or Saint Domingue. Large local proletarian uprisings continued to occur until well into the twentieth century, for example in France (Paris, 1871), Argentina (Cordoba, 1969) and Pakistan (Karachi, 1972).²²

Our knowledge of the social aspects of revolutions has increased considerably in recent decades. For a long time, historians paid little attention to the lowest classes or greatly relativized their role. Even in 1972, Lawrence Stone had argued with respect to the English Revolution that “the labouring poor, both rural and urban, played no part whatever in the Revolution except as cannon-fodder”. Very recently, Boris Mironov also defended a similar argument about the Russian Revolution of 1917.²³ However, the work of scholars such as Gregor Benton, Norah Carlin, Daniel Guérin, Dirk Hoerder, Erich Kuttner, Brian Manning, Alexander Rabinowitch and many others has demonstrated that such views are untenable. Let us consider some major revolutions.

The Peasants’ Wars in Central Europe in 1524–1526 were, as the name suggests, waged by rebellious agriculturalists, but were on occasion supported by the miners in the Erz Mountains, Bohemia, North Tyrol and elsewhere.

Influenced by the revolutionary peasant movement, sections of the miner class sporadically joined forces with the peasants in many places, with the former supporting the latter in most cases. Nowhere – except perhaps in the special case of Salzburg – did a broad alliance come about, where the mutual aid societies or the entire community of the miners, respectively, express solidarity or engaged in joint actions with the peasants in a place or mining region.²⁴

22 See e.g. Roger V. Gould, “Trade Cohesion, Class Unity, and Urban Insurrection: Artisanal Activism in the Paris Commune”, *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 4 (January 1993): 721–754; James P. Brennan, *El cordobazo. Las guerras obreras en Cordoba, 1955–1976* (Buenos Aires, 1984); Kamran Asdar Ali, “The Strength of the Street Meets the Strength of the State: The 1972 Labor Struggle in Karachi”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37, no. 1 (February 2005): 83–107.

23 Lawrence Stone, *The Causes of the English Revolution, 1529–1642* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 145; Boris Mironov, “Cannon Fodder for the Revolution: The Russian Proletariat in 1917”, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 351–370.

24 Adolf Laube, “Zum Problem des Bündnisses von Bergarbeitern und Bauern im deutschen Bauernkrieg”, in *Der Bauer im Klassenkampf. Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Bauernkrieges und der bäuerlichen Klassenkämpfe im Spätfeudalismus*, ed. Gerhard Heitz, Adolf Laube, Max Steinmetz and Günter Vogler (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975), 105–106;

The Dutch Revolt against Spanish rule (1566–1609) started as a revolutionary movement, in which workers, mainly from the textile industry, played a major part. Despite their very strident disposition, their influence remained limited. Erich Kuttner, who was the first to study this revolution from a social-historical perspective, observed:

True class-consciousness is rare among the masses. They tend to submit to any leadership from above: the aristocracy or the wealthy bourgeoisie. Still, the class instinct is penetrating the masses in a purely elementary sense, primitive communist slogans ... surface, and we constantly observe an unfathomable hatred of the poor for the rich, without the poor having been indoctrinated about the class struggle. Back in the sixteenth century, only the material power of the authorities withheld the masses from murdering and pillaging the wealthy, whom they regard as “blood-suckers” – as the moment such power diminishes, that passionate longing consistently resurfaces. Based on this example, we may conclude that class hatred considerably predates its discovery by scholars or even its propagation by political parties.²⁵

In the run-up to *the English Revolution of 1642–1660*, the popular classes figured prominently, both the “middling sort”, consisting of social groups ranging from “the larger farmers (called ‘yeomen’) and the substantial tradesmen, to the mass of land-holding peasants (called ‘husbandmen’) and self-employed craftsmen”, and the “poorer sort” (wage-labourers and paupers).²⁶

Popular disorders in 1640–42 were heterogeneous in causes and aims, sometimes they united the “middling sort” with the “poorer sort”,

Adolf Laube, “Der Aufstand der Schwazer Bergarbeiter 1525 und ihre Haltung im Tiroler Bauernkrieg. Mit einem Quellenanhang”, *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des Feudalismus* 2 (1978): 225–258.

25 Erich Kuttner, *Het Hongerjaar 1566* (Amsterdam: Amsterdamsche Boek- en Courantmaatschappij, 1949), 425. Kuttner’s work was inspired by an essay by the Marxist Sam de Wolff, “Het proletariaat in de beginjaren van den strijd tegen Spanje”, *De Nieuwe Tijd* 9 (1906): 378–388.

26 Brian Manning, “Introduction to the Second Edition”, in *The English People and the English Revolution*, ed. Brian Manning (2nd edition, London: Bookmarks, 1991), 7–8, 230–241. See also James Holstun, *Ehud’s Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution* (London: Verso, 2000). For a different perspective, see David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603–1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

sometimes they involved only the “poorer sort”. These disorders ushered in the civil war because they influenced many nobles and gentlemen to rally to the king’s cause. But the popular support which enabled parliament to fight and win the civil war came from amongst the “middling sort”.²⁷

At no point, however, does an independent workers’ movement appear to have crystallized; the craftsmen and peasants were in charge. “Many of those who took part in the revolt of 1640–42, in the New Model Army during the war and in radical movements later, were indeed independent small producers”.²⁸ Moreover, “the radical ideas of the Levellers, Diggers, and Ranters failed to gel with popular grievances and experiences”.²⁹

The American Revolution of 1765–1783 was in some respects comparable with the earlier Dutch Revolt, as it was a relatively decentralized process, occurring mainly in the cities on the East coast and varying depending on the place. Gary B. Nash has nevertheless noted that,

the American Revolution could not have unfolded when or in the manner it did without the self-conscious action of urban laboring people – both those at the bottom and those in the middle – who became convinced that they must create power where none had existed before or else watch their position deteriorate, both in absolute terms and relative to that of others. Thus, the history of the Revolution is in part the history of popular collective action and the puncturing of the gentry’s claim that their rule was legitimized by custom, law, and divine will. Ordinary people sometimes violently took over power and the procedures of the constituted authorities.³⁰

Nevertheless, no social revolution occurred in America in the 1770s. Daniel Guérin has stated that during *the French Revolution of 1789–1799*, it was the proletarian *bras nus* who – by marching to Versailles on 5 October 1789 – forced the

27 Manning, “Introduction”, 25.

28 Norah Carlin, “Marxism and the English Civil War”, *International Socialism Journal*, Second Series 10 (1983): 114.

29 John Walter, “The English People and the English Revolution Revisited”, *History Workshop Journal* 61 (Spring 2006): 180.

30 Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 383–384. See also Dirk Hoerder, *Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts 1765–1780* (New York: Academic Press, 1977).

assembly to adopt the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which would probably not have happened without such action. Nor would the expropriation without compensation of feudal dues on 10 August 1792 have come about without pressure from the masses. More generally, however:

Whenever the course of the revolution intensifies one finds the bourgeois equivocating, or stopping half-way, and each time it is the pressure from the *bras nus* that forces them to push the bourgeois revolution to its conclusion. Even insofar as it was a bourgeois revolution, bringing the bourgeoisie to power in the end rather than the proletariat, the French revolution was a mass revolution.... But this revolution was not a revolution in which the masses worked on behalf of the bourgeoisie without realising it. It was also, to a certain degree, a revolution that the masses were making for themselves and nobody else. ... They rose up in the hope that it would alleviate their poverty and misery and throw off an age-old yoke, not just that of the feudal lords, the clergy and the agents of royalist absolutism, but the yoke of the bourgeoisie as well.³¹

Basically, in the bourgeois revolutions during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the role of the working class gradually became more visible and at some times even substantial, but it was never decisive with regard to the outcome.

The same holds true for *the Mexican Revolution of 1910–1920*. It was driven mainly by peasant communities, who were supported by disaffected urban intellectuals. Many workers also embraced this cause, such as the cowboys of the northern cattle ranches and labourers on sugar plantations, in addition to trade unions. Their role remained subordinate, however, in part because of their relatively small number. “Some of its struggles were important and its class organization moved forward, but its policy and leadership did not

31 Daniel Guérin, “Preface to the English Edition”, in Daniel Guérin, *Class Struggle in the First French Republic. Bourgeois and Bras Nus 1793–1795*, trans. Ian Patterson (London: Pluto Press, 1973), 2–3. Guérin’s book was originally published in French in 1946. Works elaborating on this premise, but without admitting it explicitly, are Albert Soboul, *Les Sans-culottes parisiens en l’an II : Mouvement populaire et gouvernement révolutionnaire, 2 juin 1793–9* (Paris: Librairie Clavreuil, 1958); Richard Cobb, *Les armées révolutionnaires: Instrument de la terreur dans les départements. Avril 1793 – Floréal An II*. Two volumes (Paris: Mouton, 1961, 1963). Compare Daniel Guérin, “D’une nouvelle interprétation de la Révolution française”, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 20, no. 1 (January–February 1965): 84–94.

attain independence of the state and the leading bourgeois tendencies of the revolution".³²

3 Workers at Centre Stage

During the twentieth century, workers started to figure more prominently in revolutions. At the same time, the complexity of proletarian action became more manifest.

Because class conflict is experienced as uneven, discontinuous, and partial, its organisational expressions normally reflect this. The working class is sectionalised and fragmented. One section is fighting while others are not. Workers are opposing the symptoms rather than the root causes of exploitation and oppression. The overall level of conflict – measured, say in the pattern of strikes – rises and falls in intensity and extent. Particular kinds of organisation, with definite kinds of politics, are erected to express this contradictory pattern of consciousness and struggle.³³

Even in the “new” proletarian type of revolutions, however, workers were never the *sole* drivers of the revolutionary process. The best-known case of a change often described as “proletarian” is *the Russian Revolution of October 1917*. This revolution was in fact a combination of three factors: the struggle of the workers, the struggle of the peasants and the struggle of the oppressed nationalities. The industrial working class was not very large – possibly two million people in 1917 – but its strike movements achieved an enormous impact; in Trotsky’s words, they became “the battering ram which the awakening nation directs against the walls of absolutism”.³⁴ At the same time, the proletariat could never

32 Adolfo Gilly, *The Mexican Revolution*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1983), 329. See also Rodney D. Anderson, “Mexican Workers and the Politics of Revolution, 1906–1911”, *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 54, no. 1 (February 1974): 112: “Working or fighting, the Mexican proletariat were not engaged in an ‘anti-capitalist revolution,’ as some maintain, though they certainly would have identified the foreign and domestic industrialists as their enemies. Rather, they viewed the struggle from the perspective of Mexican patriots, fighting the conservative, ultramontane forces gathering anew, this time under the banner of ‘Progress and Order.’”

33 Colin Barker, “Perspectives”, in *Revolutionary Rehearsals*, ed. Colin Barker (London: Bookmarks, 1987), 221.

34 Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, vol. 2, trans. Max Eastman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1932), 24.

have brought about the downfall of the Tsarist Regime on its own. The very position of the working class as a minority of the nation suggests that “it could not have given its struggle a sufficient scope – certainly not enough to take its place at the head of the state – if it had not found a mighty support in the thick of the people. Such a support was guaranteed to it by the agrarian problem”.³⁵

Nonetheless, the action by the workers had such an immense impact that the October Revolution became *the* prototype of a “proletarian revolution”. As Georges Haupt observed:

Those were the years of the radicalization of Europe, coming after the First World War. There was a tremendous anticapitalist, antibourgeois feeling. People were looking for a social force able to bring about the revolution, and that social force was going to be the proletariat. ... If one looks at the cultural history of the Soviet Union in the years 1918–1924, one discovers a fantastically interesting phenomenon. Everyone would like to be a worker. This is the mode in the Soviet Union. Everyone wears working clothes. The reference group is the working class, which is the center of the whole self-understanding of the revolution in the future society.³⁶

The October Revolution of 1917 ushered in a series of upheavals, in which workers had an essential role. Their actions brought about the demise of the *ancien régimes*, because they immobilized key industries.

During *the Bolivian Revolution of 1952*, the peasants were initially passive, whereas the action by the tin miners proved decisive: together with their wives they defeated the demoralized armed forces and opened the door to massive economic and social changes.

The tin magnates, who had created a state within a state, *un superestado*, manipulating Bolivian presidents and legislators at will, lost their lucrative mines and power. The Army, which had largely functioned as an instrument of suppression and political manipulation, and as protector of the established social order, was abolished. The Indians, who comprised an overwhelming majority of the population of Bolivia, gained for the first time full civil and political rights. The MNR [Revolutionary Nationalist Movement] instituted a radical program of land reform through which

35 Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, vol. 2, 32.

36 Georges Haupt, “In What Sense and to What Degree Was the Russian Revolution a Proletarian Revolution?” *Review [Fernand Braudel Center]* 3, no. 1 (Summer 1979): 32–33.

the Indian won property rights. The educational system was re-organized along more democratic lines.³⁷

Despite their crucial role, the workers did not achieve a lasting victory. The MNR accommodated only some of their demands, and after the military coup in 1964, their unions and parties were destroyed in violent clashes.³⁸

The course of events in *the Cuban Revolution of 1953–1959* was entirely different. Fidel Castro's 26 July Movement was a declassed populist movement; Castro had initially supported the left wing of the Orthodox party, the liberal-bourgeois opposition. The struggle of his *guerilleros* (possibly amounting to one thousand members at its peak) was supported by spontaneous popular uprisings and strikes, with broad participation by parts of the vast labour movement (sugar workers, railway workers, etc.) between August 1957 and January 1959. As a social force, the working class contributed substantially to the victory. Politically, however, it held less importance in Castro's initially liberal policy. The first government formed by Castro was therefore still liberal-bourgeois. Only during the subsequent two years did the regime radicalize.³⁹

In *the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1979*, workers were not intrinsically pivotal. Until mid-1978, the main operators were "students and intellectuals, the urban poor, and the modern and traditional middle classes" who agitated against the regime of the Shah.⁴⁰ Only later on did proletarian resistance increase. The participation of the oil workers in the autumn was decisive. They deactivated the most important source of state income, and the battle soon ended. In January 1979 the Shah fled the country.⁴¹

37 Charles W. Arnade, "Bolivia's Social Revolution, 1952–1959: A Discussion of Sources", *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 1, no. 3 (July 1959): 341–342.

38 Guillermo Lora, *Historia del movimiento obrero boliviano*: 4 volumes (La Paz, Cochabamba: Editorial "Los Amigos del Libro", 1967–1980), esp. vol. 4, covering the period 1933–1952. A summary is to be found in Lora's *A History of the Bolivian Labour Movement, 1848–1971*, edited and abridged by Laurence Whitehead, trans. Christine Whitehead (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

39 Opinions vary on the relative importance of the labour movement in the Cuban revolution. Steve Cushion, *A Hidden History of the Cuban Revolution: How the Working Class Shaped the Guerrillas' Victory* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2016) argues that workers carried more weight than for example is suggested by Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

40 Maryam Poya, "Iran 1979: Long live Revolution!... Long live Islam?" in *Revolutionary Rehearsals*, ed. Colin Bakers (London, Chicago and Melbourne: Haymarket Books), 139.

41 Peyman Jafari, "Oil, Labour and Revolution in Iran: A Social History of Labour in the Iranian Oil Industry, 1973–1983" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2018).

The *Polish Revolution of 1980–1981* was largely driven by proletarian rebelliousness. The revolt began in mid-1980 as a wave of strikes, soon spreading throughout much of the country and reaching its peak in mid-August in the port cities of Gdansk, Gdynia and Szczecin. With support from the previously founded Workers' Defence Committee (*Komitet Obrony Robotników*; KOR), it evolved into a national counterweight organization (*Solidarność*), gradually bringing about the start of "dual power", with many farmers also supporting the protest. The power and authority of the state visibly declined, and only in December 1981 did the situation change, when "order" was restored via a military coup. *Solidarność* was suspended and martial law introduced.⁴²

Looking back at the developments over the past five centuries clearly reveals that from 1917, workers figured more prominently in national revolutions than they had previously. Nevertheless, during the twentieth century their role was never as great as the Marx-Hess-Engels hypothesis would have led us to believe. Nowhere did a revolution culminate in a stable society that revolved around the interests of workers. Admittedly, the "lowest class" – contrary to what Gouldner argued – sometimes did rise to power (for example in Russia), but it never managed to retain this power for long.

4 Two Complications

The analysis now becomes still more complicated. The *first complication* is that even in the twentieth century there were revolutions in which workers remained entirely subordinate. These uprisings were led by communist parties that believed in the Stalinist two-stage theory: first a bourgeois-democratic change was necessary and subsequently a socialist (proletarian) change. The most important example of this process is the *Chinese Revolution of 1927–1949*. In 1927 the Kuomintang (The Chinese Nationalist Party) had achieved a crushing defeat of the labour movement in Shanghai, suppressing it through mass terror. A few years later, the Japanese occupation forces dismantled part of the city's industry, thereby reducing the numbers of the working class. These developments turned the Chinese Communist Party progressively from a proletarian concern into a military organization of peasants demanding massive agricultural reform. They built an expanding territorial counterforce that

42 Colin Barker and Kara Weber, *Solidarność: from Gdansk to Military Repression* (London: International Socialism, 1982); Roman Laba, *The Roots of Solidarity: A Political Sociology of Poland's Working Class Democratization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

ultimately defeated the Kuomintang and established a state. Workers were completely ignored as a social force, and when the People's Liberation Army entered the cities, they urged workers not to strike or demonstrate. The following eight points formed the basis of their propaganda:

- 1) People's lives and property will be protected. Maintain order and don't listen to rumours. Looting and killing are strictly forbidden.
- 2) Chinese individual commercial and industrial property will be protected. Private factories, banks, godowns [warehouses], etc., will not be touched and can continue to operate.
- 3) Bureaucratic capital, including factories, shops, banks, godowns, railways, post offices, telephone and telegraph installations, power plants, etc., will be taken over by the Liberation Army, although private shares will be respected. Those working in these organizations should work peacefully and wait for the takeover. Rewards will be given to those who protect property and documents; those who strike or who destroy will be punished. Those wishing to continue serving will be employed.
- 4) Schools, hospitals, and public institutions will be protected. Students, teachers and all workers should protect their records. Anyone with the ability to work will be employed.
- 5) Except for a few major war criminals and notorious reactionaries, all Kuomintang officials, police and Pao-Chia workers of the Provincial, Municipal, and Hsien Governments will be pardoned, if they do not offer armed resistance. They should protect their records. Anyone with the ability to work will be employed.
- 6) As soon as a city is liberated, displaced soldiers should report immediately to the new garrison headquarters, the police bureau, or army authorities. Anyone surrendering his weapons will not be questioned. Those who hide will be punished.
- 7) The lives and property of all foreigners will be protected. They must obey the laws of the Liberation Army and Democratic Government. No espionage or illegal actions will be allowed. No war criminals should be sheltered. They will be subject to military or civilian trial for violations.
- 8) People in general should protect all public property and maintain order.⁴³

43 Arthur Doak Barnett, *China on the Eve of Communist Takeover* (New York: Praeger, 1963), 327–328.

Only after 1949 did the social and political importance of the working class start to grow again.⁴⁴

In several respects, the *revolution in Vietnam in August 1945* was a harbinger of the Chinese Revolution. In the years following its establishment in 1930, the Indochinese Communist Party had given extensive consideration to workers and their struggle, but over the course of the 1930s, interest had shifted to mobilizing peasants. By the time of its Eighth Conference in May 1941, the party definitively changed course.

It considered that “the preparation for insurrection is the central responsibility of our Party in the present period”. It called for a “national liberation revolution” and temporary postponement of the class struggle. ... On May 19, 1941, at the conclusion of the conference, the Alliance for Vietnamese Independence (*Viet nam Doc lap Dong minh Hoi*), or the Viet Minh Front, was created. It was the organizational expression of the united front proposed by the Resolution of the Conference.⁴⁵

The coup three months later focused on reforming land ownership, rather than on the liberation of wage labour.

The *second complication* was that the revolutions of the twentieth century all took place in pre-industrial or industrializing countries, and never in fully developed capitalist societies. Some may consider this a coincidence, but the systematic non-arrival of working-class revolutions from below within developed capitalism suggests a structural reason. Although the working class (in the broad sense described) became very large in the course of the twentieth century, under the advanced conditions it never again behaved as radically anywhere as it had in Russia in 1917 or in Bolivia in 1952. Consider the events in France in May to June 1968. Research reveals that the revolutionary students were vastly different from the considerably less revolutionary workers.

Ironically enough, Maoists, Trotskyites, and *Les Temps Modernes* have rather uncritically accepted PCF [French Communist Party] claims to

44 As the Sinologist Andrew Walder has observed: “It is commonly remarked, and with obvious justification, that the working class did not make the Chinese revolution. An equally justified remark is rarely heard: that the revolution, on the contrary, has made the Chinese working class”. Andrew G. Walder, “The Remaking of the Chinese Working Class, 1949–1981”, *Modern China* 10, no. 1 (January 1984): 4.

45 Huynh Kim Khanh, “The Vietnamese August Revolution Reinterpreted”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 30, no. 4 (August 1971): 772–773.

represent the working class. They assumed that the party controlled the workers and could have made revolution. It is doubtful, though, that even a revolutionary PCF would have been able to convince wage earners to take power. ... Wage earners might have desired to limit the “arbitrary” authority of supervisory personnel and to slow down production rhythms, but little evidence exists to suggest that workers wanted to take over their factories. Instead, they demanded higher pay (especially for lower-paid personnel), a further reduction of work time, total (and not half) payment for days lost to strikes, a nominal recuperation of strike time, and – for the activists – a union presence in the factory.⁴⁶

Another symptom of the non-arrival of revolutions in advanced capitalist societies seems to be manifest in the fact noted by Perry Anderson that counter-institutions of dual power have never arisen in consolidated parliamentary democracies: “all the examples of soviets or councils so far have emerged out of disintegrating autocracies (Russia, Hungary, Austria), defeated military regimes (Germany), ascendant or overturned fascist states (Spain, Portugal).”⁴⁷

5 The Paradox and Its Possible Explanation

The latter complication gives rise to a paradox: the “purest” proletarian revolutions – with absolute dominance by the proletariat – occurred early on in capitalism. However, under advanced capitalism, with circumstances that according to the Marx-Hess-Engels hypothesis are supposed to be the most conducive to a proletarian revolution, they do not take place. Why is this the case? A convincing answer will require much additional research and here, I can merely speculate. I suspect that three factors come into play: the transition dip, deflection and incorporation.

5.1 *The Transition Dip*

The transition dip idea elaborates on the work of Charles Tilly and Adam Przeworski. Tilly has mentioned that in advanced capitalist countries, the state functions very differently than in less advanced equivalents.⁴⁸ Into the

46 Michael Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution: Parisian Students and Workers in 1968* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2004), 197.

47 Perry Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism* (London: Verso, 1980), 196.

48 See also the discussion of Tilly’s vast oeuvre in Marcel van der Linden, “Charles Tilly’s Historical Sociology”, *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 2 (August 2009): 237–274.

nineteenth century in Europe and North America (as in many less-developed capitalist countries nowadays), states were not clearly visible to ordinary people, and the occasions where their presence was apparent tended to be decidedly unpleasant. In those “pre-advanced” days, states usually maintained a system of *indirect rule*. They hardly ever intervened in the lives of ordinary people directly, but instead had relatively autonomous local representatives. On the rare occasions that states did penetrate everyday lives, their main purpose was to *take* (money, goods or people) and almost never to *give*. In these circumstances, workers hoping to halt deteriorating conditions or even to improve their fate did not think first, and probably not at all, of the state. Under “pre-advanced” conditions, groups of workers therefore primarily devised alternatives without a significant role for the state. In the North Atlantic region, trade unions, journeymen’s associations and the like were “transnational” *avant la lettre*, and in many cases coordinated operations across national borders. Alternative concepts were based on autonomous cooperatives and on anarchist and liberal experiments.⁴⁹ For “pre-advanced” populations, the idea of social revolution often exuded a broad appeal as well, as the state tended to be regarded as a hostile military and tax-collecting apparatus that had to be eliminated.

This stage ended – at least in the North Atlantic region – during the extended nineteenth century, as a consequence of the Napoleonic wars and their aftermath. The immense citizens’ armies of post-revolutionary France and of many other countries that followed the French example, as well as the rise of relatively comprehensive tax systems, resulted in qualitatively stronger state interference in everyday social relations. This change coincided with the transition to *direct rule*, in which the central government started to interfere far more directly with the population than it had in the past. Direct rule, in turn, led to a rapid expansion of the purview of involvement. Non-military state expenditure increased exponentially. States “began to monitor industrial conflict and working conditions, install and regulate national systems of education,

49 Perhaps views oblivious to the state depend on first, workers’ suffrage and second, the relative size of the working class. As suffrage becomes less favourable and the working class proportionately smaller, the working class becomes politically powerless. It may choose either (i) to ignore the state, or (ii) to try to “conquer” the state, by (a) struggling to expand suffrage and/or (b) expanding the working class (e.g. socialist diatribes against contraception). Presumably, the transition from (i) to (iia) and/or (iib) would require a certain threshold value. Below this threshold value, the working class does not consider conquering the state as feasible; above it, this objective becomes more realistic. This threshold is obviously not absolute but depends in part on reports from abroad (have workers managed to influence or conquer the state elsewhere, and if so, how did they go about this?).

organize aid to the poor and disabled, build and maintain communication lines, impose tariffs for the benefit of home industries".⁵⁰ Somewhat in parallel with this process, systems of surveillance were devised in order to block the emergence of forms of protest and resistance that might threaten states and their clients.

As states began to demand more from their subjects and became more closely involved with them, their subjects started to expect something in return. Modern citizenship, which in the past had sometimes existed at the municipal level, became a national phenomenon concurrent with the rise of direct rule. It was precisely during this stage, as "subjects" became "citizens", that national trade unions and other national labour organizations gradually consolidated. No longer in a position to ignore the state and no longer interested in immediately destroying it, they sought primarily to influence or even conquer it (possibly with the intention of destroying it at a later stage). "In the process, organized claimants including workers and capitalists found themselves embedding their rights and privileges in the state. Establishing the right to strike, for example, not only defined a number of previously common worker actions (such as attacks on nonstrikers and scabs) as illegal, but also made the state the prime adjudicator of that right".⁵¹

This in essence meant an enormous increase "in the importance of the [collectively useful] functions, and therefore of the functioning, of public administration in the daily life of the people".⁵² A revolution would therefore completely disrupt daily life. The changed role of the state considerably drove up the "costs" of attempts to overthrow capitalist society. As Adam Przeworski remarked:

Suppose that socialism is potentially superior to capitalism at any moment of capitalist development (or at least after some threshold, if one believes that conditions must be "ripe") but that immediate steps toward socialism leave workers worse off than they would have been had they advanced along the capitalist path. ... Between the capitalist path and the socialist one there is a valley that must be traversed if workers move at any time toward socialism. If such conditions indeed exist and if workers

50 Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 115.

51 Charles Tilly, "Futures of European States", *Social Research* 59 (1992): 711.

52 Richard Löwenthal, "The 'Missing Revolution' in Industrial Societies: Comparative Reflections on a German Problem", in *Germany in the Age of Total War*, ed. Volker R. Berghahn and Martin Kitchen (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 240–260.

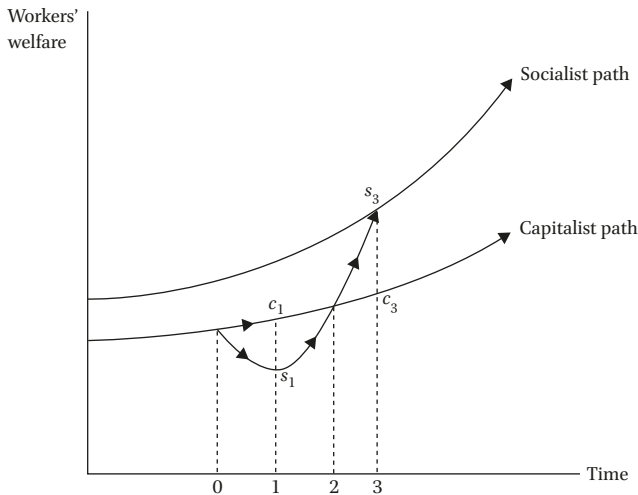


FIGURE 1.1 Przeworski's visualization of the trajectory of workers' welfare under capitalism, under socialism and under influence of a revolution
 SOURCE: ADAM PRZEWORSKI, *CAPITALISM AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY* (CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1985), 177

are interested in a continual improvement of their material welfare, then this descent will not be undertaken or, if it is undertaken, will not be completed by workers under democratic conditions. At any time workers would thus face a choice between climbing upward toward the best situation they could obtain under capitalism and a temporary deterioration of their conditions on the road to socialism.⁵³

The period of direct rule may thus have attenuated any revolutionary influences in the working class and stimulated the rise of movements that aimed to achieve reforms via the state; as a prelude to social revolution or as a cumulative strategy of small steps.

It seems likely that this observation depends on long periods of improving living standards and a stable state apparatus. The transition dip would probably lose much of its relevance if states were to get into crisis (for example, a war) and/or if the material conditions of the population were to notably deteriorate.

53 Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 176–177.

5.2 *Deflection*

I describe the second possible factor as deflection. By this, I mean that the state – even in the stage of direct rule – is not regarded as playing a major part in causing social, economic, political or cultural injustice. There are at least three probable causes. First, under capitalism the economic sphere becomes separated from the political sphere. Class conflicts are therefore initially situated at workplaces, and are thus local and particularistic.

In this respect, the organization of capitalist production itself resists the working class unity which capitalism is supposed to encourage. On the one hand, the nature of the capitalist economy – its national, even supra-national, character, the interdependence of its constituent parts, the homogenization of work produced by the capitalist labour-process – makes both necessary and possible a working class consciousness and class organization on a mass scale. This is the aspect of capitalism's effects on class-consciousness that Marxist theory has so often emphasized. On the other hand, the development of this consciousness and this organization must take place against the centrifugal force of capitalist production and its "privatization" of political issues.⁵⁴

Even very militant workers' struggles may become detracted from their *political* and *general* character.

Second, many intermediary institutions and organizations emerge, and to some extent perform the functions of the state, although they do not pertain to the state or otherwise qualify as "semi-state" apparatuses. These would include what Louis Althusser described as "ideological state apparatuses", such as schools, the family, religions and religious institutions, and the mass media.⁵⁵ They also include public transport, NGOs and other non-profit organizations.⁵⁶

54 Ellen Meiksins Wood, "The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism", *New Left Review*, 1/127 (May–June 1981): 93.

55 Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (London: Verso, 2014 [1970]).

56 Ulrich Brand et al., ed., *Nichtregierungsorganisationen in der Transformation des Staates* (Münster: Das Westfälische Dampfboot, 2003). This deflection results in part from the activities by the working classes. Sanford Jacoby has for example argued that trade union opposition to managerial discretionary power has furthered the bureaucratization of American industrial firms. Sanford M. Jacoby, *Employing Bureaucracy: Managers, Unions, and the Transformation of Work in American Industry, 1900–1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). While being an important achievement, at the same time it made the essential power relations still harder to discern.

Third, racist, sexist and nationalist influences may further undermine working-class unity and combativity.⁵⁷

5.3 *Incorporation*

The Marx-Hess-Engels hypothesis underestimated capitalism's ability to incorporate the proletariat. Marx, as we have seen, considered the proletariat as "a class *in* civil society which is not a class *of* civil society".⁵⁸ Gradually, however, the proletariat has become a part of civil society. At least two influences have probably played a role in this process. First, the political incorporation of the proletariat, partly also resulting from the efforts of labour movements. For the British case, Bert Moorhouse has argued that

the majority of the ruling class believed that incorporation was necessary to bind the masses to the prevailing system but also wanted such integration to be constrained and channeled so that, though institutional forms might change, and could be promoted as having changed, the differential distribution of power in society would remain unaltered.⁵⁹

Second, the incorporation of proletarians as consumers. It is true that Marx in his manuscript *Grundrisse* has drawn our attention to the attempts of capitalists to spur the workers "on to consumption, to endow his commodities with new attractions, to talk the workers into feeling new needs, etc". but nowhere does he evince to have understood the huge implications of the proletariat's golden chains.⁶⁰ Consumption's seductive power culminated in the relations of production and consumption (sometimes called "Fordist"), whereby working-class families not only produce and reproduce labour power to be hired out, but operate simultaneously as units of individualized mass consumption, purchasing many of the consumer goods they produce within a system that permits capital to expand and the workers' material standards of living to improve. The ideology of consumerism made

57 With regard to the interconnectedness of these discriminatory practices, see Avtar Brah, "Re-Framing Europe: En-Gendered Racisms, Ethnicities and Nationalisms in Contemporary Western Europe", *Feminist Review* 45 (Autumn 1993): 9–29.

58 Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1843–44)", in *MECW*, vol. 3, 186.

59 H. F. Moorhouse, "The Political Incorporation of the British Working Class: An Interpretation", *Sociology* 7 (1973): 346.

60 *MECW*, vol. 28, 217; Michael A. Lebowitz, *Following Marx: Method, Critique and Crisis* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 308.

them (partly) consumption driven. As Richard Wolff wrote about the United States:

They had to define themselves as above all “consumers” who willingly suffered the “disutility” of labor to acquire the “utilities” embodied in consumption. ... The advertising that pervades every aspect of life relentlessly popularizes this interpellation. ... The “manipulation” of the masses entailed in such consumerism was possible because it “latched onto” something real enough in workers’ lives: the need for a compensation, rationale, and justification for ... their alienated and exhausting labor.⁶¹

The combined effect of the transition dip, deflection and incorporation probably explains why revolutions have not occurred in advanced capitalist countries. Deflection and incorporation were considerably less important in the so-called “socialist” societies of Eastern Europe. This may explain why revolutions in which workers were sometimes pivotal *did* occur in those regions; there was no separation of the political and the economic spheres, intermediary institutions and organizations were mostly absent, and so were political incorporation and the possibilities for consumerism.

All in all, “workers’ revolutions” are much more complicated than is often assumed. One gets the impression that Karl Marx, Moses Hess and Friedrich Engels – impressed by the West European workers’ revolts of the 1830s and 1840s – first proclaimed the wage-labouring class as a revolutionary subject on philosophical grounds, and then collected arguments that were partly of an ad hoc nature.⁶² The outcome was a theory of the working class that has been partly refuted by historical experience. The Marx-Hess-Engels hypothesis clearly did not anticipate the seductive and deceptive powers of advanced capitalism. My own exploration of these powers remains highly speculative. In defence, I can only share the insight of Pierre Bourdieu that “an obvious fault is better than a hidden error”.⁶³

61 Richard D. Wolff, “Ideological State Apparatuses, Consumerism, and U.S. Capitalism: Lessons for the Left”, *Rethinking Marxism* 17, no. 2 (2005): 230–231. See also Wolfgang Fritz Haug, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality, and Advertising in Capitalist Society*, trans. Robert Bock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

62 I have explored this more fully in “O conceito marxiano de proletariado: uma crítica”, *Revista de Sociologia & Antropologia* [Rio de Janeiro] 6, no. 1 (April 2016): 87–110.

63 Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State. Lectures at the College de France, 1989–1992*, ed. Patrick Champagne, Remi Lenoir, Franck Poupeau and Marie-Christine Riviere, trans. David Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 82.

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Popular Classes, Revolution and Labour Relations in Nineteenth-Century Argentina

Gabriel Di Meglio

After the Napoleonic invasion of Spain in 1808, several revolutions erupted in Hispanic America. They involved a fight to achieve self-government, and eventually led to the independence of several republics of the former Spanish Empire. These revolutions were led by sections of the local elites, but in many of them the popular classes – urban plebeians, artisans, slaves, peasants and other rural labourers – also played a key role. This chapter focuses on their actions during the revolutionary process in the territories that would later become one of the new countries born as a result: Argentina.¹

The revolutionary period has always been a central topic in Argentine historiography. Since the 1970s, traditional narratives about a struggle between pro-nationalist *Criollos* (American-born Spaniards) and the Spanish monarchy have been challenged by revisionist readings in the fields of political, cultural, conceptual, economic and social history.² Nowadays, researchers argue that it is impossible to study Spanish American independence through a retrospective view of the present national borders.³ Instead, the emergence of Argentina as an independent nation can only be understood in connection with the

- 1 At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a large proportion of present-day Argentine territories were part of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, while other areas were not included in the Spanish jurisdiction and were controlled by indigenous sovereign groups. The destruction of the Viceroyalty in the 1820s led to the making of four different countries: Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia.
- 2 The revision started with Tulio Halperin Donghi, *Politics, Economics and Society in Argentina in the Revolutionary Period*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), first published in Spanish in 1972. The vast body of literature on the political history of the revolutionary period since then is too large to be described here. For a complete review, see Noemí Goldman and Fabio Wasserman “Un balance de la historia política y de la construcción de identidades en el proceso de independencia”, *Investigaciones y Ensayos* 62 (2016): 23–46.
- 3 Especially after the work of José Carlos Chiaramonte. See mainly his *Ciudades, provincias, Estados: Orígenes de la Nación Argentina (1800–1846)* (Buenos Aires: Editora Espasa Calpe Argentina, 1998) and *Fundamentos intelectuales y políticos de las independencias. Notas para una nueva historia intelectual de Iberoamérica* (Buenos Aires: Teseo, 2010).

broader Spanish Empire.⁴ Historians also show that when the revolution started in 1810, independence was not planned or even desired except by a very few. Instead, most revolutionaries wanted to secure self-government within a new federal Spanish monarchy.⁵ It is now clear that prior to the revolution, no Argentine national identity existed. Instead, this was slowly constructed in the following decades.⁶ Researchers have demonstrated that the revolution was not only carried out by a small group of wealthy white men, but also by many other crucial actors. This changing historiography has thus highlighted the importance of popular classes with regard to the revolution, and has examined how social and racial tensions were politicized during this period.⁷

Students of workers and labour relations had their own separate agendas, which only occasionally overlapped with studies of the revolution. From the 1940s to the 1970s, a variety of Marxist intellectuals in Argentina – as in many Latin American countries – debated whether the productive structure of colonial America had been feudal or capitalist. In this discussion, the two systems were thought of as rigidly separated. The diversity and mobility of workers in the continent seemed far removed from the European feudal model of masters exerting coercion to obtain a surplus from the landed peasantry. In most cases,

4 Tulio Halperin Donghi, *Reforma y Disolución de los Imperios Ibéricos, 1750–1850*, (Madrid: Alianza editorial, 1985); François-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias: Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Madrid: Ediciones Encuentro, 1992). Guerra's book was very influential all around Latin America.

5 José María Portillo Valdés, *Crisis Atlántica. Autonomía e independencia en la crisis de la monarquía hispana* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Ediciones de Historia, 2006); Noemí Goldman, "Buenos Aires, 1810: la 'revolución', el dilema de la legitimidad y de las representaciones de la soberanía del pueblo", *Historia y política: Ideas, procesos y movimientos sociales* 24 (2010): 47–69.

6 José Carlos Chiaramonte, "Formas de identidad en el Río de la Plata luego de 1810", *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. Emilio Ravignani"* no. 1 (1989): 71–92. His perspective was discussed by Pilar González Bernaldo, "La 'identidad nacional' en el Río de la Plata postcolonial: Continuidades y rupturas con el Antiguo Régimen", *Anuario IEHS* 12 (1997): 109–122, and also Jorge Myers, "Una cuestión de identidades: La búsqueda de los orígenes de la Nación Argentina y sus aporías", *Prismas* 3 (1999): 275–284.

7 Gabriel Di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo! La plebe urbana de Buenos Aires y la política entre la Revolución de Mayo y el rosismo* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2006); Ana Frega, *Pueblos y soberanía en la revolución artiguista: La región de Santo Domingo Soriano desde fines de la colonia hasta la ocupación portuguesa* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 2007); Sara Mata, *Los gauchos de Güemes: Guerras de independencia y conflicto social* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2008); Raúl Fradkin, *¿Y el pueblo dónde está? Contribuciones para una historia popular de la Revolución de independencia en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2008); Raúl Fradkin, "La revolución en los pueblos del litoral rioplatense", *Estudios Ibero-Americanos* 36, no. 2 (2010): 242–265.

indebtedness had been ineffective to tie the workforce to a property in colonial Hispanic America. Moreover, in the area covered in this chapter, instead of trying to tie the peasantry to their land, many landowners pressured the state to evict occupiers, and coercion was mostly exercised by state authorities rather than by landowners. However, while clearly not feudal, colonial society was not classically capitalist either. For a long time, most people were not forced to sell their labour power on the market in order to subsist. Undoubtedly there were wage workers, but in most places they had alternatives to the market to make a living. Apart from wage labourers, there were also many slaves, an extensive and heterogeneous independent peasantry, and a large group of small business owners, such as artisans. Some historians have therefore proposed an alternative definition of capitalism as a profit-driven system that produced commodities for large markets, and which could contain diverse relations of production. This definition was rejected by those who took proletarianization to be capitalism's central feature and who emphasized that Latin America had a specific economic and social organization. The revolution of the 1810s was not central to this debate, as many scholars considered that it had not changed the mode of production. Some Marxists did think of the revolution as a challenge to the social structure, but as a failed one: in the end, labour relations remained the same.⁸

The debate had not been settled, but it was more or less abandoned after the 1980s. The number of studies into labour relations grew remarkably, but without engaging in a debate about the modes of production. Some scholars studied general aspects of the development of "agrarian capitalism" through the nineteenth century,⁹ some looked for its origins, either in the late colonial

8 A clear synthesis of the arguments is found in Steve Stern, "Feudalism, Capitalism, and the World-System in the Perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean", *AHR* 93, no. 4 (1988): 829–872. With regard to the history of the debate, see José Carlos Chiaramonte, *Formas de sociedad y economía en Hispanoamérica* (Buenos Aires: Grijalbo, 1984). The proposal of capitalism as a profit-driven system is in Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), and the main critics of it (by Ernesto Laclau and Carlos Assadourian) in Carlos Sempat Assadourian, et al., *Modos de producción en América Latina* (México: Pasado y Presente, 1973). It was Rodolfo Puiggrós who talked about a failed democratic-bourgeois revolution, in Rodolfo Puiggrós, *De la colonia a la revolución* (Buenos Aires: Retórica, 1940).

9 For example Osvaldo Barsky and Julio Djenderedjian, *Historia del capitalismo agrario pampeano: La expansión ganadera hasta 1895* (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Belgrano, 2003). A recent review of this strand of research can be found in Eduardo Míguez, "Del feudalismo al capitalismo agrario: ¿el fin de la historia ... agraria?" *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. Emilio Ravignani"* 46 (2017): 180–204. The current debates about Capitalism, the "Global South" and "Slavery Capitalism" have not yet influenced the Argentine historiography of the early nineteenth century.

period or in the mid-1850s,¹⁰ while others focused on the process of proletarianization, which they considered had become prevalent in the late nineteenth century.¹¹ In all these lines of research, the revolution was considered a major break, because it was followed by a re-orientation of the economy of the region. Yet few scholars have attempted to connect popular actions during the revolution with the transformations in the world of labour.

That is precisely the goal of this chapter. By creating a “conversation” between the historiographies of revolution and of labour in Argentina, I aim to analyse how labour relations were affected by the political actions of the popular classes.¹²

1 Labour Relations at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century

The chapter explores the relationship between revolution and labour in a region of what was the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata: the Pampas; a broad and fertile plain that included the present-day Argentine provinces of Buenos Aires, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe and also the Banda Oriental. The last of these is now another country: Uruguay.¹³ The focus here is mostly on Buenos Aires, which

10 Respectively Samuel Amaral, *The Rise of capitalism on the Pampas: The Estancias of Buenos Aires, 1785–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Hilda Sabato, *Capitalismo y ganadería en Buenos Aires: la fiebre del lanar* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1989).

11 For example Ricardo Salvatore, “Reclutamiento militar, disciplinamiento y proletarización en la era de Rosas”, *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana “Dr. Emilio Ravignani”* 5 (1992): 25–47; Juan Carlos Garavaglia, “De Caseros a la guerra del Paraguay: el disciplinamiento de la población campesina en el Buenos Aires postrosista (1852–1865)”, *Illes i Imperis*, no. 5 (2001): 53–80; Daniel Campi, “Trabajo, azúcar, disciplinamiento y resistencia: El caso de Tucumán, Argentina (segunda mitad del siglo XIX)”, in *Historia do Açúcar: Fiscalidade, metrologia, vida material e patrimonio*, ed. Alberto Viera et al. (Funchal: CeHa, 2006).

12 Naturally, I have included texts about Argentina written in other countries, and I also take from Uruguayan historiography. The chapter is based on a secondary bibliography, although a few primary sources are used to provide examples. I have translated all the citations from Spanish into English.

13 Roughly speaking, the area was geographically and historically different from the rest of what today is Argentina, the “interior” provinces more closely resembling of other Andean regions. There were also huge plains in which different indigenous groups resisted the Spanish conquest and kept their sovereignty, their languages and their religion until the last quarter of the nineteenth century: Chaco in the North and Patagonia in the South. There is a vast bibliography on the indigenous groups of both regions. For a general summary, see Raúl Mandrini, *La Argentina aborigen* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2008).

in the 1810s experienced a significant popular mobilization in support of the struggle against the colonial authorities. The mobilization was more urban than rural. Labour relations were not at the heart of the political disputes of that agitated period, but they were affected by the consequences of the revolutionary process. On the other hand, the uprising in the Banda Oriental and Entre Ríos was mainly rural, and openly took issue with many aspects of the agrarian relations. Some of these disputes concerned pre-existing conditions. In order to make sense of this, the current section provides a brief overview of labour relations in the area in colonial times.

In this vast and scarcely-populated plain, most people lived in the countryside and worked in rural activities. They produced wheat and fruit for the urban markets and hides for export, and raised mules to be sent to the distant mines of Potosí. Many rural workers were peasants, who worked small and medium-sized plots and were generally engaged in a combination of agriculture and livestock breeding. A few of them owned their land, but most were settled on others' properties. Many were tenants, who paid their rent in various ways: in money, in wheat or in animals. Others were sharecroppers. There were also the so-called "aggregates", who exchanged work for land, but in contrast to the tenants, lived in the same residence as the owner or another tenant, or next to it. In addition, there was still another alternative for members of the popular classes to access the land: to occupy it without permission from the owners. Land was not fenced, and large "empty" spaces that were not used for production existed all around. The repressive capacity of the state was low, and many landowners had little control of their holdings, some of which were not actually occupied by them. They often complained about intruders, but sometimes ended up negotiating some form of collaboration with the occupants, such as demanding their help to control herds or employing them as casual labourers.¹⁴

The other main form of rural labour was related to the *haciendas* or *estancias*: large landholdings dedicated to producing cattle, mules and sometimes crops. Many haciendas had tenants who paid part of their rent in the

14 There is a vast bibliography on this topic. Three indispensable books are Jorge Gelman, *Campesinos y estancieros: Una región del Río de la Plata a fines de la época colonial* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Los Libros del Riel, 1998); Juan Carlos Garavaglia, *Pastores y labradores de Buenos Aires: una historia agraria de la campaña bonaerense 1700–1830* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1999); Carlos Mayo, *Estancia y sociedad en la Pampa (1740–1820)* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2010). Also see José Mateo, *Población, parentesco y red social en la frontera. Lobos (provincia de Buenos Aires) en el siglo XIX* (Mar del Plata: Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, 2001).

form of labour. Further, given the shortage of workers and the irregularity of demand for labour in cattle raising – which was concentrated in short periods each year devoted to livestock branding and slaughtering – the *hacendados* employed temporary labourers for those months and kept a group of slaves in charge of the permanent tasks. These slaves were the only people working at the hacienda for the entire year, and because of that some of them were even able to become bosses of free labourers,¹⁵ who were hired in high season, both per month and per day (journeymen). They were paid in currency and in kind, and while they were working they were given lodging and food. Wages in the Pampas were significantly higher than in other parts of the Viceroyalty. However, though the area attracted many migrants – seasonally or permanently – in-migration was not great enough to supply all the labour required by the haciendas. Many workers would leave one hacienda for another if they disagreed with the bosses or were paid after the due date, which was common. Labour mobility was high.¹⁶

Most of the labourers were not fully dependent on wages alone. Subsistence alternatives continued to exist, such as hunting wild animals, including otters, rodents and rheas, fishing or killing someone else's cow. Many entered and left the market, and therefore were not necessarily full-time labourers. At the same time, patterns of employment changed over a lifetime. Men from other regions went to the Pampas to get money, and then returned to their homes, where they became peasants again. Others remained in a proletarian position or lived on the margins of society. In the eighteenth century, the latter were called *gauchos*, but as decades went by, that word started to be used to denominate every poor man in the countryside. Another option for labourers was to form a family, obtain some seeds and tools or some cows, and start a small herd. Thus, they could become peasants; a route that was made possible because land was quite easy to obtain.¹⁷

15 Carlos Mayo, "Patricio Belén: nada menos que un capataz", *Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (1997): 597–617.

16 Mariana Canedo, *Propietarios, ocupantes y pobladores: San Nicolás de los Arroyos, 1600–1860* (Mar del Plata: Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, 2000). See also Roy Hora, *Historia económica de la Argentina en el siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI/Fundación OSDE, 2010).

17 An early and useful synthesis of these topics in English is Juan Carlos Garavaglia and Jorge Gelman, "Rural History of the Rio de la Plata, 1600–1850: results of a historiographical renaissance", *Latin American Research Review* 30, no. 3 (1995): 75–105. A recent balance can be found in Jorge Gelman, "De la historia agraria a la historia de las desigualdades. Un recorrido y varios homenajes", *Anuario IEHS* 32, no. 2 (2017): 47–58. See also Míguez, "Del feudalismo al capitalismo agrario" and the comments on the text in the same issue by Juan Manuel Palacio and Eduardo Barsky.

Another fundamental aspect of rural life was the importance of customary notions that sanctioned access to resources. People from the popular classes considered that stones or firewood could be taken from others' land because they were scarce goods; that they could take their own livestock to graze in any surrounding field; that wild animals could be hunted for food; and that killing a cow was acceptable if it was done to meet a need. Custom established that a person who lived for a long time in a given place had the right to stay there. From the late eighteenth century onwards, the authorities and the major landowners tried unsuccessfully to stop these practices. Attempts to secure rights over their possessions were made in various places around the end of that century, generating tensions and disputes.¹⁸

Thus, the scarcity of population, and the availability of land and of food alternatives without becoming fully dependent on the market allowed the popular classes to negotiate their social position and working condition (in Buenos Aires there was also the possibility of crossing the frontier and joining independent indigenous groups). These factors also partly curbed the pressures from the elites, who always complained about workers "abandoning" their tasks after receiving a salary advance; one of the practices used to retain them and stop their mobility. Laws against "vagrants" were introduced during the eighteenth century, sending any man without a steady job into the army, but the goal was not easy to achieve. Even if coercion was occasionally able to make workers stay in a given place, it failed to generate a steady flow of labour to the market. Migrants were the ones who suffered most from the pressure of the authorities, because they had no local connections to defend themselves.¹⁹

There was one region in which rural relations were more tense before the revolution: the Banda Oriental and part of Entre Ríos. In the late eighteenth century, some rich people from Buenos Aires and Montevideo began obtaining land grants for cattle raising in the Banda Oriental, an area with a lower population because it had been colonized much later than Buenos Aires. The new owners started to clash with the untitled occupants who were already there, and who the owners tried to expel from their lands. These attempts were

18 Raúl Fradkin, "Entre la ley y la práctica: la costumbre en la campaña bonaerense de la primera mitad del siglo XIX", *Anuario IEHS* 12 (1997): 141–156.

19 María Elena Barral, Raúl Fradkin, Gladys Perri and Fabián Alonso, "Los vagos de la campaña bonaerense: la construcción histórica de una figura delictiva (1780–1830)", in *El poder y la vara. Estudios sobre la justicia y la construcción del Estado en el Buenos Aires rural*, comp. Raúl Fradkin (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros Editorial, 2007). Another perspective appears in Gabriela Martínez Dougnac, "Justicia colonial, orden social y peonaje obligatorio", in *Poder Terrateniente, relaciones de producción y orden colonial*, ed. Azcuy Ameghino (Buenos Aires: F. García Cambeiro, 1996), 185–225.

sometimes resisted judicially by appealing to custom, but at other times they had a drastic ending: evictions and the destruction of homes. At the same time, the new landowners tended to control the best sources of water and to take for themselves the cattle that went to drink there. These situations and the lack of an adequate demarcation of the farms led to the tense situation in the region that arose during the revolutionary years.²⁰

The cities in the area were small, except for Buenos Aires, which had more than 60,000 inhabitants by 1810, a significant number by South American standards of that time.²¹ Artisans dominated the urban workforce. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, about 60 per cent of craft activities in Buenos Aires were performed by Afro-descendants, who were the clear majority among the shoemakers and tailors. For a free black, being a craftsman offered the possibility of social advancement. Racial disputes arose among artisans, however. In the 1790s, some black and mulatto shoemakers tried to separate themselves from the recently formed Guild of Shoemakers and create a different one. They even sent a petition to the king. In the debates and mobilizations around contesting the framework of guilds, they acquired some political experience.

20 José Pedro Barrán y Benjamín Nahum, *Bases económicas de la revolución artiguista* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 2007); Lucía Sala de Touron, Nelson de la Torre and Julio Rodríguez, *Estructura económico-social de la colonia* (Montevideo: Ediciones Pueblos Unidos, 1967). Outside the area considered in this chapter, in various parts of what is present-day North-West Argentina, several indigenous communities worked their lands collectively and the chief then used that production to pay the tribute to the Crown. The mines of Potosí, in present-day Bolivia, had a special labour system: the *mita*, indigenous mandatory service that several communities had to cover every year. In what today is North-East Argentina, then the area of the former Jesuit missions – the Order had been ousted from the Spanish territories in 1767 – the Guaraní indigenous groups continued producing *yerba mate* and hides in communal lands as they had done before with the priests, but under the supervision of a secular administrator. See Julia Sareal, *The Guaraní and Their Missions: A Socioeconomic History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014). With regard to the indigenous villages, see a synthesis in Gabriela Sica, “Las sociedades indígenas del Tucumán colonial: una breve historia en larga duración. Siglos XVI a XIX”, in *La historia nacional en perspectiva regional. Nuevas investigaciones para viejos problemas*, ed. Susana Bandieri and Sandra Fernández (Buenos Aires: Teseo, 2017), 41–82. For the *mita*, see Enrique Tandeter, *Coacción y mercado. La minería de la plata en el Potosí Colonial, 1692–1826* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 1992). For examples of labour relations in other parts of present-day Argentina see Guillermo Madrazo, *Hacienda y encomienda en los Andes. La puna argentina bajo el marquesado de Tojo. Siglos XVII a XIX* (Buenos Aires: Fondo Editorial, 1982); Sara Mata, “Estructura agraria, la propiedad de la tierra en el Valle de Lerma, Valle Calchaquí y la Frontera Este (1750–1800)”, *Andes. Antropología e Historia*, no. 1 (1990): 47–88.

21 According to new calculations made by Lyman Johnson, *Workshop of Revolution: Plebeian Buenos Aires and the Atlantic World, 1776–1810* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

Many of the artisans were slaves, since it was often cheaper for masters to teach the craft to someone who could not leave. Other slaves learned a craft and exercised it independently, giving what they earned to their owners, who were not necessarily artisans.²² Slavery was crucial in the cities. In Buenos Aires, slaves accounted for more than 25 per cent of the population by 1810. The women were seamstresses, ironers, washerwomen or wet nurses, and could even be forced by their masters to engage in prostitution. Brickyards, construction sites and bakeries – important not only for the local market but also for the crews of the ships docked in the port – used slave labour. Of course, a large number of slaves were also engaged in domestic activities.²³

Apart from the slaves, Buenos Aires, Montevideo and smaller cities had a heterogeneous plebeian population. This included street vendors, wage workers, sailors, and in the ports, personnel responsible for maintaining the ships that arrived after the long transatlantic voyage. There were many people who did not have a fixed occupation and took employment in what they could find daily or periodically, from obtaining some goods and exchanging them for other things, to digging wells or tying firewood. They could also be beggars.²⁴

All these people were massively mobilized by the British army's occupation of Buenos Aires in July 1806, and the subsequent reconquest of the city, aided by troops sent from Montevideo. Soon after the British defeat, a crowd pressed the city council (*Cabildo*) to forbid the return of Viceroy Sobremonte to the capital, which he had left when the invaders attacked. At the same time, a voluntary militia was organized, including most male adults in the city and its outskirts. Militiamen were inhabitants who were armed for the defence of the city. They were not regular soldiers, but were paid when on active service. Thus, the militia became a steady job for many plebeians.²⁵ Officers were voted in by the soldiers, and the new organization became a channel of contact

22 Johnson, *Workshop of Revolution*; Miguel Ángel Rosal, *Africanos y afrodescendientes en el Río de la Plata. Siglos XVII–XIX* (Buenos Aires: 2009).

23 Alex Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers. Emerging Black Identities in the Río de la Plata*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015); Juan Carlos Garavaglia, "El pan de cada día: el mercado del trigo en Buenos Aires, 1700–1820", *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana, "Dr. Emilio Ravignani"* no. 4, (1991): 7–29; Marta Goldberg y Silvia Mallo, "La población africana en Buenos Aires y su campaña. Formas de vida y subsistencia, 1750–1850", *Temas de Asia y África*, no. 2 (1994): 15–69; Rosal, *Africanos y afrodescendientes*.

24 César García Belsunce, *Buenos Aires. Su gente. 1800–1830*, 3 Vols. (Buenos Aires: Emecé Distribuidora, 1976).

25 Tulio Halperin Donghi, "Revolutionary Militarization in Buenos Aires, 1806–1815", *Past & Present* 40, no.1 (1968): 84–107.

between the local elite and the plebeians, not mediated by the imperial order. The new units subsequently played a key role, intervening in local disputes in the midst of the Spanish imperial crisis.²⁶

The revolution that was soon to start in the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata was not the result of inner tensions, but a consequence of the collapse of the centre of the monarchy under the French offensive. However, when the process began, many local grievances became political, and that would also affect labour relations.

2 Revolution

In May 1810, the arrival in Buenos Aires of news about the fall of Spain at Bonaparte's hands led to the organization of a movement that removed the viceroy from power and created a junta to replace his position. This was a collective local government, similar to those created in several Spanish cities on behalf of the captive Ferdinand VII, and was initially supposed to rule until the return of the legitimate king. However, the junta wanted more than that. The aspiration for self-government was strong among the elites in Spanish America. They wanted to maintain their resources and elect their own authorities, cutting off the dependence on Spain, even though their desire was to remain within the monarchy.²⁷ Many cities of the viceroyalty accepted the new government of Buenos Aires, while a few others did not, and declared their loyalty to a new and fragile regency council in Spain. Among them was Montevideo, in the Banda Oriental. The junta sent troops against the loyalists, starting a civil war that would eventually turn into a war of independence lasting for 15 years.

From the beginning, the junta tried to ensure the adhesion of the plebeians to the revolution in Buenos Aires. The support of militia officers and a large proportion of the secular clergy was especially useful. Mariano Moreno, the secretary of the junta, started to publish a journal and forced the priests to read it aloud before mass, addressing the illiterates. The government and the

26 Pilar González Bernaldo, "Producción de una nueva legitimidad: ejército y sociedades patrióticas en Buenos Aires entre 1810 y 1813", in AAVV, *Imagen y recepción de la Revolución Francesa en la Argentina* (1990): 27–51; Johnson, *Workshop of Revolution*.

27 Similar movements occurred in Caracas, Cartagena, Bogotá, Santiago de Chile and Quito. For Buenos Aires, see Noemí Goldman, "Buenos Aires, 1810". For the general process in Halperin Donghi, *Reforma y disolución de los imperios ibéricos*, and for Portillo Valdés, *Crisis Atlántica*.

city council decided to organize public celebrations whenever good news for the cause arrived, which would lead in May 1811 to the creation of the most important festive occasion of that time: the anniversary of the revolution. These meetings had a massive attendance.²⁸

Although at the beginning the leaders of the revolution promoted the controlled participation of common people, the politicization of the plebeians increased when a factional struggle broke out within the junta towards the end of 1810. While the moderate faction – gathered around the figure of President Cornelio Saavedra – had the aim of achieving self-government while remaining within the monarchy, the radicals – followers of Mariano Moreno – sought total independence and wanted to change many hierarchical aspects of society.²⁹ To settle the conflict, the moderates counted on the support of most of the military units, but if the military units acted alone, they could have been accused of forcing a change through violence. Therefore, they found another solution: on the night of April 5, 1811, they organized a massive mobilization to displace their rivals from the junta. One of the radicals later wrote that the moderates went “from the city to the suburbs in search of machines to execute the movement, or, as it was said then, they appealed to the men of poncho and *chiripá* [plebeian garments] to confront the men of cloak and frock coat”.³⁰ Around fifteen hundred people, most of them plebeians, attended the demonstration. The troops showed up too, but remained as silent support. The mobilization was coordinated by the petty authorities of the urban quarters, appointed by the city council.³¹ However, beyond their influence, they had to find a popular cause, shared by those who followed them; they found it under the claim that Spaniards should be banished from Buenos Aires. This was the first requirement of the petition they presented, while the eviction of the radical deputies from the junta appeared under this in the list. All the demands were approved (although the measure against the Spaniards was not later implemented).³²

28 With regard to the celebrations, see mainly Lía Munilla, *Celebrar y Gobernar. Un estudio de las fiestas cívicas en Buenos Aires, 1810–1835* (Buenos Aires: Miño Dávila Editores, 2013); Fernando Gómez, “Las Fiestas Mayas y la construcción de legitimidad en Buenos Aires (1811–1836)”, *Prohistoria* 19 (2013): 73–93.

29 For a recent approach to this classical topic, see Noemí Goldman, *Mariano Moreno. De reformista a insurgente* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2016).

30 Ignacio Núñez, “Noticias históricas”, *Biblioteca de Mayo*, 25 Vols. (Buenos Aires, 1960), I, 453.

31 Di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo!*, 101.

32 The petition was reproduced entirely in the press on 15 April 1811. *Gaceta de Buenos Aires (1810–1821)*, T II (Buenos Aires, 1910), 281–293.

This event was a turning point in the revolution. First, the petition was made in the name of a single actor: “the People of Buenos Aires”. An opponent of the movement wrote in his diary that the “plebe” had been erroneously considered as the people (*pueblo*). Instead, “whether the President had called the true People, he would not have achieved his plans”.³³ Only a small number of neighbours, and not the plebeians of the suburbs, were the “people” in the colonial period. Now, the concept had been expanded to include any man (not women, although many of them participated in this new political life). In a revolution justified from the beginning in the name of “the people”, this was a transformation.

Second, the leaders needed a topic that would be popular enough to drive plebeians into action. Thus, in every subsequent mobilization, the leaders had to include popular mottos to gain support, which meant a way of including popular demands in the political struggle. That happened on 5 April 1811: the moderate deputies had never spoken against the Spaniards, but this mobilization was mainly against them. In 1810, the revolutionaries had protested against the colonial authorities and the abuses of the metropolis, while recognizing Ferdinand VII as the legitimate king. Now things had changed: every Spaniard was an enemy. This was the third change on that crucial day, caused by the plebeian intervention. Resentment against the Europeans, as they were called, was common among the plebeians, given the better conditions they generally enjoyed when they migrated to Buenos Aires, such as communitarian aid, availability of credit, better opportunities from marriage (marrying a Spaniard was more prestigious for a woman) and different legal punishments for the same offence. None of this led to the revolution, but when it started, the small complaints became politicized.

There was a fourth lesson from the movement of April 1811: it was successful. All the political groups learnt that the combination of plebeians and troops in the Plaza de la Victoria amounted to a winning formula. In September 1811, a new faction dissolved the junta and created a triumvirate instead, using the same political practice: “Plebe in the Plaza and troops supporting it”, as a contemporary put it.³⁴ Similar movements occurred in October 1812, when the radicals seized power, and in April 1815, when they lost it. There is not enough space here to describe all these events, but it is clear that plebeian mobilization became a feature of Buenos Aires’ politics.³⁵

33 Juan Manuel Beruti, *Memorias curiosas* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2001), 166.

34 “Instrucción de Saavedra a Juan de la Rosa Alba”, *Biblioteca de Mayo*, 11, vol. 1 (1960): 1122.

35 Di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo!*

Those who had been in subaltern positions in colonial times found an opportunity to rise socially through supporting the new cause; a new place in the community. Through their struggle in the revolution, they were symbolically levelled: they now were more valuable than those who had opposed it, even if the latter had held a higher social status. Social and racial tensions were subsumed in the opposition to the Spaniards. In a society based on the notion of juridical inequality by colour and place of birth, the possibility of changing this, and at the same time overpowering the enemies of the cause, was a powerful motive for plebeians. Therefore, they were the main denouncers of “enemies of the system”, mostly Spaniards, to a “Tribunal of Public Safety” created after the movement of April 1811.³⁶

The differences between autonomists and independentists were resolved by the defeat of Napoleon in Europe and the return of Ferdinand VII to the throne in 1814. The king was not willing to negotiate over autonomy. Instead, he sent troops, enabling local loyalists to prevail in most of the continent. By 1816, the only insurgent territory still standing was the Rio de la Plata. Therefore, when a congress was called that year, independence was declared without hesitation. The war against the loyalists – in Chile and in the Upper Peru – nevertheless lasted for years, and in addition, there were military clashes between two different revolutionary blocks after 1814. The Banda Oriental, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe and two other provinces created a confederation against the central revolutionary government located in Buenos Aires.³⁷

Although in the latter, labour relations were not openly contested, the political disputes and military mobilizations had an impact on them. First, there was plebeian pressure to ensure that every job was given to the “sons of the country”. Second, slavery was contested.³⁸ Both radical and moderate branches maintained their position against slavery, and decided to gradually put an end to it. They avoided direct emancipation, claiming that slaves were not prepared for sudden freedom, and thereby protecting property rights. They started with the slave traffic. In May 1812, the official journal proclaimed:

How long shall we give shelter in our ports to these ships, loaded with parents, with children, with husbands who, traitorously wrenched from the bosom of their families, come to satisfy with their sad existence the

36 Ibid.

37 For a synthesis of this, see Gabriela Tio Vallejo, “Rupturas precoces y legalidades provisionarias: el fin del poder español en el Río de la Plata”, *Ayer* 74 (2009): 133–162.

38 Di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo!* This pressure took place in 1812.

greed, and the caprices of their barbarous robbers? Shame on a free people, if it is indifferent to these excesses.³⁹

The triumvirate banned the traffic. Any new slave who landed in what now was called the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata would be freed. This decision reinforced the slaves' support for the revolution. Shortly after the measure was put in place, a slave called Ventura denounced a counterrevolutionary conspiracy by Spaniards, many of whom were executed after a short trial. During the agitation of these days, another slave called Valerio said to his master that he thought *Criollos*, Blacks and Indians were equal.⁴⁰

A few months later, under a new government, the 1813 Constituent Assembly enacted a Free Womb Act, under which any new-born child of a slave mother was to be born free. The idea was that by abolishing slavery and the slave trade by inheritance, the institution would eventually disappear when the last person enslaved before 1813 died, all without interfering with the owners' interests. However, slaves did not want to wait for freedom any longer. Many believed abolition was close: a black "poor journeyman" named Hilarión Gómez declared "everything breathes banishing slavery".⁴¹

For men, the revolutionary war itself opened up a direct route out of slavery. If they became soldiers, they were promised that they would be set free by the end of the conflict, and many wanted to go into the army. In 1816, a woman demanded that the authorities pay her the value of a "mulatto" she owned, who had escaped and enlisted. Another owner stated that he had a young slave, who showed "a strong desire to pursue a military career", so the owner wanted to be paid for him by the state.⁴² Cases like these were common, and many slaves were bought by the authorities. Thirty per cent of the soldiers in the decisive Army of the Andes led by General José de San Martín in 1817 were

39 15 May 1812. *Gaceta de Buenos Aires (1810–1821)*, T. III (Buenos Aires, 1910), 192–193.

40 All the information comes from the Archivo General de la Nación [AGN, Argentine National Archive], sala x, legajo 6-7-4, Conspiración de Álzaga. See also Mariana Pérez, "¡Viva España y mueran los patricios! La conspiración de Álzaga de 1812", *Americanía*, no. 3 (2013): 21–55.

41 AGN, X, 8-9-4, Solicitudes Civiles y Militares, 1815. For the judicial fights of slaves in the 1810s, see Gladys Perri, "Los esclavos frente a la justicia. Resistencia y adaptación en Buenos Aires, 1780–1830", in *La ley es tela de araña. Ley, justicia y sociedad rural en Buenos Aires, 1780–1830*, ed. Raúl Fradkin (Buenos Aires: Prometeo libros, 2009), 51–82; Magdalena Candiotti, "Altaneros y libertinos. Transformaciones de la condición jurídica de los afroporteños en la Buenos Aires revolucionaria (1810–1820)", *Desarrollo Económico* 50, no. 198 (2010): 271–296.

42 Mauricia Arguibel and José Ortiz, both in AGN, X, 09-02-04, Solicitudes Civiles.

former slaves.⁴³ Becoming a soldier gave Afro-descendants a strong identification with the homeland (*Patria*). It gave them freedom and respectability, or at least they expected it to. In 1820, a drunken white officer insulted one of his subalterns and called him “black”. He replied loudly that the officer had no right to offend him: “I am black but I am a corporal of the *Patria*”. His fellow soldiers were so angry that they almost rebelled against the officer.⁴⁴ One consequence of this military manumission was that after the war there were more slave women than men. Greatly weakened, slavery continued to exist until its abolition by the 1853 National Constitution, but it could no longer supply the labour power for rural production and the domestic labour required.⁴⁵

Another substantial change came with the sanctioning of free trade by the revolutionary governments, a measure that had enduring consequences. While it made foreign goods cheaper, and thus available to workers, it was also contested by artisans, whose workshops were threatened by the entry of those manufactures. However, these criticisms did not change the artisans’ support for the revolutionary cause.⁴⁶

In the Banda Oriental and Entre Ríos – as we have already seen, an area with many conflicts concerning land – peasants and labourers mobilized for revolution. Loyalist forces had been sent from Montevideo to control the rural areas in 1810, but in February 1811 a massive uprising started there in support of the Buenos Aires’ junta. The rebels were successful, obliging the counterrevolutionary troops to abandon the countryside and look for shelter in Montevideo (which remained a loyalist stronghold until it fell in 1814).⁴⁷

43 San Martín’s army crossed the Andes and defeated the royalist forces in Chile, securing its independence. Later San Martín led his troops to Perú, centre of the royal power in South America.

44 AGN, X, 29-10-2, Sumarios Militares, 146.

45 See George Reid Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires, 1800–1900* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980). See also the works published in “*Negros de la patria*”: *Los afrodescendientes en las luchas por la independencia en el antiguo Virreinato del Río de la Plata*, ed. Silvia Mallo and Ignacio Telesca (Buenos Aires: Sb editorial, 2010); Peter Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave Soldiers and the Wars of Independence in Spanish South America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); Di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo!*

46 See Jonathan Brown, *A Socioeconomic History of Argentina, 1776–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Also, Di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo!* This is a topic that deserves further research.

47 Ana Frega, *Pueblos y soberanía en la revolución artiguista: La región de Santo Domingo Soriano desde fines de la colonia hasta la ocupación portuguesa* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 2007).

This rural movement was led by José Artigas, and took the most radical positions in the whole area. Many peasants and labourers fought for liberty and egalitarianism, first against Spaniards and local loyalists, and subsequently – after 1814 – against the Buenos Aires central government. The motto of these *Artiguists* was “*nadie es más que nadie*” (“nobody is more than nobody”). They demanded land reform and affirmed their traditional common rights should be respected. In 1815, Artigas sanctioned a land reform, confiscating the properties of loyalist landowners and dividing it among poor families, whom he called “the unhappy ones”. The decision was not just a benevolent gesture from Artigas: his troops had pressed him to be given some benefit for having fought without pause under his command. With the new measures, some of these peasants and labourers would become landowners.⁴⁸

Many members of the elites saw *Artiguism* as a menace. Nicolás Herrera, a well-to-do politician from Montevideo, wrote to the Portuguese Court in Brazil, promoting action against Artigas:

The white caste occupied in America the same place the nobility did in the states of Europe, and it produced the same effect. But the revolution divided whites. The Spanish Europeans and their Party were presented as criminals, inept, cowards, and barbarians to the Creoles. Indians, blacks and mulattos became used to mistreat their masters and employers. ... The dogma of equality moves the crowd against all government and has established a war between the poor and the rich, master and lord; those who command and those who obey.⁴⁹

The Portuguese invasion of the Banda Oriental began in 1816. The *Artiguists* resisted for four years, but they were ultimately defeated and the process of land reform was interrupted. In that same year, 1820, the central government created in 1810 collapsed in Buenos Aires. For a while, provinces governed themselves without any authority from above.

Some important changes had taken place by then. The monarchy had been abolished and the former subjects now lived in republics. Some liberal reforms had also been made, such as sweeping away noble titles, the Inquisition, judicial torture and the indigenous tribute that had existed in colonial times outside the region considered here. Soon, the properties of the Catholic regular

48 Ana Frega, “El Reglamento de Tierras de 1815: justicia revolucionaria y virtud republicana”, in *Tierras, reglamento y revolución: Reflexiones a doscientos años del reglamento artiguista de 1815*, ed. Gerardo Caetano y Ana Ribeiro (Montevideo: Planeta, 2015).

49 *Archivo Artigas*, t. xxx (Montevideo: Imprenta Ecler S.A., 1998), 10.

orders were secularized in Buenos Aires. The “caste system” was also ended with the revolution, putting an end to juridical racial inequality (although racism persisted). However, most popular expectations of an egalitarian transformation were not achieved.

The demise of revolutionary enthusiasm can be adequately traced through the literature of the time. One of the innovations of that agitated period was the appearance of a new literary genre, strongly political, in which some writers used the language of the people of the countryside and placed them as central historical actors. In a poem written in 1821, two *gauchos* complain about justice. One says that a wealthy man who steals public money is quickly released, while any peasant who steals something for eating is hit and imprisoned by the police. “And they call this Equality?”⁵⁰

3 Labour Relations after the Revolution

The War of Independence triggered a remarkable destruction of wealth and trading networks. Potosí remained in loyalist hands until the end of the conflict in 1825, and it also experienced a crisis in mining, partially caused by the refusal of the indigenous communities of that area to continue with the coercive *mita* system after the revolution. Thus, silver stopped being the main commodity exported from Buenos Aires, as it had been before 1810, and Potosí ceased to be a hub of demand for different goods. The new situation had dire consequences in the interior of present-day Argentina. However, in the Pampas region, with good fluvial connections with the Atlantic, free trade provided new opportunities.⁵¹

In colonial times, commerce had been the most profitable activity in Buenos Aires,⁵² but after the revolution, the new transatlantic trade was mainly in the hands of British merchants. Therefore, former Buenos Aires merchants,

50 It is a poem called “Diálogo patriótico interesante entre Jacinto Chano, capataz de una estancia en las Islas del Tordillo, y el gaucho de la guardia del Monte”, by Bartolomé Hidalgo. In Bartolomé Hidalgo, *Cielitos y diálogos patrióticos* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Huemul, 1967). See Josefina Ludmer, *The gaucho genre: A treatise on the motherland* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002).

51 Carlos Sempat Assadourian, “El sector exportador de una economía regional del interior argentino. Córdoba, 1800 – 1860”, in *El sistema de la economía colonial*, ed. Carlos Sempat Assadourian (México: Editorial Nueva Imagen, 1983), 18–55; Tandeter, *Coacción y mercado*.

52 Susan Socolow, *Merchants of Buenos Aires 1778–1810: Family and Commerce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

who could not compete with the British, moved their capital to cattle raising, which required low initial investment. Hides and salted meat became the main commodities. The Banda Oriental, Entre Ríos and Santa Fe were the main producers of hides before 1810, but their livestock staple was seriously diminished during the war. By contrast, Buenos Aires had suffered little combat in its territory in the previous years and was ready to take advantage.⁵³ Thanks to rapid economic growth, Buenos Aires consolidated its privileged situation among the rest of the provinces. Trade was far more extensive than in other regions, and this was the activity through which the provincial states were financed. The annual budget of Buenos Aires often surpassed that of all the other provinces combined.⁵⁴

To ensure economic expansion, the government of Buenos Aires started to put pressure on the frontier to gain land controlled by the indigenous sovereign groups, which had never been conquered by the Spaniards. As the War of Independence was over, it could use its military forces in the frontier region. At the same time, the state rented out huge expanses of public land at very low prices, allowing many members of the elite to acquire large landholdings for exploitation. The province tripled the area of arable land, and a powerful landowning class with large landholdings quickly formed, particularly in the southern areas taken from the indigenous population.⁵⁵

If land was not a problem for these now powerful cattle ranchers, labour was. There was a chronic shortage, not only because of the scarcity of population but also due to the persistence of a large number of small and medium-size producers. Many peasants produced for the market and did not need wages. In addition, the growing engagement with international markets led to the emergence of a group of relatively prosperous new agricultural tenants.⁵⁶ Because the scarce population of the Pampas combined with the high demand for labour led to high wages, constant migration from the interior provinces provided new workers. However, migration alone was not enough to cover the increased demands of the major *estancias*. On the one hand, militarization brought about by the previous war and the continuing conflicts in the

53 Tulio Halperin Donghi, "La Expansión Ganadera en la Campaña de Buenos Aires (1810 – 1852)", *Desarrollo Económico* 3, no. 1–2 (1963): 57–110.

54 Jorge Gelman, "La gran divergencia. Las economías regionales en Argentina después de la independencia", in *La historia económica y los procesos de independencia en la América hispana*, ed. Susana Bandieri (Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2010), 105–129.

55 Halperin Donghi, "La Expansión Ganadera".

56 Julio Djenderedjian, *Historia del capitalismo agrario pampeano: la agricultura pampeana en la primera mitad del siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: siglo veintiuno editores, 2008).

following years meant that soldiers were required. On the other hand, as land was still accessible for these migrants, they could become peasants, as had been the case in colonial times. Thus, the persistence of small landholding acted as a barrier to proletarianization.⁵⁷

In the 1820s, cattle ranchers therefore aspired to put an end to the opportunities to create small farms, at the same time trying to secure their own property rights, which were challenged by the occupation of land and by customary rural practices. Most tenants had verbal contracts. Custom sanctioned that those staying on a piece of land acquired rights of possession over it, at the same time having the first option to purchase. The owners encouraged new written contracts, without regard to the previous occupants. Although the provincial state protected landowners, at a lower level of jurisdiction the two contradictory concepts of entitlement to the land often collided, since members of the community would recognize continuous possession over time, if held with “honesty” and without generating conflicts, as equivalent to the access to property. At the same time, those who had been tenants for an extended period became neighbours of the community, which provided protection and allowed them to defend themselves.⁵⁸

Major cattle ranchers and the state faced great difficulties when confronting pre-existing forms of land occupancy that had unintentionally been reinforced by the revolution. They were also unable to fully achieve their goals regarding wage labourers. The pressure on “vagrants” increased in every province: any man without papers showing he had a contract could be sent into the army. At the same time, the authorities tried to eliminate the extended forms of subsistence that were alternatives to wage labour. A list of instructions for the administrators of *estancias* written in 1819 emphasized two important points. First, families had to be prevented from settling on a property, thus making it impossible for them to become peasants. Second, the hunting of otters, rheas and rodents by wage workers for personal consumption had to be stopped.⁵⁹ However, the scarcity of workers and the easy access to land, combined with

57 Garavaglia, *Pastores y labradores*; Tulio Halperin Donghi, “Clase terrateniente y poder político en Buenos Aires (1820–1930)”, *Cuadernos de Historia Regional* 15 (1995): 11–46.

58 Raúl Fradkin, “La experiencia de la justicia: Estado, propietarios y arrendatarios en la frontera bonaerense (1800–1830)”, in *La ley es tela de araña*, comp. Raúl Fradkin; Jorge Gelman, “Derechos de propiedad, crecimiento económico y desigualdad en la región pampeana, siglos XVIII y XIX”, *Historia Agraria* 37 (2005): 467–488.

59 Juan Manuel de Rosas, *Instrucciones a los mayordomos de estancias* (Buenos Aires: Claridad, 2010). Before entering politics, Rosas, who was to become a key figure in the region, was a rancher and wrote these rules in 1819.

the low repressive capacity of the state, allowed members of the popular classes to continue these customary practices for decades. Therefore, wage workers retained much of their autonomy and could leave once they had acquired a sum that seemed sufficient, or if they were discontent with their employer.⁶⁰ Strikes, described at the time as “mutinies” or “uprisings”, also occurred. Such actions were not created by the revolution, but the political experience of the previous years allowed the popular classes to deal better with the attacks from above.

The pressure of the authorities on behalf of the landowners’ interests was greater after the revolution than before in Buenos Aires, and similar to the late colonial situation in the Banda Oriental. However, the popular mobilization that had started in the 1810s strengthened the possibilities of defying the offensives by the ruling classes and the state. Hence, by holding on to notions of justice carried over from colonial times, many tenants, farmers and small cattle ranchers could successfully resist the advance of property rights and maintain their holdings. In addition, they could fall back on forms of collective action related to the new political circumstances and the militarization brought by the revolution.

For example, in 1822, in the northern part of the province of Buenos Aires, a landowner wanted to evict what he called a group of “vagrants”. The judge who took the case held a different view: he considered the occupants “a multitude of militiamen”, who were from Santa Fe and whose services during the War of Independence had been rewarded by the government by granting them access to those lands, without title and without paying a fee. The occupants in turn delayed the eviction and continued sowing. They designated one of their own to be their representative and proposed paying a lease, but did not accept they had to leave. Neighbours of the land recommended that the violent eviction should not go ahead, because “we fear *montonera*”, referring to a group of armed riders that had played an important role in the War of Independence in the region. Four years later, the dispute had still not been resolved and the judge declared: “I have not proceeded by force because I do not have it and it could bring fatal consequences”, given that “there are more than fifty men with their respective families and all are armed, because they are soldiers of the active State Militia”. Thus, being part of the militia allowed the occupants to

60 Garavaglia, *Pastores y labradores*; Jorge Gelman, “Un gigante con pies de barro: Rosas y los pobladores de la campaña”, in *Caudillismos rioplatenses: Nuevas miradas a un viejo problema*, comps. Noemí Goldman and Ricardo Salvatore (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1998), 223–240.

maintain their position as peasants, a status they had won in the revolutionary years.⁶¹

The long war had brought changes in the whole area, affecting labour relations. Peasants, labourers and other plebeians entered the ranks of the army and the militia, which became major employers of the soldiers and wage workers. Military experience gave them new knowledge, which nourished their capacity for protest and prepared them for political intervention. Desertions and mutinies were common practice among the troops, with wages, food, clothing and mistreatment by officers being the causes of discontent. What was in dispute included the work performed by the soldiers, their remuneration and the conditions of service.⁶²

However, the main transformation in labour relations in the region brought about by the revolution was the serious weakening of slavery. The large *estancias* had to deal with the need to replace slaves, who had been used to perform fundamental tasks before the revolution. Some attempted to replace them with other forms of forced labour. The establishments of Juan Manuel de Rosas – who was also a key political figure from the 1820s to the 1850s – are an excellent example. In the 1830s, he tried to replace former slaves by captive Indians, who suffered similar conditions to those previously experienced by slaves. They did not receive a salary but were given food, and this “payment” was much lower than that received by wage workers. However, by the end of the decade, the captives had managed to renegotiate their situation and had obtained conditions similar to those of wage earners. In the 1840s, Rosas therefore turned to the use of indentured labourers from Galicia, in Spain. He would pay for their expensive Atlantic travel, and this money was then deducted from their salaries until the debt had been fully settled, when they became free labourers. Cattle ranchers were able to pay these immigrants much lower salaries than the locals. Like slaves and captives, Galicians carried out the permanent tasks on the *estancias*, but within a short period they were able to renegotiate their working conditions. The attempt to replace slavery with other forms of coerced labour thus had little success. Major cattle ranchers became entirely dependent on free wage labour and the small producers managed to preserve their place in the productive system and even to expand it.⁶³

61 Raúl Fradkin, “¿‘Facinerosos’ contra ‘cajetillas’? La conflictividad rural en Buenos Aires durante la década de 1820 y las montoneras federales”, *Illes i Imperis*, no. 4 (2001): 5–34.

62 Gabriel Di Meglio, Raúl Fradkin and Florencia Thul, “¿Huelgas antes de los sindicatos? Notas para una historia larga de las luchas de los trabajadores en Argentina y Uruguay”, *Archivos de historia del movimiento obrero y la izquierda*, no. 14 (2019): 11–31.

63 Jorge Gelman, “El fracaso de los sistemas de trabajo coactivo rural en Buenos Aires bajo el rosismo”, *Revista de Indias*, vol. LIX, no. 215 (1999): 123–141.

The revolutionary legacy for the popular classes in the region was not only that they could act collectively on certain occasions, but also that they had become important actors in the new republican politics. From the 1820s onwards, every province organized elections to choose the members of its legislature, which appointed the governor. Male suffrage was extended after the revolution: in Buenos Aires every free man could vote once he had passed the age of 21, without any other requirement.⁶⁴ This political system, and the practice of mobilization of the urban and rural population after the 1810s, made many leaders attentive to popular claims in order to gain support. They had to take into account the interests of rural peasants, urban artisans and the Afro-descendant community, organized in the 1820s in the so-called “African Societies”. With some nuances, the situation was similar throughout the whole region.

4 Conclusions

Most historiography on the Latin American revolutions of the early nineteenth century has understood them primarily as political events that led to the creation of new independent countries. Recent studies have shifted the focus to the social aspects of those revolutions, as this chapter has done for the case of the Pampas, in present-day Argentina. Meanwhile, students of labour relations have adopted a long-term perspective to explore the development of “agrarian capitalism”.

This chapter has created a conversation between the two lines of inquiry. One evident conclusion from this is that there is still much research to be done. For example, we know very little about what the world of artisans’ workshops was like after the 1810s. Yet from what we know so far, labour relations seem not to have been seriously transformed by the revolution in the short term, with one major exception: slavery. Much weakened during the revolutionary years, slavery never recovered, and the attempts to replace it with other forms of coercive labour failed.

While slavery was openly contested during the revolutionary years, other labour relations were not. Instead, the popular classes seem to have had a different agenda. In the Banda Oriental, peasants and labourers aimed to maintain their customary use of resources and access to land. Elsewhere in the region,

64 Marcela Ternavasio, *La revolución del voto. Política y elecciones en Buenos Aires, 1810–1852* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2001).

members of the popular classes challenged social and racial hierarchies – tacitly contesting the colonial caste system and advocating for every man to have political rights. It was not the popular classes but the elites who tried to change labour relations. They wanted to strengthen their control over the rural and the urban poor, and to be able to have access to fluid and cheaper labour. Starting in the 1820s, cattle ranchers and the provincial state aspired to reinforce property rights in Buenos Aires. However, to a great extent they failed, due to the resistance of many peasants.

That was the legacy of the political and military mobilization of the revolutionary years: it strengthened workers and allowed them to withstand the attacks that the new order directed at them. After the revolutionary years, leaders had to take some of their demands and opinions into account. The popular classes thus managed to maintain some customary practices for decades and to negotiate their labour conditions, taking advantage of structural factors, such as the scarcity of the labour force and the existence of an open frontier.⁶⁵ Some of the key features of the development of the Argentine “agrarian capitalism” – such as high wages and limited proletarianization – were shaped by the politicization of the popular classes in the 1810s.

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65 Raúl Fradkin, “¿Qué tuvo de revolucionaria la revolución de independencia?” *Nuevo Topo. Revista de historia y pensamiento crítico*, no. 5 (2008): 15–43.

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Izhevsk in Revolt

The “Third Force” in Power from August to November 1918

Dimitrii Churakov

In the Russian Federation, an active search for historical precedents for the new structure of power has been ongoing ever since the abolition of the Soviet state.¹ However, the current period is not the first decade in which Russian historians have studied the alternative regimes to Bolshevik political power; a power that existed in the country during the Russian revolution and the Civil War of 1917–1922. Among the state entities of this period, historians have shown a particular interest in regimes that were ruled by leftist parties, but that were opposed to the Bolsheviks. One of the attempts of right-wing socialists to propose their own version of the revolution took place in 1918 in the very heart of Russia – Ural – and grew into the largest anti-Bolshevik workers’ uprising in Soviet history. At the heart of this uprising was Izhevsk – one of the most important industrial centres in the country. The study of the anti-Bolshevik workers’ uprising in Izhevsk sheds light on both the nature of political forces that came into power in this particular town and general patterns in the development of the Russian Civil War.

Interest in the events that shook Izhevsk and the nearby town of Votkinsk has not faded in Russian historiography. On the contrary, interest has only grown over the years. This is no coincidence, as it was the working class – the proletariat – that Soviet ideology proclaimed to be the social foundation of the Bolshevik Party and its state. In the early period of the development of historical science in the USSR, the Izhevsk uprising was studied in the context of the workers’ mass protests in Ural. In this region, the establishment of Soviet power was a very arduous process. The front between the White and Red armies shifted several times from west to east. Remaining at the epicentre of

1 Parts of this chapter have been translated from an essay that was published in German as “Der antibolschewistische Arbeiteraufstand in Iževsk. Probleme der Etablierung ziviler Machtorgane August bis November 1918”, *Arbeit - Bewegung - Geschichte. Zeitschrift für historische Studien* 7, no. 2 (2018): 139–160. We are grateful to the editors of *ABC* for their permission for this translation. The editors thank Gijs Kessler and Kevin Murphy for their help with matters of transliteration.

the civil war, the Ural region saw many attempts by the local population to independently choose its own future.² In the years of the formation of Soviet historiography, the events in Izhevsk from August to November 1918 had already attracted the most attention among the various instances of working class protest.³

In the studies by Soviet historians from the 1920s, some questions were quite boldly raised and discussed that were not entirely convenient for the ruling party. This was possible because at that time, a single ideology and unified view of the 1917 revolution did not yet exist in the USSR. Among these fundamental questions was that of the reasons for the uprising. It was common to emphasize the influence of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks on the development of events in Prikamye (the Kama region in Ural) that led to a split among workers.⁴ At the same time, in the 1920s it was still possible to find references to the mistakes made by the Soviet authorities themselves that potentially caused the Izhevsk uprising.

Among the problems discussed by Soviet historians were the inability of the local Bolshevik organization to appeal to the majority of Izhevsk workers, and its inability to work with mass proletarian organizations (such as trade unions), which ultimately resulted in their shift towards an anti-Soviet position. Furthermore, there were the harsh “ultra-left” measures by the Bolsheviks and their closest allies, in particular the Socialists-Revolutionaries Maximalists (SRs Maximalists). One example of the harsh actions by the Bolsheviks was their attempt at solving the food problem through the creation of *prodotryads* (food-requisitioning groups). There were numerous examples of the local authorities’ incompetence, which was at the time highly likely to fuel the growing discontent of workers. For instance, Soviet historian A. I. Anishev linked the uprisings in the Ural and Volga region not to the activity of *kombeds* (committees of poor peasants) or the anti-Bolshevik propaganda of the right-wing socialists, but largely to the mass conscription for the Red Army that began in 1918.⁵ However, other historians of the epoch did not agree with Anishev’s conclusions. Among these was A. P. Kuchkin, a participant in the Izhevsk events

2 N. Solonitsyn, ed., *Oktyabr i grazhdanskaya voyna v Vyatskoy gubernii* (Vyatka: Istpart Viat'skogo gubkoma VKP(b), 1927).

3 N. Sapozhnikov, “Izhevsko-Votkinskoe vosstanie”, *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 8–9 (1924): 5–42.

4 For example, *Izhevsk v ogne grazhdanskoy voynyi, 1917–1918: Iz istorii revoliutsionnogo dvizheniya izhevskikh rabochikh* (Izhevsk: Izd. Obl. komissii po provedeniuu desiatoi godovshchiny Okt'iabr'skoi revoliutsii, 1927).

5 A. I. Anishev, *Ocherki istorii grazhdanskoy voynyi. 1917–1920* (Leningrad: Voenno-polit. akad. im. t. Tolmacheva RKA i RKKF, 1925), 133, 138.

and a prominent figure in the Soviet Union at the time, who wrote even more boldly about the reasons behind the uprising. He noted that in some Ural plants, certain Soviet leaders behaved in a way that completely discredited the Soviet government. They shot people left, right and centre, took bribes and interpreted the party programme “like criminals”. Such circumstances, Kuchkin believed, made workers look forward to the arrival of the White Army.⁶

The next stage in the development of Soviet historical science began at the start of the 1930s and ended during the second half of the 1950s. The political situation in these years negatively affected studies concerning the history of the workers’ movements. As the conventional state-sanctioned version of the October Revolution crystallized, work on and objective study of the history of the working class diminished. The general tendencies in the development of historical science also affected the study of the history of workers’ protest movements in the first months of the Soviet state’s existence. Apart from a reduction in the number of publications about the history of trade unions, the number of works discussing the political struggle within them was also substantially reduced, as was serious discussion of the desire of certain trade unions to take the lead in anti-Bolshevik workers’ protests. The works published about this issue were more propagandistic than academic. In those times, the official point of view was finally consolidated, and it suggested that any manifestation of opposition sentiments in the workers’ movement was the result of petit bourgeois influence or the “subversive” and “counter-revolutionary” activity of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries among workers.⁷ The same approach also dominated the historiography of the Izhevsk uprising.⁸ Its final evaluation was contained in the *History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, in which the uprising in Izhevsk was declared as having been a revolt by “Socialist Revolutionary oriented workers”.⁹

This development in the Soviet historiography of the workers’ movement continued until the mid-1950s. At this time, mentions of the Izhevsk uprising were very rare and more often than not, superficial. In Soviet historiography the point of view was firmly consolidated that the Izhevsk uprising was a result of the propaganda of the petit bourgeois parties of the SRs and Mensheviks, as

6 A. P. Kuchkin, “K istorii Izhevskogo vosstaniya”, *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, no. 6 (1929):153–162.

7 For example, A. Kazakov, *I sezd i IV konferentsiya professionalnykh soyuzov* (Moscow: Profisdat, 1933).

8 V. A. Maksimov, *Kulatskaya kontrrevolyutsiya i Izhevskoe vosstanie* (Izhevsk: Udpartment, 1932).

9 *Istoriya Vsesoyuznoy Kommunisticheskoy Partii (bolshevikov)*. *Kratkiy kurs. Pod redaktsiei komissii TsK VKP (b)* (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo polit. lit-ry, 1938), 217.

well as the supposed petit bourgeois nature of the majority of the local workers themselves.¹⁰ In a monograph published in 1967 in Izhevsk on the history of the revolution and civil war in the city, the workers' uprising was defined as an armed counter-revolutionary insurrection.¹¹ In this publication, it was also noted that Constituent Assembly proponents in Prikamye were closely connected with the bourgeoisie and "leaned on the bayonets of the Czechoslovaks".¹² Neither of these "facts" corresponded to the true events of the revolution: the Izhevsk plant was state owned, thus there was no high industrial bourgeoisie, and the Czechoslovak troops were very far away from Izhevsk and never entered the city.

At the same time, the discussion was resumed about the social specifics of Izhevsk workers in comparison with workers in other regions of Russia. A gradual formation of the working class was taking place in the Kama region, and its social profile combined modern industrial features and a strong sense of connectedness with the land in conjunction with forms of peasant farming. These factors were considered by Soviet historians as the reasons why workers in Izhevsk rose up to rebel against the Bolsheviks.¹³ However, Soviet historiography exaggerated the uniqueness of this phenomenon. The Izhevsk and Votkinsk workers' connection to the land was not something unique that distinguished them from the workers in other regions of the country; it was a universal phenomenon. There were continuous discussions among Soviet historians of the New Economic Policy about the social profile of the Ural workers, almost half of whom remained peasants; a trend that only ceased with the establishment of the Stalinist regime.¹⁴ A significant connectedness with peasant roots was a general characteristic of the Russian proletariat, even the workers in the Central Industrial Region that included Moscow and several neighbouring provinces of Central Russia. The characteristic features of the development of the Central Industrial Region were considered by one of the doyens of the Soviet historical school, A. M. Pankratova.¹⁵ Some other historians, such as V. Y.

10 For example, E. A. Ryabuhin, *V bor'be s kontrrevolyutsiei (Pomosch trudyaschihsya Vyatskoy gubernii Vostochnomu frontu v 1918–1919 gg.)* (Kirov: Kirovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1959).

11 S. P. Zubarev, *Prikamye v ogne* (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1967), 62, 64.

12 This refers to the Czechoslovak troops who were in Russian territory at the time of the October Revolution and who mutinied against Soviet power in the spring and summer of 1918.

13 S. P. Zubarev, *Za respubliku Sovetov* (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1970), 125–126.

14 *Istori i vremya. 20–50-e gody XX veka: A.M. Pankratova* (Moscow, 2000), 40–54.

15 A. M. Pankratova, "Tekstilschiki v revolyutsii 1905–1907 gg", in *Rabochiy klass Rossii: Izbrannyye trudy*, ed. A. M. Pankratova (Moscow: Nauka, 1983).

Laverychev, also noted these specific features with regard to the development of capitalist relations and classes in Russia.¹⁶

One of the key indicators showing the workers' continued relationship with the villages is the plots of land that many of them owned. This phenomenon is shown, for example, by published data from the professional census of 1918. After analysing its results, historian A. G. Rashin proved that just prior to the revolution, on average 31.3 per cent of the workers in 31 provinces of Russia owned their own or their family's land. Another 20.9 per cent not only owned land, but also supported their household from it by themselves or with the help of their family.¹⁷ If for some reason workers lost their economic connectedness with the land, they often kept the personal connection, which included transferring part of their earnings to their relatives in the village. In particular, as the researcher O. Solovyov emphasizes, 94 per cent of the workers in Tsindel'skaya's manufacturing sector were peasants by origin, even by 1917.¹⁸

As we can see, the social profile of Izhevsk workers was little different from that of their counterparts in the rest of Russia; a strong connectedness with the peasantry and small-scale land ownership. For the official Soviet ideology, the peasantry was a very conservative and even counter-revolutionary class. However, that begs the question of why there were no similar protests by workers against the Bolsheviks in the overwhelming majority of other Russian cities, where the connections between the workers and the peasantry were much stronger than in Izhevsk. Soviet historiography has been unable to answer this question.

1 Emigrant Historiography and Historiography in Russia since Perestroika

The historical scholarship produced by Russian emigrants was also far from objective in its study of the Izhevsk uprising. In the works of emigrant historians, the uprising became a symbol of the people's resistance to Bolshevism.¹⁹

16 V. Ya. Laveryichev, *Monopolisticheskiy kapital v tekstilnoy promyshlennosti Rossii (1900–1917 gg.)* (Moscow: Izd-vo Mosk. un-ta, 1963).

17 A. G. Rashin, *Formirovanie promyshlennogo proletariata v Rossii* (Moscow: Izd-vo sotsial'no-ekon. lit-ry, 1940), 414–415.

18 O. A. Solovyov, "K voprosu o reaksii Moskovskogo proletariata na fevral'skie sobyitiya v Moskve", *1917 god v istoricheskikh sudbah Rossii. Problemy istorii Fevral'skoy revolyutsii* (Moscow: Izd-vo Prometey, 1922): 114.

19 A. G. Efimov, *Izhevtsy i votkintsyi (borba s bolshevikami 1918–1920 gg.)* (Concord, CA: G. N. Blinoff, 1974).

The contemporary historiographer from the Ural region, A. S. Vereschagin, emphasized in this regard that despite its many dissimilar approaches and assessments, the emigrant historiography was as much characterized by a politicized interpretation of the issue as its Soviet counterparts were.²⁰

Nevertheless, emigrant authors with different political views contributed to the interpretation of the Izhevsk uprising. In addition to socialists, conservative authors – who were also often eyewitnesses and direct participants in the events – gave their assessments of what took place in the Kama region in 1918. Because of their direct role, one of the most important issues facing the emigrant historiography was the search for those responsible for the defeat of the uprising; a search often ending in mutual reproaches and accusations. The nature of the movement was interpreted in different ways. For Menshevik historians and memoirists, the Izhevsk uprising was seen as a continuation of the struggle for the Constituent Assembly and democracy.²¹ However, their opponents on the political right sought to emphasize the broad, all-encompassing character of the uprising, denying the leading role of socialists in its preparation.²² At the same time, the disagreements of various emigrant historians disappeared when it came to the anti-Bolshevik orientation of the Izhevsk workers' protest.

During and after the years of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, several new publications about the Izhevsk uprising appeared. Among the most recent works specifically focusing on the question of workers' protests at the birth of the Soviet regime, the monograph by the Izhevsk historians P. N. Dmitriev and K. I. Kulikova deserves a mention, as it provides a wide overview of the Izhevsk-Votkinsk uprising.²³ However, this work still contains many of the same myths inherent in earlier Soviet historiography, despite being based on sources in several local archives, primarily from Izhevsk. Nevertheless, the range of problems highlighted is much broader than any others from earlier historiography, whether Soviet or emigrant. In particular, these two Izhevsk historians raised more boldly than before the issue of harsh "ultra-left" measures inherent in the policies of the Soviet government, as well as the problem of the heterogeneity

20 A. S. Vereschagin, "Paradoksy istoriografii Izhevsko-Votkinskogo vosstaniya", in *Akademik P.V. Volobuev. Neopublikovannyye raboty. Vospominaniya. Stati*, ed. P. V. Volobuev, (Moscow: Ross. akad. nauk, 2000), 389.

21 I. G. Upovalov, "Rabochee vosstanie protiv sovetsoy vlasti", in *Ural i Prikame (Noyabr 1917 – yanvar 1919). Dokumenty i materialy*, ed. M. S. Bernshtam (Paris: YMCA Press, 1982), 396–421.

22 S. P. Melgunov, *Tragediya admirala Kolchaka* (Belgrade: Russkaia tipografia, 1930), 108.

23 P. N. Dmitriev and K. I. Kulikov, *Myatezh v Izhevsko-Votkinskom rayone* (Izhevsk: Udmurtiya, 1992).

of political forces that supported Soviet power in Izhevsk. This issue was covered in greater detail in a book by an Izhevsk historian, S. L. Bekhterev. He was especially interested in the role of a small but very radical party, the Socialist-Revolutionaries Maximalists, in the history of the Kama region during the Russian revolution. Bekhterev's work was produced at a time when the opportunity to write more objectively about the so-called "petit bourgeois parties" had grown, a notion that the previous generations of Soviet historians had used to identify not only Mensheviks and right-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries, but also left-wing Socialist-Revolutionaries and SR s Maximalists.²⁴

The beginning of the twenty-first century was marked by the publication of several other works on the history of Izhevsk, including the events that took place in the region during the civil war. Despite the fact that more than a century has passed since the studied events, the works of contemporary authors are still not free from political sympathies for certain participants in the revolution in Prikamye. At the same time, it should be said that this does not prevent further study of the events of the uprising in 1918, and of their causes and consequences. In fact, it may even prompt these inquiries further. Another important step towards restoring an accurate image of the political process in Izhevsk and the whole Kama region in 1918 was the recent publication of the book by A. V. Korobeynikov, *Participants of the Izhevsk uprising from August to November 1918*.²⁵ Korobeynikov is also the author of some earlier works on the topic.²⁶ Another Izhevsk historian already mentioned above, P. N. Dmitriev, is actively continuing his research. His post-Soviet works are perhaps the most informative and objective of all the studies that have been published in Izhevsk this century. Issues that previously remained outside the field of vision of Russian historians have been covered by him, based on new archival material.²⁷

24 S. L. Bekhterev, *Esero-maksimalistskoe dvizhenie v Udmurtii* (Izhevsk: Udmurtskii institut istorii, iazyka i literatury UrO RAN, 1997).

25 A. V. Korobeynikov, *Uchastniki Izhevskogo vosstaniya avgusta – noyabrya 1918 g.: ih sudby i spiski po arkhivnym fondam Sovetskoy militsii* (Institut kompyuternykh issledovaniy, Izhevsk, 2016).

26 A. V. Korobeynikov, *Volzhskaya flotiliya protiv narodnoy armii (osen' 1918 g.)* (Idnakar, Izhevsk, 2012). A. V. Korobeynikov, *Votkinskaya narodnaya armiya v 1918 g.* (Idnakar, Izhevsk, 2013).

27 P. N. Dmitriev, "Partiyno-politicheskaya sistema Udmurtii v usloviyah stanovleniya sovetskoy gosudarstvennosti (oktyabr 1917 – vesna 1918 gg.)," *Rossiyskaya gosudarstvennost: urovni vlasti. Istoricheskaya dinamika. Materialy Vserossiyskoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii* (Izhevsk: Izdatelskii dom "Udmurtskii universitet", 2001). P. N. Dmitriev, "Sotsialnyy oblik rabochih Udmurtii v pervye desyatiletiya XX v.: sotsialno-byitovye,

Studies by other authors have been published in recent years. They have raised issues such as the role of the Izhevsk uprising among the various workers' protests of 1918,²⁸ the particularities of the Soviet account of the Izhevsk uprising's social nature,²⁹ the role of the so-called "third force"³⁰ in the events of the revolution in the east of Russia,³¹ the role of Izhevsk rebels in the Kolchakov army after their retreat to the East in the fall of 1918,³² and the production of weapons in rebel-occupied plants in the city of Izhevsk.³³ In addition, collections of documents also started to be published in Russia, including archival documents dedicated to the Izhevsk uprising and the preceding period.³⁴ The most important recent documentary publication is a voluminous work written by Izhevsk historians and archivists to mark the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. This group of authors set themselves the task of presenting, as far as possible, a complete and objective picture of the events of 1917, with much wider coverage of the socio-political, economic and cultural life of the Udmurt Krai during this period. About 80 per cent of the documentary material in the collection has never been published before.³⁵

This array of recent publications allows for serious advances to be made with regard to many issues concerning the history of the Izhevsk uprising. It also allows us to more carefully address the questions already posed in earlier

производственные, политические аспекты", in *Rabochie Rossii. Istoricheskiy opyt i sovremennoe polozhenie*, ed. D. O. Churakov (Moscow: Èditorial URSS, 2004), 149–164.

- 28 N. A. Zayats, "O fenomenalnosti Izhevsko-Votkinskogo vosstaniya", *Izhevskiy istoriko-kulturnoy rekonstruktsii*, no. 1 (2013): 34–48.
- 29 A. V. Ivanov, "Sotsialno-politicheskie aspekty Izhevsko-Votkinskogo vosstaniya 1918 goda v trudah sovetskikh istorikov 1920–30-h godov", *Vestnik Udmurtskogo universiteta*, no. 3 (2012): 47–54.
- 30 Neither Bolsheviks nor Whites, but usually right-wing socialists.
- 31 I. P. Klimov, "Deyatelnost pravitelstv 'demokraticeskoy kontrrevolyutsii' Sibiri i Urala na zheleznodorozhnom i vodnom transporte vesnoy-osenyu 1918 goda", *Noveyshaya istoriya Rossii*, no. 2 (19), (2017): 53–67. I. V. Shvets, *Grazhdanskaya vojna v Sibiri i na dalnem Vostoke Rossii: borba respublikanskoy i monarhicheskoy tendentsiy (1917–1922 gg.)*, (Dissertacija, Chabarovsk, 2007).
- 32 A. V. Posadskiy, "Izhevskaya brigada v boyu 9 maya 1919 g. glazami belyih i krasnyih", *Sibirskiy istoricheskiy almanah. Tom 2. Sibir na perelome epoh. Nachalo HH veka* (Krasnoyarsk: Verso, 2012), 134–137. E. G. Renyov, "Vospominaniya D.I. Fedichkina kak istochnik po izucheniyu Izhevskogo antibolshevistskogo vosstaniya (8 avgusta - 8 noyabrya 1918 g.)", *Vestnik Udmurtskogo universiteta*, no. 3–5 (2011): 158–161.
- 33 "Bezoruzhnoe vooruzhionnoe vosstanie: proizvodstvo vintovok na izhevskikh zavodah vo vremya antibolshevistskogo vystupleniya", *Vestnik Rossiyskogo universiteta družby narodov. Seriya: Istoriya Rossii*, no. 1 (2013): 32–48.
- 34 *Izhevsko-Votkinskoe vosstanie*, ed. V. Zh. Tsvetkov (Moscow: Posev, 2000).
- 35 "1917 god v istorii Udmurtii".

historiography, and to identify new problems that were invisible to historians in the past. In particular, it is possible to examine in a more detailed and objective way the development of the political situation in Izhevsk from May to November 1918, the evolution of the rebellion's authorities, the main aspects of their internal policies, and the causes of instability and the defeat of the anti-Bolshevik forces.

As a result of the ongoing political struggle, disputes and compromises in the spring and summer of 1918, two political blocs finally formed in Izhevsk. The Mensheviks and right-wing SR constituted the right-wing coalition, which opposed the power of the Soviets. In the Soviets, they saw not the embodiment of state power, but only the social-class agents of proletarian self-organization and elements of civil society. The slogan of the right-wing socialists was the re-establishment of the Constituent Assembly and self-governance through *zemstvos* (local councils for rural self-government), which had existed before the revolution. The left-wing coalition mainly consisted of the Bolsheviks and the SRs Maximalists, with both standing firmly on a platform of Soviet power.³⁶ However, the differences in their understanding of the further goals of the revolution and the ways to achieve them made the left-wing bloc fragile. There were conflicts between the Bolsheviks and the SRs Maximalists at times, sometimes even in the form of armed confrontation between the two parties. Furthermore, an alliance with the even more radical SRs Maximalists prompted Izhevsk Bolsheviks to enact many radical measures that were unpopular among the workers and inhabitants of the villages around Izhevsk.

2 “Power to the Soviets, Not the Party!”

By May 1918, the right-wing socialists had finally managed to seize the initiative. The bloc of right-wing SRs and Mensheviks sharply intensified their criticism of the Bolsheviks' policy after the Eighth Party Council of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries in Moscow in mid-May 1918. The decision was taken to launch an armed struggle against the Bolsheviks.³⁷ Emissaries of the Central Committee of the Party of Socialist Revolutionaries rushed to different cities in the east of the country, and Izhevsk did not escape their attention. In the summer of 1918, two members of the SRs Central Committee, N. N. Ivanov and

36 S. L. Behterev, *Esero-maksimalistskoe dvizhenie v Udmurtii*, 52, 57.

37 *Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyi arhiv sotsialno-politicheskoy istorii (RGA SP1)*, F. 274. Op. 1. D. 1. L. 34.

I. I. Teterkin, arrived there.³⁸ The positions of the opponents of Soviet power in Izhevsk were significantly strengthened as a result of the Urban Union of Front-Line Soldiers joining their ranks, which brought together soldiers, officers and other veterans of the First World War.³⁹ Initially, the union was concerned with social support for its members, but gradually it also became involved in the political struggle on the side of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Menshevik bloc. Although formally the leadership of the union included ordinary soldiers and non-commissioned officers, in reality its activity was controlled by an active officer core, which was even more hostile to the Bolsheviks than the official right-wing socialist opposition.⁴⁰ In the re-election of the Izhevsk Council, the Bolsheviks were defeated twice: at the end of May and at the end of June. While in May they had managed to resolve the situation peacefully, in June, with the help of reinforcements arriving from Kazan, they dispersed the council. Arrests began, and in total, about one hundred people were detained, including deputies of the new council and leaders of opposition parties and organizations.⁴¹ Power was initially put into the hands of a new executive committee, in which the Bolsheviks and the SR s Maximalists prevailed, and subsequently the Izhevsk Military Revolutionary Command Staff, headed by the Bolshevik, S. I. Kholmogorov.⁴²

Izhevsk Bolsheviks repeatedly informed people in the capital about the situation in the city. In particular, S. I. Kholmogorov, who in his report to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, stressed that if the Izhevsk plants were not paid the most serious attention, they would very soon turn into a major threat to the Soviet republic. After all, Izhevsk was a city with an arms industry, and the weapons produced there could have fallen into the hands of anti-Soviet forces.⁴³ However, the warnings from the Izhevsk Bolsheviks were dismissed. Indeed, after the fall of Kazan following attacks by the Czechoslovak Legion of the French Army, the high command carried out a full mobilization in Izhevsk and sent the remaining forces of the Izhevsk communists to the front. Together with the Bolsheviks, the main forces of the SR s Maximalists

38 Tsentrálny gosudarstvennyy arhiv Udmurtskoy Respubliki (TsGA UR), F. 1-1061. Op. 1. D. 17. L. 11.

39 P. N. Dmitriev, *Soldatskie soyuzi v Udmurtii. Kanun grazhdanskoy voynyi (formirovanie, sotsialnyy sostav, otnoshenie s partiyami)* (Izhevsk: Muzey – Istoriya i sovremennost, 2000), 232–248.

40 Tsentr dokumentatsii noveyshey istorii Udmurtskoy respubliki (TsDNI UR), F. 350. Op. 49. D. 6. L. 1.

41 TsDNI UR. F. 350. Op. 3. D. 14. L. 13–14.

42 *Izhevskiy zaschitnik*, 23 August 1918.

43 Gosudarstvennyy Archiv Rossiyskoi Federatsii. F. 393. Op. 1. D. 40. Ll. 314–319.

were also dispatched to fight the mutiny by the Czechoslovaks. Only a few dozen Red Army soldiers and policemen remained in the city. This moment was used by the anti-Soviet opposition for a coup attempt.⁴⁴

The Union of Front-Line Soldiers took up the role of the main force of the revolt. With about four thousand members, many with hidden weapons, the union was a real political force. However, the uprising could hardly have succeeded if the factory workers had joined the other side. Most of the workers showed passivity, while a number of them not only supported the uprising, but took an active part in it. Long before the Kronstadt uprising of 1921, the Izhevsk workers had raised their flag with a slogan that would become a symbol of democratic resistance to Bolshevism: "Power to the Soviets, not the party".⁴⁵ On 8 August 1918, power in the city was seized by the rebels.⁴⁶ Soon after, on 17 August, forces from Izhevsk occupied Votkinsk, where they were also supported by local workers and the Votkinsk Union of Front-line Soldiers, and on 30 August the county (*uezd*) centre, Sarapul, also fell.⁴⁷

3 Evolution of the Rebellion's Statehood

The first issue the rebels faced after their victory was the need to organize power. One of the rebel military leaders, Colonel D. I. Fedichkin, described the first steps: "At the end of the shootings [the mass shooting of Bolsheviks on the day of the uprising], silence settled over Izhevsk. Civil authority, which had previously belonged to the Bolsheviks, now passed into the hands of the Izhevsk Soviet of Workers' Deputies".⁴⁸ Fedichkin refers here to the re-establishment of the city council, which had been disbanded by the Bolsheviks and the SR Maximalists just three weeks before.

In accordance with the outlined plan and the agreements that had been reached, the executive committee of the Izhevsk Council and its presidium were renewed. The members of the new presidium included the Menshevik B. N. Kutsenko and local merchants Tyulkin, Sannikov and Gorev. Along with them, the presidium was joined by a former member of the Constituent Assembly from the Vyatka province, right-wing Socialist-Revolutionary V. I. Buzanov, as well as Soldatov, chairman of the Union of Front-line Soldiers of

44 TsDNI UR. F. 350. Op. 49. D. 6. L. 2.

45 TsDNI UR. F. 350. Op. 49. D. 6. L. 2.

46 TsGA UR. F. R-1061. Op. 1. D. 13. L. 1.

47 TsGA UR. F. R-1061. Op. 1. D. 13. L. 5.

48 D. I. Fedichkin, "Izhevskoe vostanie", in *Pervopohodnik* 17 (1974): 62–77.

Izhevsk.⁴⁹ Buzanov was involved in the work of the council at the insistence of the executive committee, and also the Command Staff of the Union of Front-Line Soldiers.⁵⁰ Later, a new election for the council was announced. Needless to say, the Bolsheviks, the Socialist-Revolutionaries Maximalists and the anarchists were not allowed to stand in the elections, which were held according to the well-known system of *trehvostka* (three-tail)⁵¹; the same way as elections to the Constituent Assembly.⁵²

It should be noted that the restoration of the council's power in Izhevsk took place after the pre-October institutions of power had been restored in other anti-Bolshevik territories. The power of the Izhevsk council was, of course, far from absolute: from the very beginning, the Command Staff of the Union of Front-Line Soldiers and of the People's Army stood behind it. The Votkinsk council became even more dependent on the military authorities; its executive committee taking many decisions based on the instructions of the head of the Votkinsk Command Staff, G. N. Yuriev, as shown by documents.⁵³ Nevertheless, the reliance of the revolt's leadership on the workers' demand "Power to the Soviet, not the party!" should be recognized as the key feature of the events of the summer of 1918 in Prikamye. Almost everywhere throughout the rest of Russia at that time, the overthrow of the Bolsheviks was accompanied by the overthrow of Soviet power, whereas by contrast, in Izhevsk the overthrow of the Bolsheviks led to a brief revival of the Soviet power.

Such a situation was of course temporary, because the existence of a central anti-Bolshevik government in Samara implied the unification of state structures in the regions under its control. Therefore, the period for which the power of the democratically-elected workers' council was restored in Izhevsk turned out to be extremely short. On the day when the city of Votkinsk joined the revolt on 17 August, civil authority was handed over by the Izhevsk Council to the so-called Committee of the Members of the Constituent Assembly in Prikamye, or *Prikomuch*. A lot is unclear about the handover of power to the *Prikomuch*, but the general outline of the events can be based on available circumstantial evidence. In the period when the new Soviet was formed, there

49 N. Solonitsyn, "About the history of the Civil War in the province", in *Oktyabr i grazhdanskaya voyna v Vyatskoy gubernii. Sbornik statey i materialov*, ed. N. Solonitsyn (Vyatka: Istpart Vĭatskogo gubkoma VКР(b), 1927), 40.

50 *Izhevskiy zashitnik*, 23 August 1918.

51 TsGA UR. F. R-1061. op. 1. D. 17. L. 20–21.

52 V. G. Lekomtsev. *K istorii Votkinskogo zavoda: Mezhdousobnaya voyna (1918–1919 godyi)* (Votkinsk: Russkaĭa gazeta Udmurtiimurtii, 1998), 45.

53 TsGA UR. F. R-1061. op. 1. D. 17. L. 21.

were negotiations between the revolt's commanding staff and Buzanov – a member of the constituent assembly of the Vyatka Krai – about the creation of a firmly anti-Bolshevik government. Colonel A. A. Vlasov and captain N. Y. Tsyganov offered Buzanov the opportunity to form a committee of the constituent assembly, similar to the one in Samara, or to take supreme authority as the only member of the constituent assembly in the territory of the revolt. Buzanov flatly refused to take personal responsibility for the uprising, but promised to raise the issue of creating a particular collegiate authority at a meeting of the city committee of the SRs. The meeting between Vlasov, Tsygankov and Buzanov was private and was not recorded anywhere. However, the meeting of the SRs' city committee promised by Buzanov failed to take place. Buzanov did manage to speak personally with some members of the committee and gain their consent.⁵⁴

The *Prikomuch* was practically the same as it was in Samara, and considered itself as the local power structure. It was announced that the city of Izhevsk was a territory under the “power of the Committee of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, temporarily located in the city of Samara”. It was declared that “all civil and military authorities in Izhevsk recognize the Committee as the sole and legitimate Supreme Power in Russia and consider themselves to be completely subordinate to it”. It was also decided that the seat of the committee should be in Izhevsk. In Votkinsk and Sarapul, also under the control of the rebels, special commissioners were appointed as commissars. An agitation and education bureau was formed under the committee, immediately calling on the population to rise up in defence of the “gains of the February revolution and the Constituent Assembly”. It was proclaimed that the local government in Izhevsk would act “to defend all civil liberties and true democracy of the people”.⁵⁵

New authorities were also forming in other settlements occupied by the rebels. For example, in Votkinsk the handover of power to the *Prikomuch* was carried out with the support of public opinion. A special meeting of citizens was held in the city, where the question of the organization of power was discussed. At the meeting, people agreed about the violent nature of the establishment of the Soviets' omnipotence in October 1917, emphasizing that all anti-Bolshevik uprisings in the country were under the banner of the Constituent Assembly. Based on this, the assembly concluded that “the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly, temporarily staying in Samara, is in

54 TsGA UR. F. R-1061. op. 1. D. 17. L. 22.

55 *Izhevskiy zaschitnik*, 1 September 1918.

this particular situation the most acceptable and obvious source of power for the masses". Following the discussion, a resolution was adopted in which it was stated in the most unequivocal manner that "the power of the Soviets is over". Further, the resolution stated that in Votkinsk itself, as well as in Izhevsk and the surrounding areas, full power would be temporarily handed over to the *Prikomuch*, the local representative of the all-Russian authority of the Samara Committee to Save the Constituent Assembly.

At that time, questions about the organization of power were also being discussed in the town of Sarapul in the same district. After the beginning of the uprising, Sarapul lost its former significance as the local administrative centre, and political decisions were by then being dictated from Izhevsk. Thus, on 2 September, the recreated City Duma gathered in Sarapul. Chairman P. P. Mikhailov, who had been appointed from Izhevsk, delivered a speech to the members of the duma. At his suggestion, a decision was made that the supreme power in the city should be temporarily handed over to the executive body of the city administration, the *Uprava* (City Council). All the funds received for the maintenance of the People's Army in Sarapul were to be at its disposal. However, at the first request from the Command Staff of the People's Army, the city *Uprava* was obliged to transfer any required funds, with the army acknowledging the receipt of the transferred amount. Under the *Uprava*, a special body was created to raise funds: the Financial Commission. The elected members of this commission were two members of the city duma (K. G. Solov and G. E. Kulikov), the chairman of the Sarapul *Uprava*, S. F. Yermolin, and two representatives of the central factory workers' committee of Sarapul.⁵⁶

A republican government structure in the rebel region was finally formed by mid-September. The formation of the *Prikomuch* was also finalized, with Buzanov becoming its chairman. In addition to Buzanov, the committee included A. D. Karyakin and N. I. Evseev, and from 9 September 1918, the signature of K. S. Shulakov also appeared on the documents. In some sources, the expression "the top four" was used for the new authority. On this same date, the rebel government implemented a comprehensive administrative reform in order to regularize the system of governance in the region, and all the measures planned in this regard were described in great detail in Decree No. 4, adopted that day.⁵⁷

The decree began with a declaration that "the power of the Soviets and their Committees is abolished". The Soviets themselves were spared, but their

56 *Izhevskiy zaschitnik*, 5 September 1918.

57 TsDNI UR. F. 350. op. 6. D. 50. Svyazka 2. L. 16–20.

actual functions were reduced to proletarian organizations of the workers and the working peasantry. The decree fully restored the pre-October order, and city and local governments were declared as regulatory bodies. They were ordered to act “on the strict basis of the Provisional Government’s resolutions concerning rural and city self-government”. In the villages, instead of the dispersed Soviets, it was entrusted to village gatherings, “until the general resolution of the issue of rural management on a nationwide scale”, to temporarily elect a committee or a person to take over the functions previously performed by the *starosta*, the village headman. All Soviet institutions and their members were instructed to “immediately hand over their affairs and the funds and valuables they have [...] to the restored local self-government body”. Workers in Soviets were also obliged to assist in the restoration of local government. The restoration of the *zemstvos* and self-governing city bodies was to be based on universal, direct and equal suffrage and a secret ballot. The decree by the provisional government concerning the township (*volost’*) and county (*uezd*) *zemstvos* was to form the basis of the elections, in which all men and women who had reached the age of twenty and were residing in the villages controlled by the rebels were eligible to participate.

However, the period during which the democratic authorities ruled the region did not last much longer than the activity of the altered Soviet. Significant changes took place within the upper ranks of the rebels shortly after the dissolution of the Komuch and the creation of the Ufa Directory on 23 September. It is repeatedly noted in memoirs and historical literature that in the autumn, the representative of the local Udmurd population of Evseev instead became the head of the rebel republic of Buzanov. The reasons for this change were not explained at the time, although they were relatively trivial. On 14 October 1918, Evseev began to govern on the basis of the mandate given to him by the Central Government of Russia: the Directory.⁵⁸ Special commissioners of Evseev were sent to villages under the rule of Izhevsk, and by then all civil authority had been concentrated in their hands, although military power was still held by the command staff.⁵⁹ Based on available sources, we can assume the authorities in

58 TsDNI UR. F. 350. op. 6. D. 50. Svyazka 2. L. 41. The Ufa Directory was a temporary all-Russian government, founded at a government meeting in Ufa by the anti-Bolshevik coalition of representatives of the Komuch and the Omsk provisional government.

59 The Izhevsk and Votkinsk People’s Armies initially existed independently of each other, and their command staff also acted separately. Rebel forces later merged in the United People’s Army of Prikamye, and the Izhevsk army’s command staff became the General Command Staff of Prikamye. A. A. Karevskiy, “K istorii antibolshevistskogo vosstaniya v Izhevsk i Votkinske: vooruzh Yonnyie formirovaniya Prikamya letom—osenyu 1918 g.”,

Izhevsk remained in this form until their forced withdrawal to the other side of the river Kama under pressure from the advancing Red Army.

Three stages can therefore be clearly distinguished in the evolution of the rebel republic: a period of Soviet administration, a period of civil administration and a period of one-person rule. The fact that civil authority at all stages of its development coexisted with military power should also be noted. Moreover, military power was initially dominant – or at least as powerful as civilian power – only temporarily disappearing into the shadows. Obviously, this peculiar evolution of the non-Bolshevik regime in the Kama region was determined by the general circumstances of the civil war, which eliminated the specifics behind the formation of the local authorities that emerged in the first weeks of the Izhevsk uprising. In those years, both in the Soviet and in the White Army territories, democratic and civilian institutions gave way to authoritarian and military ones. The ideological principles that had guided the right-wing socialist leaders of the uprising were soon forgotten in the face of harsh reality. At the same time, the rebel authorities were trying to implement these principles not only with regard to the structure of local administrative bodies but also the policies they pursued in the territories under their control. This is a subject that needs to be discussed separately.

4 Policies of the Rebel Authorities

In the past, the study of the policies of Izhevsk's new rebel authorities was largely limited to examining the creation of the People's Army in Prikamye, as well as terrorism against the Bolsheviks. This choice was determined not only by ideological clichés, but also by the nature of the question and the available sources, as these two aspects of the rebel regime's policies are well-reflected in available documents. In addition, the People's Army in Prikamye subsequently joined the Kolchak army and became one of its most capable units. As for the regime of terror carried out in Izhevsk, it was indeed particularly cruel, even by the standards of those harsh times.⁶⁰ It is not only Soviet authors who wrote

in *Izhevsko-Votkinskoe vosstanie*, ed. A. A. Karevskiy, K. A. Kulagin and D. O. Churakov (Moscow: Posev, 2000), 5–12.

60 In this regard, it is worth mentioning not only its scale and organized character, but also for example, the most common methods of execution: the convicts were not shot, but bayoneted to death. After the Red Army units entered Izhevsk, the graves of those killed by rebels were opened, and 50–60 stab wounds and other signs of beatings and torture were found on the corpses. See, for example: TsGA UR. F. P-1061. Op. 1. D. 37. Ll. no. 5, 7 and others.

about the numerous victims, but also the rebels themselves. For instance, A. Y. Gutman reported of “hundreds arrested in improvised detention houses”.⁶¹ In addition, about 3,000 prisoners were kept on barges adapted as temporary prisons.⁶²

It would, however, be wrong to reduce the activities of the rebel government of Izhevsk only to military and police measures. Normal provincial life in the city did not stop for a minute, and the new authorities had to maintain and regulate it. Various civilian institutions continued to operate, and medical assistance was provided. The religious life of city dwellers and workers was reviving, and religious processions were held on special occasions. Schools began to operate in the autumn, and a special decree by the temporary *Prikomuch* was devoted to the new academic year. It exempted teachers and students from military service and ordered that the educational institutions temporarily employed for military needs should be vacated.⁶³

The main concern of the rebels was to maintain production at the Izhevsk plant, because the military products made there were of strategic value. In addition, the participation of some workers in the uprising called for an active labour policy by the rebel authorities. In accordance with the order of 11 August 1918, a new board took over the management of the plant. Apart from its managing director, Y. I. Kanevsky, and administrative and economic director, G. K. Vilma, there were also three representatives from the workers. The order noted that the workers’ representatives were only introduced temporarily until the elections.⁶⁴

The re-election of these representatives played an important role in strengthening the rebel government. However, the details also show an increase in absenteeism and indifference among the workers. Only 4,137 workers took part in the elections, and 325 people left the ballot paper blank. D. P. Krupin (1,512 votes), V. I. Buzanov (1,394 votes) and P. A. Baryshnikov (1,291 votes) were elected as members of the collective management of the Izhevsk plants.⁶⁵ Subsequently, when Buzanov became a member of the *Prikomuch*, V. E. Korepanov took his place on the board, having come fourth in the elections with 288 votes for his candidacy.⁶⁶ Initially, apart from the plant’s administration, the Soviets

61 “Beloe delo. Letopis beloy borbyi. Berlin”, 3, (1927), in *Ural i Prikame (Noyabr 1917 – yanvar 1919): Dokumenty i materialy*, ed. M. S. Bernshtam (Paris: Rosspen, 1982), 385.

62 See also, TsGA UR. F. R-609. Op. 1. D. 2. Ll. 1–110, TsGA UR. F. R-609. Op. 1. D. 3. Ll. 1–139, and TsGA UR. F. R-609. Op. 1. D. 4. Ll. 1–126.

63 *Izhevskiy zaschitnik*, 18 September 1918.

64 TsGA UR. F. R-543. Op. 13. D. 13. L. 1.

65 TsGA UR. F. R-543. Op. 13. D. 13. L. 9.

66 TsGA UR. F. R-543. Op. 13. D. 13. L. 30.

dealt with the issues related to the organization of labour in the rebel region. Somewhat later, on 30 October, a labour department was established directly under the control of Extraordinary Commissioner Evseev in order to centralize labour policies, with M. N. Martynov appointed as the head of the labour department.⁶⁷

Along with the new management of the plant, basic provisions for the management of production were developed to replace those that had existed under the Bolsheviks. For instance, a plan was outlined with the main provisions for management of the artillery plant, containing items specifically addressing the rights of workers' representatives in this regard. The proposal was to elect these representatives according to "the four pillar formula": on a democratic basis. However, workers' rights were limited in favour of the management. In the document, for example, it was specifically noted that "the workshops, the Economic Committee, forest areas, railways and other departments of the factories are to be handled by the management with full responsibility, and therefore all commissioners and collegiate bodies in the factories must move up the affairs to the heads of the relevant departments".⁶⁸

In order to improve the functioning of the plants, the authorities in the rebel region implemented several populist measures. For example, in the order for the Izhevsk Arms and Steel Plants No. 28 of 5 September 1918, it was announced that on the days when the plant was not operating (from 8 to 10 August) workers would still be paid. In addition, the fixed output system was abolished, meaning that everything workers produced in excess of the norm was to be paid additionally.⁶⁹ Moral as well as economic incentives were involved. In one of the special appeals of the *Prikomuch* to the workers, it was emphasized that Izhevsk plants were "the most powerful means" in the fight against "enslavers of the Russian people ... for the final triumph of democracy of the people". It was further claimed that "the workers who remained at the plant should remember that by increasing labour productivity in the production of the necessary weapons they directly contribute to saving our Motherland".⁷⁰

To meet the needs of workers, the new authorities kept wages at the level they had been at under the Bolsheviks. The decrees of the Soviet government concerning working conditions, working hours and social guarantees were also not touched, and all of them remained in force. For example, the

67 TsGA UR. F. R-460. Op. 1. D. 2. L. 148.

68 TsGA UR. F. R-543. Op. 13. D. 13. L. 1-1 ob.

69 TsGA UR. F. R-543. Op. 13. D. 13. L. 28.

70 *Izhevskiy zaschitnik*, 15 October 1918.

Izhevsk arms plant continued to operate three 8-hour shifts, as it had done before, although it would have benefitted the interests of the defence industry to have increased the working day. The rebel authorities limited themselves to introducing compulsory overtime work, although this innovation was initially introduced only in mid-October and was limited to workshops lagging “in the supply of necessary items for the production of rifles”.⁷¹ Many of the economic decisions made by the rebel leadership bore obvious traces of egalitarian tendencies characteristic of the Russian revolution of 1917. This was expressed primarily in the fact that the command ranks, the soldiers and the workers were to receive an equal monetary allowance. On this occasion, the *Prikomuch* adopted a special decree, ordering “to pay everyone the same salary, 420 rubles a month, to all those working in the factories, to all who fought against the Bolsheviks by arms, and all the city and factory workers without distinction of positions and seniority”.⁷²

After the moderate socialists took power, the position of the trade unions changed. The Mensheviks – together with the right-wing Socialist Revolutionaries who shared their stance in this matter – advocated the independence of the trade unions. This question was discussed in particular at the general meeting of the Delegate Council of the Votkinsk Union of Metalworkers. Having delivered a report on this issue, the prominent Menshevik I. G. Upovalov condemned the practice of the Bolsheviks that had allowed the trade unions to manage the process of production. He stressed that “the Union was turned not into an organization of the economic or political struggle of the workers but into some kind of government agency that fights against the working class and does not protect its interests”, and he called for an end to this practice. Members at the meeting supported the resolution proposed by the Mensheviks, which ended with the words: “We, the workers of the Votkinsk plant, delegates of the Metalists’ Union, consider it necessary that the trade union must make a break with all power, no matter where it comes from, i.e. must stay neutral and stand solely and exclusively to defend the interests of the working class in its struggle against the oppressors”.⁷³ Pursuing the line of “independence”, the Union of Metalworkers sometimes spoke out against the rebel authorities of the region, even occasionally engaging in sharp conflicts with them.⁷⁴ The positions of the workers’ organizations were especially strong in Sarapul. The orders of the military authorities there had to be signed

71 *Izhevskiy zaschitnik*, 15 October 1918.

72 Fedichkin, *Izhevskoe vostanie*.

73 *Votkinskaya zhizn*, 15 September 1918.

74 TsGA UR. F. R-1061. Op. 1. D. 21. L. 160 ob.

by the delegates of the factory committees, without which no decisions had any legal force.⁷⁵

At the same time, because the situation was becoming more difficult on all fronts, completely different approaches began to prevail in the labour policies of the rebel authorities. "This terrible hour of protecting our interests requires a great effort", read one of the proclamations of the Union of Front-Line Soldiers, meaning that "at the present moment *we cannot adhere to all the norms protecting labour in peacetime*".⁷⁶ These calls were not only made on paper, as democratic labour rights actually came to be curtailed over time. For example, overtime work became mandatory. Order No. 63 of the Chairman of the Board of the Izhevsk Plant, dated 18 October, stated: "In view of the impossibility of returning workers from the front to the plant for military reasons and the extreme necessity of rifles, a 2-hour overtime has to be introduced in all workshops where less than 1,000 articles are produced".⁷⁷ Overtime work was not paid, but was listed as arrears. Workers' salaries were not paid either. At best, they were given only two-thirds of the amount they were due, and the rest was withheld. When this measure was introduced in the first half of September it was perceived by many as temporary, but the situation in the payment of wages to workers did not improve in the second half of the month, or in October.⁷⁸ Measures in the field of labour generally became draconian in the last days of the existence of the rebel republic in Izhevsk, as evidenced by the factory order dated 28 October 1918 and signed by the Commander-in-Chief of the *Prikamsky* in the Yuriev district and the plant's managing director, Y. Kanevsky. This order effectively introduced the mobilization of factory workers, concluding categorically: "Failure to appear at work will be considered as non-fulfilment of the combat order".⁷⁹ The policy in relation to workers' organizations was also toughened. For instance, the leader of the Votkinsk Union of Metalworkers, A. K. Malkov, was actually expelled from the city for his position, which had become undesirable to the military authorities.⁸⁰

The policy concerning relations with the peasantry was an important aspect of the rebel government in Izhevsk. The fact that a significant part of the peasantry in the region sympathized with the uprising can be considered as

75 A. Gutman (Gann), "Dva vosstaniia", *Beloe delo. Letopis beloy borbyi*, no. 3 (Berlin: Mednyi vsadnik, 1927).

76 Sapozhnikov, *Izhevsko-Votkinskoe vosstanie*, 57.

77 TsGA UR. F. R-543. Op. 13. D. 13. L. 70.

78 TsGA UR. F. R-543. Op. 13. D. 13. L. 34, 35.

79 TsGA UR. F. R-543. Op. 13. D. 13. L. 79.

80 TsDNI UR. F. 352. Op. 1. D. 7. Svyazka. 2. L. 2.

a success for the rebels, which allowed them to significantly increase the potential of their movement. The relationship between the rebel authorities and the inhabitants of the villages around Izhevsk was of course not always ideal. However, the sympathy of a large proportion of the peasantry helped in the formation of the rebels' armed forces and the resolution of the food problem. The new authorities in Izhevsk began to address this latter issue immediately after the uprising. Among the first measures by the new Izhevsk authorities in this regard – that was met with complete support by the peasants – was the permission given for free trade, which had been prohibited under the Bolsheviks. The shops and markets that had been empty under the previous government were revived. New shops opened, and the shoes, handicraft, dishes and metal products for household consumption that had disappeared – or rather, had been hidden until better times – temporarily reappeared. All these steps by the rebel authorities were to be expected: it was not by accident that among the slogans of the uprising, along with political ones there were others such as: “Tea, sugar, white bread and fairs twice a year”.⁸¹

In order to incentivize the peasants to help with the bread supply for the rebels, the Izhevsk Soviet repeatedly addressed them with special appeals that were widely distributed through the press.⁸² Special district commissioners were selected, who travelled to villages and asked the peasants to part with some grain and flour – as much as they could give.⁸³ Bread was bought for money, but often – as even Soviet sources admit – the peasants gave provisions to rebel workers as voluntary donations; “for Christ’s sake”.⁸⁴ At the same time, it must be remembered that by the autumn of 1918, money was no longer of great value to the peasants, therefore they often regarded the requests of the Izhevsk authorities as requisitions. For that reason, workers often paid for bread with their products; weapons and ammunition.⁸⁵ However, it was also often the case that the peasants did not receive any weapons or money for their bread, but only promissory notes.⁸⁶

Gradually, the food issue in the rebel region became difficult. Freedom of trade, introduced in the early days of the uprising as one of the primary measures to eliminate the Bolshevik heritage, in practice became limited again. Instead, a rationing system emerged. Speculation – the invariable companion

81 TsGA UR. F. R-1061. Op. 1. D. 17. L. 20.

82 For example, *Izhevskiy zaschitnik*, 10 September 1918.

83 *Ural i Prikamye*, 500.

84 *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*, 8–9 (1924).

85 Fedichkin, *Izhevskoe vostanie*.

86 TsGA UR. F. R-460. Op. 1. D. 2. L. 156.

of hunger – reappeared, followed by the authorities' attempts to fight it. For example, in September the following order from Commissioner S. Egorov appeared in one of the issues of the *Votkinskaya life* newspaper:

In view of the fact that lately there has been a large development of extreme speculation in Votkinsk, I consider it necessary to warn those involved that the regime change happened not to indulge predation and plunder of the population by speculators who use everything to fill their pockets. Therefore, the *Prikamsky* Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly represented by authorized bodies will mercilessly fight speculation and speculators as enemies of the people, sending them to court where they will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.⁸⁷

Residents in the rebel cities had to suffer labour mobilization as well. For instance, in the descriptions of the battles around Izhevsk one can find references to a powerful line of defensive fortifications built by rebels. Some documents issued by the rebel authorities give a clear description of how they were built. One of them reads:

On 7 September, all citizens aged 16 to 50 without exception must be present at 7 o'clock in the morning with axes, shovels and food for two days on Mikhaylovskaya Square. Those who do not have shovels and an axe will receive them from the district commissioners who will temporarily seize them from the inhabitants of the district. ... Everyone join the trench works immediately! Everyone grab a shovel! A shovel will save Izhevsk: the deeper into the ground, the stronger the defences.

For those who did not see the urgency of the moment, it was explained that any "attempt to shirk from work would be punished with the utmost severity".⁸⁸

As throughout the rest of the country, the authorities had to deal with a taxation system in Izhevsk that had been completely destroyed. In Soviet Russia, this problem was combatted with the help of trade unions and other bodies of workers' self-government. In Izhevsk, the authorities tried to revive local public organizations. Under the circumstances of an acute shortage of funds, even for maintaining the fighting capacity of the rebel army, appeals to the factory workers' conscience and patriotism became permanent. The tone of

87 *Votkinskaya zhizn'*, 29 September 1918.

88 TsDNI UR. F. 350. Op. 6. D. 50. Svyazka. 2 L. 33.

these appeals is interesting in itself, since it conveys the peculiarities of those days. For example, in one of the appeals by the Izhevsk authorities, the population was called upon to “immediately donate or give away for a small fee warm clothes that are in excess or are unneeded, such as: fur coats, great-coats, jackets, boots, felt boots, socks, foot cloths, mittens, underwear, soldier’s blouses”. It was also noted: “Do not hesitate if the donated items are not entirely new. The shortage is severe and the Army will be very grateful for everything”.⁸⁹ The authorities in Votkinsk acted in a similar manner: “We appeal to comrades, workers and other citizens: help the city in voluntary sewing of clothing for the People’s Army”, was stated in one of their communications. “Fathers of families, ask your wives and adult daughters to sew at least one pair of clothing for free. Knowing the responsiveness of the working masses and citizens we have the hope they will treat our request sympathetically and will help in this difficult moment of the renewal of our state”.⁹⁰

The rebel government of Izhevsk, which had tried to find its own “third way” in the early period of the civil war, lasted for only three months. Its main activities, whether in the area of administration, labour policy, the taxation system or other matters, were focused on restoring the trajectory of the country’s development; an effort that was started in February and interrupted in October 1917. At the same time, the general conditions of the civil war and other objective and subjective issues undermined the initial democratic impulses of the movement, forcing the course of the Izhevsk authorities in the general direction of that time.

5 Crisis and Defeat

The growing difficulties undermined the strength of the rebels’ power, and tensions between factions in the rebel leadership escalated. The basis of this conflict was the disagreement between the right-wing socialists in the leadership and the representatives of non-party officers. For instance, according to A. Y. Gutman, the Union of Front-Line Soldiers agreed “quite reluctantly” to the leadership of the “four members of the former Constituent Assembly”. It was only the position of other socialist groups supporting the right-wing SRS that forced the war veterans to reconcile themselves with this decision, and even then only temporarily, until the rebels joined the main forces of the

89 *Izhevskiy zaschitnik*, 15 October 1918.

90 *Votkinskaya zhizn*, 17 September 1918.

White Army. The words Gutman used to describe the formation and activity of *Prikomuch* very clearly show the true attitude of the “comrades in a common struggle” towards each other. He wrote sarcastically in his memoirs:

The example of the “*Komuch*” in Samara inspired the Izhevsk Right SRs, and they hastened to declare themselves the Supreme Power under the loud title “Committee of the Constituent Assembly of *Prikamye*”. ... The lure of the Samara *Komuch*’s power was too strong so that several little men accidentally stumbling into public life could not resist the temptation to become the “supreme rulers” of a single *uezd* of a great state, even for a very short time. ... Socialist contagion that did its evils in the capitals and major cities of Russia moved to the Kama. Random, weak and spineless people narrowly driven by party affiliation once again came to power. The SRs came, this time third-rate ones, and the fire of enthusiasm in the struggle for Russia faded.

According to Gutman, the results of “socialist management” were the same: “They chatted in Samara, they chatted in Izhevsk, until the Reds came and crushed everything and everyone”.⁹¹

A strong unitary power remained the ideal of the military officials. They were not satisfied with the “second edition of the Constituent Assembly”; they preferred the “second edition of Kornilovism”. Gutman shared his thoughts about this:

If an energetic and firm leader came to power in Izhevsk and managed to subjugate and lead the movement, everyone would have followed him. Everyone would have subordinated themselves to a reasonable will. But unfortunately in Izhevsk, at the time of the uprising, four party leaders valued the dogma much more than the state. Especially when it came to power.

In his opinion, the Izhevsk-Votkinsk uprising could have turned into a “nationwide movement”, but this would have needed it to have been led by “people who were not tied tightly to one or another political program but possessed by the idea of saving Russia from Bolshevism and restoring state order”.⁹²

⁹¹ *Ural i Prikamye*, 377, 378, 383, 390.

⁹² *Ural i Prikamye*, 382.

The socialists paid back in kind. Taking advantage of their position in the government, they sought to impose in every way their conditions for political coexistence. The officers, even those who had been local factory workers before, were considered by the civil authorities to be “a necessary evil”. Only those officers who were members of the socialist parties were credible, one example being G. N. Yuriev, a Social Democrat member of the factory committee, who was for a long time the commander of the Votkinsk rebel group. Gradually the pacifist propaganda of the socialists gave way to “putting an end to the fratricidal war”. Some socialists were ready to go even further, preferring the power of the Bolsheviks “over the epaulets and orders of the Tsarist army”, which had been “imposed” on the rebels from Siberia. A. I. Gutman describes his private conversation on the eve of the fall of Sarapul with a member of the *Prikomuch*, the right-wing Social Revolutionary Mikhailov. “We had better reconcile with Bolshevism than with reactionaries”, Mikhailov assured him. “And by ‘reactionaries’ the socialists primarily referred to ‘counter-revolutionary officers’, as in the times of Kerensky”.⁹³

The result of the rivalry between the socialists and the officers was a form of dual power, with the relationship between the military and civil administration leading to a direct confrontation. Against this background, a row erupted, which became the latest in the chain of crises of rebel power and the forerunner of its fall. Its beginnings can be traced back to 20 October 1918, when at a joint meeting of senior army officers and the *Prikomuch*, D. I. Fedichkin proposed starting an emergency evacuation of the wounded, women and children as well as valuable equipment and weapons to the eastern shore of the Kama. He justified his decision by saying that within one week, Izhevsk would not have a single bullet and then they would have to “flee from Izhevsk naked on ice”.⁹⁴

His plan was not met with understanding. Moreover, Evseev, who by that time had become the civilian leader of the rebel region, called Fedichkin's proposals cowardice. Fedichkin had no choice but to resign, referring to “a poor state of health”. The resignation was immediately accepted, and N. Evseev's Order No. 12 of 23 October stated ambiguously that Fedichkin had been dismissed from the post of Commander of the People's Army of Prikamye “because of his poor condition threatening extremely dangerous consequences for the defence”.⁹⁵ However, the fear of a military coup was so great that at the end of the meeting the entire board of the civilian government immediately fled to

93 *Sotsialisticheskiy vestnik*, no. 16 (1922): 7.

94 *Izhevsko-Votkinskoe vosstanie*, 77.

95 TsGA UR. F. R-460. Op. 1. D. 1. L. 70.

an unknown location. Only after some time did it become known that the “top four” had moved to Votkinsk. As a result, the decision to evacuate people was not made, and major changes took place in the leadership of the People’s Army. The socialist Yuryev was appointed to replace Fedichkin and the command of the Izhevsk army units was assigned to captain N. I. Zhuravlev, a man almost unknown to the people of Izhevsk and even to the commanding officers. These changes in all likelihood followed the line of “strengthening” the command of the rebel army by officers close or personally loyal to Evseev.⁹⁶

The turmoil in the leadership of the rebel republic, combined with the increasing anarchy and anti-democratic tendencies in the life of the rebel region, caused growing discontent among the population of Izhevsk, especially among the workers. For instance, in mid-September, the Union of Metalworkers came out to defend those arrested in the days of the August uprising. They formed a special delegation, with the purpose of demanding that the military authorities improved the conditions of prisoners and released the innocent.⁹⁷ Pro-Bolshevik sentiments began to increase among some segments of the factory workers, which was largely due to the vigorous activities of underground groups of Bolsheviks and non-party workers.⁹⁸ Agitators, supplied with a large amount of communist literature and money to attract people to their cause, got into the rebel areas and destroyed the rebels’ rear flank from the inside. Their activities in Izhevsk and Votkinsk, and especially in Sarapul, were carried out unpunished, as is clearly noted in the sources from the White Army. Pro-Bolshevik sentiments also spread in the People’s Army, strengthening the process of its disintegration. Entire units of the People’s Army began to go over to the side of the Reds, a development that had been impossible to imagine prior to that time.⁹⁹

All the moments of crisis noted above, as well as the capital’s *a priori* superior strength over the temporarily seceded provinces, made the defeat of the Izhevsk-Votkinsk uprising inevitable; all the more so, as it became less and less working class in its nature. After taking Sarapul in early October, the units of the Red Army began to prepare for the assault on Izhevsk. The operation of encircling and taking the rebels’ main citadel was assigned to a special division of the 2nd Army under the command of V. M. Azin. The order to start the operation was signed on 3 November 1918 by the commander of the Second

96 *Ural i Prikamye*, 394.

97 *Votkinskaya zhizn'*, 15 September 1918.

98 For more details, see N. P. Dmitriev and K. I. Kulikov, *Myatezh v Izhevsko-Votkinskom rayone*, 152–154.

99 TsGA UR. F. R-350. Op. 49. D. 6. L. 5.

Army, V. I. Shorin, and a member of the Revolutionary Military Council, P. K. Sternberg.¹⁰⁰ The decisive battle took place on 7 November 1918. In the early morning, an intensive artillery bombardment conducted by government troops began, with the rebels also responding with artillery fire. It was in this battle that, for the first time during the civil war, the Bolsheviks had to face psychological warfare, so vividly recreated in the film *Chapaev*. As always in moments of great danger, a factory whistle howled over the city and the bells of the Mikhailovsky Cathedral rang, as the most capable troops of the Izhevsk army in their full strength launched their attack under the red and green banner. According to a participant in the conflict, A. P. Kuchkin, this battle could be compared only with those of Chelyabinsk and Perekop in terms of its violence and brutality.¹⁰¹ It was not until the evening that the advancing units of the Reds were able to get through the fierce fire and the several lines of well-built fortifications. An armoured train *Svobodnaya Rossiya* (Free Russia) broke into Izhevsk station, and with its fire created disarray among the defenders, after which infantry and cavalry units entered the city.¹⁰²

The fights near Izhevsk on 7 and 8 November 1918, together with the actions to normalize the situation in the city, temporarily interrupted the advance of the Second Red Army and allowed the remnants of the rebel army to take steps to organize the evacuation of Votkinsk. The decision to make an emergency evacuation was taken at a special meeting attended by the civilian authorities of the region, the new commander of the Izhevsk-Votkinsk army, Captain Yuriev, Colonel Albokrinov and the commander of the Izhevsk army, Captain Zhuravlev. On 11 November, the Votkinsk plant was abandoned by the rebels and Lieutenant Bolonkin's unit was ordered to cover the planned retreat of the rebels' main forces. On the night of 12 November, the last units of the army crossed the Kama, and the sappers destroyed the pontoon bridge after crossing it. From then on, the fate of Izhevsk rebels was linked to the history of the White movement in the east of the country.¹⁰³

Thus ended the largest anti-Bolshevik uprising of workers in the history of the civil war. It became a serious challenge for the emerging revolutionary state. Izhevsk workers demonstrated the possibility of developing a version of the Russian state during the country's crisis that was neither White nor Red. At the same time, the experience of the right-wing socialist government in

100 TsGA UR. F. R-1061. Op. 1. D. 3. L. 67.

101 N. P. Dmitriev and K. I. Kulikov, *Myatezh v Izhevsko-Votkinskom rayone*, 267–268.

102 *Dokumenty i po istorii grazhdanskoj vojny v SSSR*. Vol. 1 (Moscow: Politizdat, 1941), 381–382.

103 TsGA UR. F. R-1061. Op. 1. D. 17. L. 38–39.

Izhevsk showed that democratic power in those circumstances was possible only in the form of a “democratic dictatorship”, which in terms of its methods, differed very little from the Bolshevik and military dictatorships. Even if not dead, the political line of the right-wing socialists in Izhevsk had been heavily discredited. Democratic slogans without democratic content could not convince people of their fairness and usefulness when those people were, above all, trying to survive in circumstances of complete collapse and ruin. The civil war relentlessly imposed its own laws, in accordance with which the barricades can only have two sides, and those standing in the middle find themselves in the crossfire.

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Networks of Revolutionary Workers

Socialist Red Women in Finland in 1918

Tiina Lintunen and Kimmo Elo

In January 1918, the socialist Reds in Finland resorted to force in their struggle for a social revolution, whereas the conservative Whites supported the government and wanted to expel the Russian troops still in the country. This chaotic situation became a civil war.^{1,2} Revolutionary ideas inspired thousands of women to support the Red Guard. These “Red women” worked both for the troops and as armed troops themselves.³ With the war ending in a victory for the Whites, the rebels (women as well as men) were tried for treason.

During the hearings, each defendant had to state why she had joined the Red Guard or otherwise supported the cause. The most common justifications given in their testimonies were economic – the good salary the Red Guard paid. Many also justified joining the Guard by saying, “Because others joined too”, or “I was told to”.⁴ Who were these “others”, who had such an influence on these women? What were the overarching factors that brought these women together, and how were these women acquainted with each other?

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- 1 This chapter was first published in the *International Review of Social History* 64, no. 2 (2019): 279–307. It is reproduced with permission of Cambridge University Press. The chapter contains various illustrations that are best viewed online and in full color. For the original article and supplementary online material, please visit <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859019000336>.
 - 2 Over the years, there has been a great deal of controversy about the name and nature of the events that took place in Finland in 1918. After the war, the Whites used the term “War of Liberty”; the Reds talked about revolution and rebellion. Nowadays, most researchers use the neutral term “civil war”.
 - 3 The term “Red woman” can refer to a female soldier on the Red side, to a woman serving the Red side, to a Red agitator, or to a family member of a Red soldier. In our study, Red women are taken to mean women accused of treason and prosecuted in court. They came from all the groups mentioned above, the exception being female soldiers: there were no women soldiers in the district we studied.
 - 4 Tiina Lintunen, *Punaisten naisten tiet. Valtiorikosoikeuteen vuonna 1918 joutuneiden Porin seudun naisten toiminta sota-aikana, tuomiot ja myöhemmät elämänvaiheet* (Turku, 2015), pp. 98ff.

The reasons the women gave were probably not always the real reasons: most women tried to minimize their sentences by understating their commitment and importance. It was rare for a woman to admit she had joined for political reasons. Surely, there were more women who shared these political views, since the majority of them were also members of the labour movement.⁵ The influence of others was also real. In previous studies, the example of family and co-workers proved to be an important factor in encouraging others to join the revolution.⁶ The situation was undoubtedly complex and the reasons why women joined the Guard were manifold. Ideology, money, and comrades were all contributory factors and will have differed from one individual to another.⁷

Our source material consists chiefly of documents produced by the authorities. Unfortunately this also means that the primary material available for this study included only fragmented and rare data on the social connections of these women. We reconstructed the prevailing social networks by treating the factors referred to above as social channels important for social interaction. Further, we assumed that geographical closeness (as implied by the same place of residence) strengthened social cohesion between women living in the same region. In order to model and analyse this complex set of relations, we decided to apply historical network analysis (HNA), a formal method developed to analyse and graphically present complex relationships.

Our hypothesis is that Red activity was based on organizations and everyday solidarity. The purpose of our chapter is therefore to analyse the networks of these Red women. What kind of connections were there? By exploring the networks, we are able to discover how revolutionary ideas were able to spread among workers. These networks were crucial not just *before* but also *after* the war, when the convicted women tried to survive in a society ruled by the Whites. The Reds were stigmatized as unfit citizens; support from other Reds was therefore of the utmost importance.

The Civil War is one of the most studied themes in Finnish history. It was also highly controversial – the terror during the conflict has aroused conflicting passions among researchers, and a great deal of controversy. Research into the collective memories of the period has also triggered heated debates. It has taken nearly a century to reach some sort of consensus that there is no one

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 97–99.

6 See, for example, Tuomas Hoppu, *Tampereen naiskaartit. Myytit ja todellisuus* (Jyväskylä, 2008), pp. 73–75, and Aimo Klemettilä, *Tampereen punakaarti ja sen jäsenistö* (Tampere, 1976), p. 241.

7 Lintunen, *Punaisten naisten tiet*, p. 101.

monolithic truth about the war, but that several parallel interpretations are equally valid.⁸

The historiography of the research into the Finnish Civil War has gone through four waves. After the war, the official history was written by the victors. During this first wave, the war was described from the perspective of the Whites; the Reds were presented as the sole malefactors. Researchers referred to the war as a War of Liberation, Revolution, or Rebellion. In the 1960s, the situation changed when greater consideration was given to the Red view. The most important studies of this second wave were by Jaakko Paavolainen on the Red and White terror and by Viljo Rasila on the social background of the war and its adversaries. For the first time, the actions of the Whites were analysed critically.⁹ One of the most important pioneers was Anthony F. Upton, who in 1980 wrote a comprehensive study of the Finnish revolution and Civil War.¹⁰ It was a sort of prologue to the third wave, which began in the 1990s. This period was more neutral, and the term “civil war” gained ground among researchers. Also, a microhistorical approach emerged, with Risto Alapuro’s and Heikki Ylikangas’s path-breaking studies.¹¹ Both of these turns – the focus on the Red point of view and their social background, and later the microhistorical approach – have been significant to our study.

During the present century, the historiographical emphasis has shifted towards new military history – the fourth wave, with research focusing on such phenomena as myths, emotions, violence, and everyday life. It was not until this phase that ordinary women and children and their experiences were included.¹² Our study is interlinked with this field. By analysing women’s networks, we are able to piece together at least some of their interactions and sphere of activity. As far as we know, ours is the first study of revolutionary women’s networks in Finland, or indeed in any European country. Our

8 Tiina Kinnunen, “The Post-Cold War Memory Culture of the Civil War: Old-New Patterns and New Approaches”, in Tuomas Tepora and Aapo Roselius (eds), *The Finnish Civil War 1918: History, Memory, Legacy* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 401–439, 401–403; Tuomas Tepora and Aapo Roselius, “Introduction: The Finnish Civil War, Revolution and Scholarship”, in Tepora and Roselius, *The Finnish Civil War*, pp. 1–19, 8–15.

9 Jaakko Paavolainen, *Polittiset väkivaltaisuuudet Suomessa 1918*, 2 vols (Helsinki, 1966–1967); Viljo Rasila, *Kansalaissodan sosiaalinen tausta* (Helsinki, 1968).

10 Anthony F. Upton, *The Finnish Revolution, 1917–1918* (Minneapolis, MN, 1980).

11 Risto Alapuro, *Suomen synty paikallisena ilmiönä 1890–1933* (Helsinki, 1994); Heikki Ylikangas, *Tie Tampereelle. Dokumentoitu kuvaus Tampereen antautumiseen johtaneista sotatapahtumista Suomen sisällissodassa 1918* (Porvoo, 1996).

12 Lintunen, *Punaisten naisten tiet*, p. 24.

approach is microhistorical. We focus on a local community and its social layers in a political system in transition. We are interested in the common people and their lives.

This chapter contributes, too, to the field of the digital humanities¹³ and seeks to exemplify how quantified historical sources can be explored using digital methods and tools. We apply historical network analysis to analyse the significance and impact of regional, social networks and to improve our understanding of the structural factors affecting intra-group dynamics among the Red women who participated in the Finnish Civil War in 1918. Viljo Rasila used factor analysis in 1968 in his statistical study of the structures of Finland's political divisions in 1918.¹⁴ We want to bring this study to the next level by studying the networks and closeness of the Reds.

Historical network analysis allows us to study the functions of multiple social background variables – here, we consider place of residence, kinship, and associations – in a much fuller way, and thus offers a promising tool for examining past communities at an aggregate level:

With SNA [social network analysis], we are only interested in individuals as part of a much bigger whole. In fact, one advantage to the technique is that SNA helps us view an entire community and figure out which individuals we should be truly interested in and which ones were perhaps less significant. When we study past relationships systematically as SNA allows, the method will prevent us from misunderstanding the function of an individual's relationships or exaggerating the distinctiveness of those relations.¹⁵

We chose these three variables because our hypothesis is that the connection of these women to the labour movement would be significant. According to previous studies, the political power of the working class was based on getting organized. So, the first choice was obvious. Place of residence was also

13 Since the whole discipline is subject to continuous, often controversial debate, there is no space in the present chapter for an exhaustive debate about the digital humanities. Useful contributions to this debate can be found in Anne Burdick *et al.* (eds), *Digital Humanities* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), Frédéric Clavert and Serge Noiret (eds), *L'histoire contemporaine à l'ère numérique / Contemporary History in the Digital Age* (Brussels, 2013), and Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (eds), *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016* (Minneapolis, MN, 2016).

14 Rasila, *Kansalaissodan sosiaalinen tausta*.

15 Robert M. Morrissey, "Archives of Connection", *Historical Methods: A Journal of Quantitative and Interdisciplinary History*, 48:2 (2015), pp. 67–79, 69–70.

promising, since we knew that men's ties had been local. We wanted to see if this held true for women. Finally, kinship was chosen since we knew, after preliminary examination of the data, that there would be relatives, and previous research has shown the influence of family members to have been important.¹⁶

We are convinced that the power of digital methods such as historical network analysis lies in their ability to allow a distant reading of large material corpora. For example, social interaction patterns can be rather complex and hard to perceive without proper visualization. This is exactly what HNA is designed for: to model and visualize complex relationships in an attractive visual form. At the same time, however, we are fully aware that all network visualizations require a proper context-aware interpretation and that qualitative research is also needed. Further, the network data can be derived from documents containing only historical facts. A well-known problem is the static nature of graphical visualizations, often criticized for "freezing" the course of history. An often-used workaround is to "chunk" the network in temporal snapshots. For this chapter, we are interested in one point in time only – the beginning of the Finnish Civil War. Hence the problem of dynamic networks is not highly relevant here.

The first section of this chapter describes the historical context by briefly presenting the main developments in Finland in 1917 and the first few months of 1918, which resulted in the outbreak of the Finnish Civil War. In the second, we present our primary material and discuss our method: historical network analysis. The third section presents the main analysis and revolves around network visualizations. We conclude by summing up the most important results and their implications.

1 Background

The Civil War between the rebellious Reds and the conservative Whites broke out in January 1918. Its causes were multifarious and stemmed from both domestic and world politics. At the international level, the most important elements were, naturally, World War I and the collapse of the Russian Empire, the mother country of the Grand Duchy of Finland. After the downfall of the empire and the Bolshevik Revolution, Finland gained independence but was

16 Hoppu, *Tampereen naiskaartit. Myytit ja todellisuus*, pp. 73–75; Klemettilä, *Tampereen punakaarti ja sen jäsenistö*, p. 241.

in such turmoil that it found itself embroiled in an agonizing and destructive civil war after only a few weeks of freedom.¹⁷

World War I had shaken the foundations of the society in Russia to which Finland belonged as an autonomous district. The two revolutions in 1917 also affected the western territories of the empire. With regard to the Finnish region, state power had already slipped out of Russian hands after the March Revolution. However, the political atmosphere was tense. The Russian provisional government was aware of Finnish separatist ideas and was keen to repress attempts to secure full sovereignty. Finns tried to achieve this sovereignty by making the Finnish Parliament the highest legislative body. The provisional government refused to accept this and dissolved parliament and ordered new elections. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, supported Finnish separatist aspirations. They hoped that their revolutionary ideas would spread to Finland and thus further Bolshevik aims.¹⁸

During 1917, the domestic situation in Finland slowly evolved from minor disputes into ever-increasing violent conflicts. What circumstances led to this chaos? First, there was a serious shortage of food and work. Due to the chaos in Russia, Finland's trade to the east fell sharply and unemployment increased dramatically. There was also a severe lack of food because Finland was not self-sufficient and World War I interrupted grain imports from Russia, while in Finland itself the harvest was less abundant than usual. Price controls failed and the black market flourished. Workers were hungry and disappointed with the government and with producers. Riots and disorder became a part of everyday life.¹⁹

Second, politics failed. Socialists and bourgeoisie were unwilling to compromise amid the resurfacing of old, ideological, class-based conflicts. Universal suffrage in 1906 had not mended the deep class divisions and socialists and bourgeoisie were reluctant to share power, accusing each other of attempting a *coup d'état*. The socialists became frustrated when parliament was dissolved by the Russian provisional government in the summer of 1917 and they lost their majority after new elections in October 1918. If the political decision-making

17 Perti Haapala and Marko Tikka, "Revolution, Civil War, and Terror in Finland in 1918", in Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (eds), *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 72–84, 74–79.

18 William G. Rosenberg, "Paramilitary Violence in Russia's Civil Wars, 1918–1920", in Gerwarth and Horne, *War in Peace*, pp. 21–39, 22–24; Haapala and Tikka, "Revolution, Civil War, and Terror in Finland in 1918", pp. 74–75.

19 Perti Haapala, "The Expected and Non-Expected Roots of Chaos: Preconditions", in Tepora and Roselius, *The Finnish Civil War*, pp. 42–50.

processes had worked, the difficult economic situation might have been ameliorated. Things went from bad to worse, however, since political problems aggravated everyday concerns.²⁰

Third, after the first Russian Revolution in March, there was no police force in Finland. Nor did it have an army of its own. There was no official paramilitary force to control restless crowds. In the summer and autumn of 1917, during the worker strikes and political unrest, local militia were founded in order to protect the political rights of strikers and also the rights and political agenda of the landed estate owners. These early militia were clearly class-based, especially in the countryside, but later their composition became more complex.²¹ Originally, the militia were regional and lacked general rules and cohesion. However, these coalitions were preliminary phases for the subsequent formation of the national Red and White guards, which both had c.100,000 soldiers. The Reds had 2,600 female soldiers, with a further 10,000 women as service troops. All of them were located in southern Finland.²²

Finland gained its long-hoped-for independence in December 1917. It was not a time for celebration. Disagreements between socialists and non-socialists became more intense. Finally, despite efforts by more moderate party members, the radical socialists launched a revolution in January 1918. Inspired by the Russian Revolution, they were ready to seize the opportunity and carry out a *coup d'état*. However, they did not adopt the Bolshevik model. They believed in armed, but peaceful revolution. The Reds did not plan to make Finland a constituent part of Lenin's Russia but to create an independent state. This fundamental difference explains, at least partly, why people were so willing to join the revolution, which later became a civil war.²³

20 *Ibid.*, p. 40; Tuomas Hoppu, "Sisällissodan puhkeaminen", in Pertti Haapala and Tuomas Hoppu (eds), *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen* (Helsinki, 2009), pp. 92–111, 92f. Pertti Haapala, "Vuoden 1917 kriisi", in Haapala and Hoppu, *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen*, pp. 58–89, 80.

21 Most of the Red guardsmen were farmworkers or industrial workers. The Whites were a more heterogeneous group. Most of them were landowners, but there were also students, public servants, and middle management of industry and business. In between were the tenant farmers and handicraftsmen; they supported both sides. Marko Tikka, "Suomen sisällissodan tapahtumat", in Tuomas Tepora and Aapo Roselius (eds), *Rikki revitty maa* (Helsinki, 2018), pp. 82–110, 84; Alapuro, *Suomen synty paikallisena ilmiönä 1890–1933*, pp. 47–49.

22 Risto Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland* (Berkeley, CA, 1988), pp. 145, 160; Haapala, "The Expected and Non-Expected Roots of Chaos", pp. 45–47; Hoppu, "Sisällissodan puhkeaminen", pp. 92–111.

23 Hoppu, "Sisällissodan puhkeaminen", pp. 98–101; Rosenberg, "Paramilitary Violence in Russia's Civil Wars", pp. 30–33; Haapala and Tikka, "Revolution, Civil War, and Terror in Finland in 1918", pp. 75ff.

As Jorma Kalela has pointed out, the historical events that occurred in Finland in 1918 should not be seen in isolation but as part of the series of proletarian revolts that took place in Europe from 1917 to 1920. However, the Finnish case had three characteristics that marked it out from revolts elsewhere in Europe. First, in Finland the proletariat was united. They split into communists and social democrats only after the revolution had been suppressed. Second, the revolutionaries managed to hold on to power for nearly three months. Third, in Finland the revolt took place earlier than in Central Europe, where the uprisings occurred only after World War I.²⁴ The Finnish Civil War lasted for just over three months and ended in victory for the Whites. Though brief, the war was bloody and brutal. It left one per cent of Finland's population dead as a result of battles, terror, and famine in POW camps.²⁵

The Red revolution needed both soldiers and service workers. Women, too, were called up for duty. The Red administration was surprised that women were eager to take up arms. Approximately 2,600 armed themselves. They were generally unmarried and young – most of them were under the age of twenty-one. Only some of them took part in battle; the rest acted as sentries. They did, however, play an important role in propaganda. Red newspapers used the fact that women were willing to risk their lives to put pressure on Red men to join in combat too. The Whites were appalled by the thought of women taking up arms, arguing that it was contrary to the social system and inappropriate for a woman to fight.²⁶

For many years, the image of a Red woman has been dominated by those 2,600 armed females and the role they played in the history of the Finnish Civil War. In contrast, we know little about the unarmed Red women. There were approximately 10,000 women who undertook traditional duties, such as nursing and subsidiary tasks.²⁷ They were older than the female soldiers; many of them were married and had children. They were seduced into joining not just by ideological considerations; good wages also played a role. The Reds had

24 Jorma Kalela, "Suomi ja eurooppalainen vallankumousvaihe", in Ville Pernaa and Mari K. Niemi (eds), *Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan poliittinen historia* (Helsinki, 2008), pp. 95–109, 103–105.

25 Marko Tikka, "Warfare and Terror in 1918", in Tepora and Roselius, *The Finnish Civil War*, p. 118.

26 Lintunen, *Punaisten naisten tiet*, pp. 36–38; Tuomas Hoppu, *Sisällissodan naiskaartit. Suomalaisnaiset aseissa 1918* (Helsinki, 2017), pp. 71, 270.

27 There were more volunteers than the Guard could take. Some of the young women not hired to serve the army decided to form armed female companies. Despite the lack of general approval, 2,600 women took up arms towards the end of the war. The women we study did not bear arms.

occupied Helsinki in the first few days of the war and seized the Bank of Finland; this enabled them to offer generous salaries that doubled the incomes of recruits.

Most of these Red women were also members of the labour movement. Party members were consequently committed to the cause and wanted to help change the prevailing social system.²⁸ As Hoppu and Klemetilä have already noted, money was therefore not the only reason for joining the Guard.²⁹ Some of these women and girls undoubtedly did not understand the gravity of their actions in joining, nor were they aware of the serious consequences of this affiliation. For example, thirteen-year-old Karin Sandberg, who washed dishes in the Red Guard's canteen for two weeks, probably did not realise that this job would land her in court.³⁰

2 Materials and Methods

To be able to examine the roots of an organization, we restrict our study to a particular region and community.³¹ A restricted area is a prerequisite, especially for network analysis. The subjects of our analysis are the women from the district of Pori, in western Finland (Map 4.1).³² This region is a fertile research subject, since it was situated near the front line and occupied by the Reds, who needed a large army service corps. Women were consequently also needed. Moreover, the labour movement was strong in this region, and workers were well unionized. Hence, the political atmosphere favoured radical change. Consequently, the second largest regional group to face trial in the political crimes courts after the war comprised women from this province.

Our data comprise 267 women. We included all women from the district of Pori accused of Red activity. After the war, these Red women ended up in court on charges of committing treason or assisting in treasonous activity. They had either worked in support roles, been agitators, or were Red refugees. These women form a heterogeneous group. Their ages vary from thirteen to

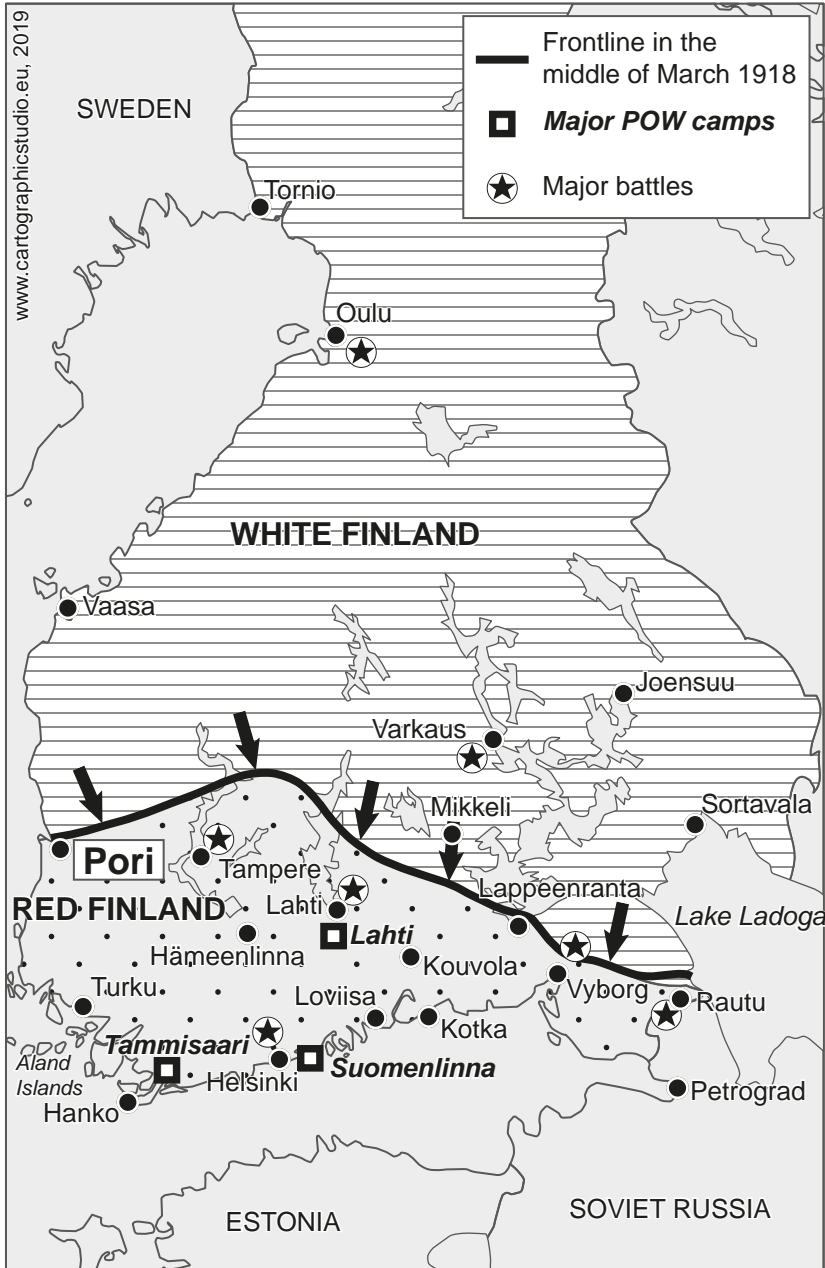
28 Lintunen, *Punaisten naisten tiet*, pp. 36–38, 145–149.

29 Hoppu, *Tampereen naiskaartit. Myytit ja todellisuus*, pp. 73–75, and Klemetilä, *Tampereen punakaarti ja sen jäsenistö*, p. 241.

30 National Archive, Helsinki, Court for crimes against the State (VRO), doc. 143/270.

31 Alapuro, *Suomen synty paikallisena ilmiönä 1890–1933*, p. 14.

32 In her dissertation, Lintunen studied the background of these women, their role in the war, the punishment they received, and their subsequent lives. Lintunen, *Punaisten naisten tiet*.



MAP 4.1 Southern Finland in 1918. Pori is located on the west coast near the front line.

sixty-nine years, but most were in their twenties or thirties. Of the women, 53 per cent were unmarried, 37 per cent married, and 11 per cent were war widows. By profession, they were mainly factory workers, craftspeople, maids, or housewives; 69 per cent of them were members of the labour movement.³³ We examine the connections among all these women. In addition, to tackle the microhistorical dimension, we closely examine the women from the Aronen family, as representative of the larger group of Red women, which comprised around 5,500 people tried in court after the Civil War. We refer to our research subjects by their own names since more than a century has passed and we aim to do justice to them by understanding their activity in the context of their era.

Our materials consist of documents from various archival sources. The trial documents in the National Archive contain ten to twenty pages of information on each defendant, including interrogation notes in which we can read their own stories and where they explain what they had done, why, and where. The statements given in the interrogations are documented on official forms; descriptions are normally brief. It should be noted that these statements were made under extreme duress and so should be interpreted cautiously. For example, many of the women lied about their union membership. There are also letters of recommendation from relatives and influential individuals, as well as abusive letters from foes. The files also contain an official certificate, a two-page statement from the local White authorities, and the court verdict. We use them to identify the women who were prosecuted for treason and to get an overall picture of them and their backgrounds. These documents were produced by the authorities. We also have a few interviews recorded with these women in the 1960s. Unfortunately, there are no letters or diaries available and thus we have to content ourselves with this scarce material on the motives of these women.

The files of the local workers' associations and trade union branches in the Labour Archives reveal the political participation of these women.³⁴ Furthermore, the local parish registers and municipal archives are used as a source of information about kinship and place of residence. Qualitative analysis does not help us identify the potential interrelationships between these women. We

33 *Ibid.*

34 These were two distinct organizations. The trade unions tried to improve the wages and working conditions of their members, and to reduce the number of working hours. Workers' associations aimed to improve working conditions nationally through legislation. They also strove to educate workers by organizing cultural and entertainment programmes.

need network analysis to help us see the nexus of the social relationships and to identify the key women in the network.

3 On Historical Network Analysis

The structure and dynamics of relationships between the issues, events, and people underlying historical phenomena are of key interest in historical research. In recent years, many historians have shown a growing interest in applying digital or other formal methods to their empirical material in order to model and analyse patterns of social interaction underlying certain phenomena. One approach enjoying slowly growing popularity among historians is historical network research (HNR), a research paradigm stressing the importance of relationships among units (people, organizations, concepts, etc.) to explain historical phenomena.³⁵

Network research itself dates back to the late nineteenth century, but it was the development of powerful personal computers and easy-to-use software allowing graphical presentations, i.e. visualizations of networks, that increased interest in network research among historians. Another important pioneering role was played by those digital or computational historians at the crossroads of computational science and historical research who showed how social network analysis can be exploited to address research questions relevant for historical research.

The main focus of HNR lies in analysing relational patterns such as social or institutional relations or interactions in a historical context.³⁶ It has been applied to map, measure, model, and visualize relationships between different units in a network. In recent years, network visualizations have gained a central position in network research, for two reasons in particular. First, new, easy-to-use visualization software is available, making data visualization much easier. And second, network visualizations are an effective form of presenting complex relationships in an intuitive and quite easy-to-understand form. Additionally, different visualization layouts offer new possibilities for highlighting

35 See, for example, Peter Bearman *et al.*, “Networks and History”, *Complexity*, 8:1 (2002), pp. 61–71; Tom Brughmans, “Thinking Through Networks: A Review of Formal Network Methods in Archaeology”, *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 20:4 (2013), pp. 623–662; Ruedi Epple, “Flucht und Unterstützung: Die ‘Auskunftsstelle für Flüchtlinge’ in Zürich und ihre Netzwerke”, *Journal of Historical Network Research*, 1:1 (2017), pp. 106–145.

36 For a more detailed discussion about historical network research, see, for example, <http://historicalnetworkresearch.org/>; last accessed 14 February 2019.

network-related attributes or visualizing a node's relevance in regard to its close neighbourhood or the complete network.³⁷

Historical network analysis as a spin-off of social network analysis is part of the Anglo-Saxon, quantitatively oriented development line of network research. Accordingly, HNR has its theoretical foundations in graph theory in mathematics, where a network is defined as a set of dots (*nodes, vertices*) and connecting lines (*edges*) between nodes.³⁸ Both nodes and edges can be enriched by attaching both quantitative and qualitative attributes to them, and these attributes can be used in the analysis. The main purpose of using attributes, however, is to ensure that the formal network model, the network topology, provides valid, reliable, and appropriate information to answer the research question.

The analytical focus of network analysis lies in the network structure, consisting of nodes and edges, and is based on the assumption that both the units (nodes) selected for the analysis and the connections (edges) between these are significant when it comes to understanding and explaining the larger phenomenon the network is connected to. Consequently, the main purpose of using network analysis and visualization tools is to elucidate structural aspects from the research object neglected or left unidentified by other research methods or tools. Although the analogy is not perfect, strong similarities exist between network analysis and statistical analysis, especially at the level of the research process. The network metrics used to describe the central characteristics of a network's structure can be compared to coefficients produced by fitting a statistical model. From this perspective, both provide quantitative information about dependencies between variables in the data, thus improving our understanding of the phenomenon subject to analysis.³⁹

The primary material used in this chapter was processed into quantified network data in three steps. First, we extracted all socially relevant information from the original historical documents. In addition to name and place of residence, we extracted information about membership of trade union branches and workers' associations, as well as about kinships. We justify this

37 For more on this, see, for example, John Scott, *Social Network Analysis* (London, 2013); Barbara Schultz-Jones, "Examining Information Behavior Through Social Networks: An Interdisciplinary Review", *Journal of Documentation*, 65:4 (2009), pp. 592–631; Marten Düring and Martin Stark, "Historical Network Analysis", *Encyclopedia of Social Networks* (London, 2011).

38 For a good introduction to graph theory, see Keijo Ruohonen, *Graph Theory* (Tampere, 2013). For good introductions to SNA, see, for example, Christina Prell, *Social Network Analysis: History, Theory and Methodology* (London, 2012); Scott, *Social Network Analysis*.

39 Morrissey, "Archives of Connection".

selection by the fact that societies and associations are among the most central forms of organizations with regard to collective action.⁴⁰ This information was stored in an affiliation matrix, with each row representing one “Red woman” and each column representing a single variable. This table was imported to R, a statistical package,⁴¹ for advanced analysis.

Second, we created the actual network data by connecting women who had been members of the same workers’ association or the same trade union branch, and who had lived in the same residence. We also added connections based on kinship. In the third step, we imported the network data to Visone, an open-source software program for network analysis and visualizations. Visone offers an extensive set of analytical tools and innovative network visualization integrated into an intuitive, easy-to-use user interface.⁴²

4 Social Networks of the “Red Women”

We have split our analysis into three main parts, each analysing the same network data from a specific perspective. The methodological aim is to exemplify and evidence how historical social network analysis can be exploited to analyse the historical social reality reconstructed and represented through social networks. Each sub-analysis starts with a specific network visualization seeking to highlight analytically interesting and relevant aspects from the social networks of selected Red women residing permanently in the Pori region.

All networks visualized and analysed in this chapter are one-mode networks, where two women are connected if they are members of the same workers’ association, the same local trade union branch, or if they share the same place of residence. Since the network data is created by projecting a two-mode network – for instance, a person to trade union branch network – onto a one-mode social network – for instance, onto a person-to-person network where connections are based on shared trade union branch membership – all nodes sharing the same affiliation form a fully connected clique. Such a projection is also needed as we want to calculate some network measures and most of these are defined for one-mode networks only.⁴³ We are aware of the issues

40 Alapuro, *Suomen synty paikallisena ilmiönä 1890–1933*, p. 14.

41 www.r-project.org; last accessed 5 March 2019.

42 For further details, see <http://visone.info/html/about.html>; last accessed 14 March 2018.

43 Stephen P. Borgatti and Martin G. Everett, “Network Analysis of 2-Mode Data”, *Social Networks*, 19:3 (1997), pp. 243–269.

constraining the application of certain network measures to a projected one-mode network⁴⁴ and systematically avoid using these. Further, as regards the overall objectives of this chapter, these technical and theoretical issues are less relevant and do not outweigh the benefits of using projected one-mode network data in order to explore social interaction patterns. Another advantage is that the reader can visually explore – by focusing on the link colours – what kind of connections exist between the women.

Map 4.2 illustrates the geographical closeness of the city of Pori. As we can see, Pori's city centre was very compact and the distances between the city's sections very short. However, the Pori region was geographically rather large and included districts far from the centre. A good example is the district of Reposaari, an island located twenty-five kilometres northwest of the centre.⁴⁵ The labour movement was very active in Reposaari. Of the women we studied who came from there, eighty-two per cent were organized.⁴⁶ Our study also includes the rural communes in Pori and Ulvila, both located around the city of Pori. Those parishes were geographically fragmented and comprised several small villages across a quite large geographic area. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was difficult for the poor to travel far – the chief means of transport was by foot. Thus, geographical mobility was low and communication over longer distances often depended on newspapers and visits from political activists.⁴⁷

5 Associational Connections

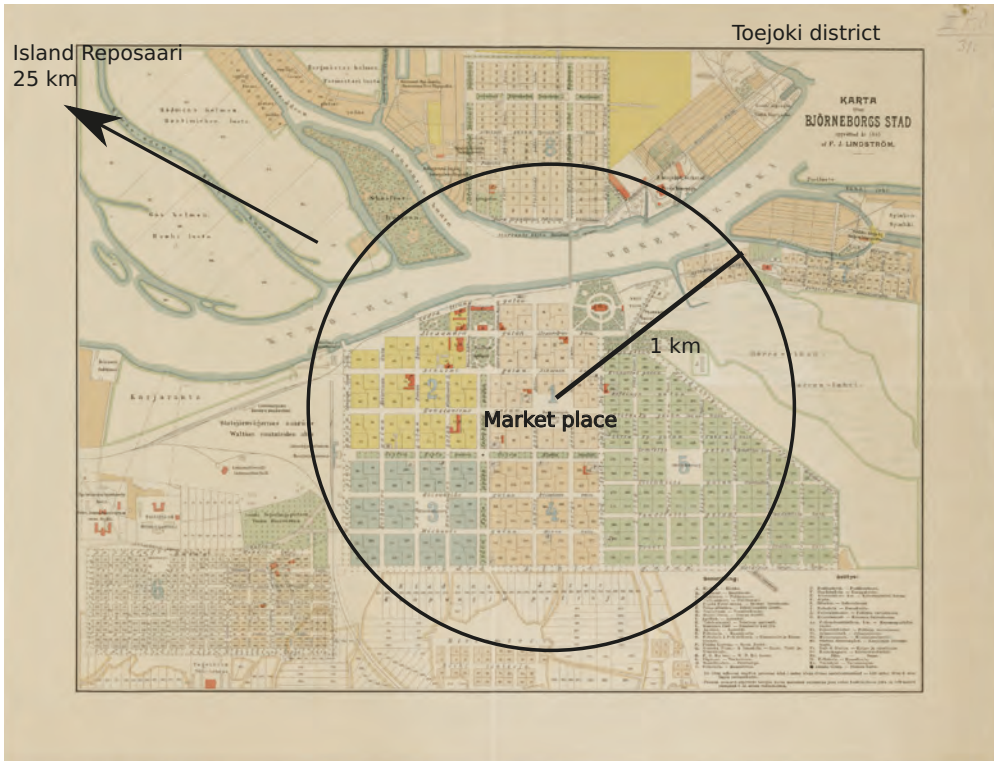
We start our exploratory analysis with Figure 4.1, which presents the social network of the 267 women based on their membership of workers' associations and trade union branches. Each node in the network represents one woman. The connections (links) visualized in green indicate that the two women were members of the same workers' association; the connections visualized in red

44 Tore Opsahl and Pietro Panzarasa, "Clustering in Weighted Networks", *Social Networks*, 31:2 (2009), pp. 155–163.

45 In summer there was a steamboat connection linking Reposaari to the city of Pori.

46 National Archive, Court for crimes against the State (VRO and VRYO).

47 The city of Pori had 17,603 inhabitants, the rural commune of Pori 7,685, and Ulvila 8,339. *Suomen tilastollinen vuosikirja 1919* (Helsinki, 1920), pp. 12, 14. The three parish were inter-linked since some Ulvila villages were considered suburbs of the city of Pori. Quite a few people from the nearest Ulvila villages and the rural commune of Pori worked in the city's factories. Jussi Koivuniemi, *Joen rytmissä. Porin kaupungin historia 1940–2000* (Pori, 2004), p. 20.



MAP 4.2 Map of the city of Pori
 NATIONAL LIBRARY, DORIA, COLLECTION OF FINNISH MAPS, PORI 1895

represent membership of the same trade union branch. Although all links of the same main type (workers’ association or labour union branch) are visualized in the same colour, heterogeneity within the same main type has been maintained. Hence, each individual workers’ association (green links) is visualized as its own sub-network and connects only those women who were members of this specific association.⁴⁸ The visualization is based on the “stress minimization” layout, a variant of force-directed layouts widely used in social network analysis. As the name suggests, the graph is treated as a spring system and the algorithm looks for a stable, “aesthetically pleasing” configuration

48 We have included all workers’ associations and trade union branches of which the women were members. There were other trade union branches and workers’ associations, but their female members did not end up in court accused of being Red.

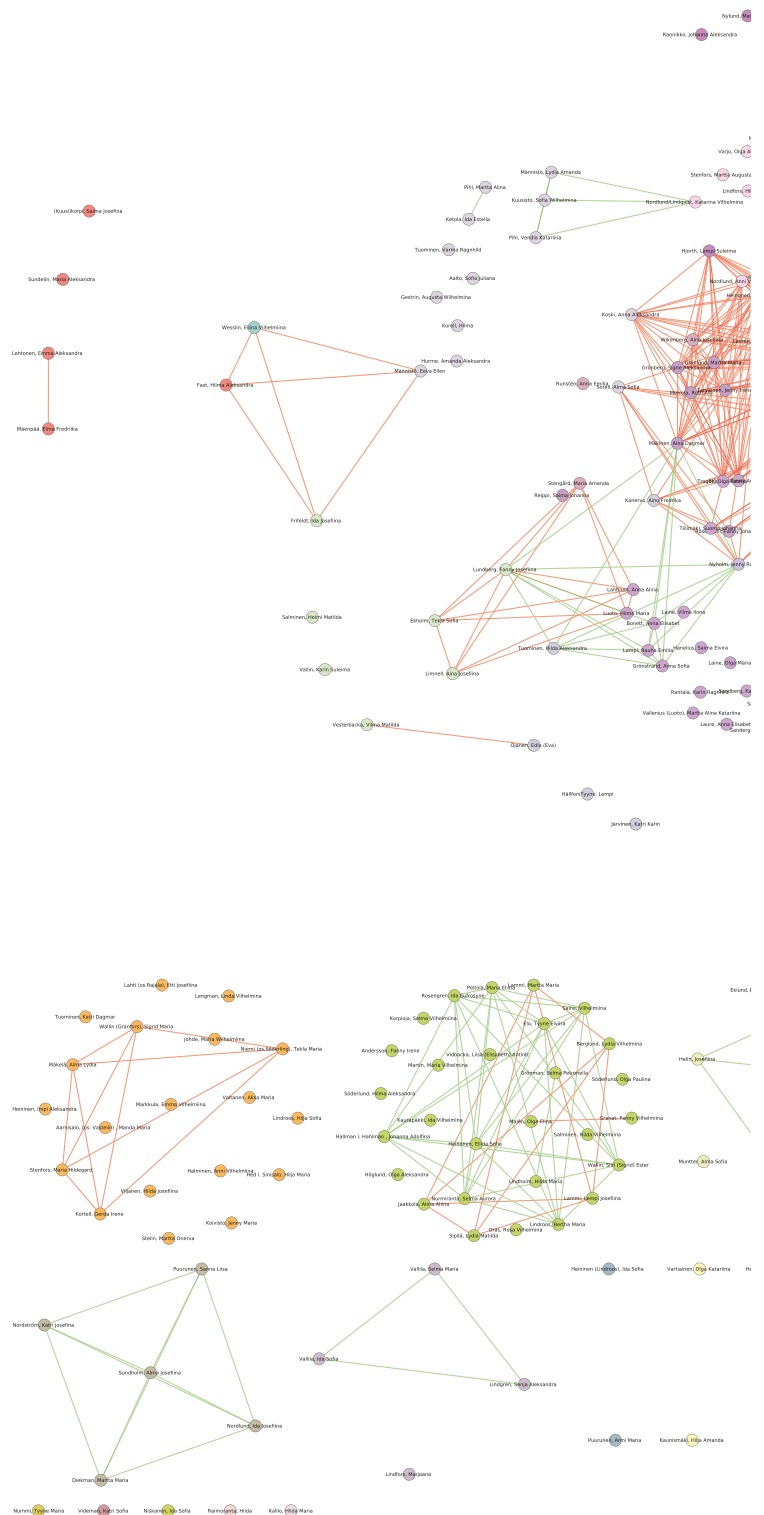


FIGURE 4.1 Social network based on membership of trade union branches and workers' associations
 FOR FULL-COLOR VERSION, SEE [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1017/S0020859019000336](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859019000336)

displaying “as much symmetry as possible”.⁴⁹ The resulting graph is designed so that nodes having more mutual connections are visible as clusters/cliques.

Figure 4.1 evidences the important role of workers’ associations and trade union branches as the most remarkable factors that linked these women. In fact, sixty-nine per cent of them were members of the labour movement. Thus, the majority of these women were politically active and so would also have had political motives for supporting the revolution. It was quite natural for members of the Red Guard to also have been active members of the workers’ movement. In addition, at the beginning of the war, the Reds wanted to recruit women of a mature age, not young girls, to serve the forces. The women chosen had previously proved their loyalty to the cause, and the generous salary was seen as a kind of reward for their efforts on behalf of the labour movement. They also encouraged one another. For example, Helena Rosengrén told her interrogators that Amanda Nordling fetched her from home and asked her to work with her in the Red kitchen. Both were members of the same workers’ association.⁵⁰ Likewise, Hilda Tuominen said that her acquaintance Johanna Järvenpää had urged her to join the Red Cross of the Red Guard with her. They were both seamstresses and members of the workers’ association. The two of them were hired to sew bandages.⁵¹

6 Geographical Closeness

The social networks visualized in Figure 4.1 suggest the majority of these women were politically active, but there are a significant number of “isolates”, i.e. women who joined neither a trade union, nor a workers’ association. That a majority of them decided to join the Guard raises the question how these women acquired political information possibly relevant to that decision.

Since our primary sources are rather limited, even non-existent as regards daily interaction, for a plausible answer to this question we must rely on secondary sources, as well as on theoretical research on social proximity and closeness. Regarding the former, one should bear in mind that, apart from these active members of the labour movement, many others sympathized with the social democrats, read their newspapers, and participated in their

49 Stephen G. Kobourov, “Spring Embedders and Force Directed Graph Drawing Algorithms”, *eprint arXiv:1201.3011*, 2012, available online at <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1201.3011.pdf>; last accessed 20 September 2018.

50 National Archive, Court for crimes against the State (VRO), doc. 141/384.

51 *Ibid.*, doc. 141/610.

gatherings in the People's Halls even though they did not pay the membership fee,⁵² making them “unconnected isolates” in our visualization. According to the sociologist Risto Alapuro, these non-members belonged to the same social networks as the active members of the workers' association, and the mutual meeting places of the networks were usually the local People's Halls.⁵³ Moreover, the historian Kari Teräs, who has studied the commitment of Finnish workers to trade unions, found that people on the inner and outer levels of the union organization were connected to each other in their everyday life and in various collective activities. Thus, the trade unions' sphere of influence was much wider than their membership. Those who participated in the activities organized by the union often shared the same worldview and values of the actual members.⁵⁴ We can presume that these individuals on the fringes of the workers' movement would be aware of any revolutionary plans. Many of them adopted these ideas and supported the Red Guard.

In several cases, membership of a local trade union branch shows that many of the women in this study worked in the same locations. For example, the members of the cotton mill workers union or Pihlava's sawmill union worked in the same premises and met each other daily.⁵⁵ Thus, they probably talked to one another about joining the Guard and encouraged each other to do so. For example, Fanni Sjöman claimed that Fanni Hockzell had persuaded her to join the Guard. They both worked in the cotton mill.⁵⁶ Previous research supports this notion: persuasion, pressure, and inspiration at the workplace were important factors when workers were considering whether to join the Guard. For example, sixty-three per cent of members of the armed female company in Valkeakoski worked at the same paper mill. In Hyvinkää, eighty per cent of those alleged to be Red women had worked together at the same woollen mill and most were union members. Men's union branches, for example carpenters and shoemakers in Helsinki, also formed their own companies. Usually, however, it was the workers' associations that provided local troops.⁵⁷

52 Lintunen, *Punaisten naisten tiet*, pp. 75–77.

53 Alapuro, *Suomen synty paikallisena ilmiönä 1890–1933*, pp. 102ff.

54 Kari Teräs, *Arjessa ja liikkeessä. Verkostonäkökulma modernisoituihin työelämän suhteisiin 1880–1920* (Helsinki, 2001), p. 312. See also Leena Enbom, *Työväentalolle vai seuraahuoneelle? – Työväen vapaa-ajantoiminta, politiikka ja vastarinta 1920- ja 1930-lukujen tehdasyhdyskunnassa* (Helsinki, 2014), p. 94.

55 National Archive, Court for crimes against the State (VRO and VRYO).

56 *Ibid.*, doc. 143/279.

57 Varpu Anttonen, “Valkeakosken naiskaarti Suomen sisällissodassa 1918” (Master's thesis, University of Tampere, 2009), pp. 33, 40; Essi Ylitalo, “‘Innokas punikki’. Hyvinkään punakaartilaisnaiset sisällissodan jälkiselvittelyissä 1918” (Master's thesis, University

All this points to the importance of place and geography. We should keep in mind that in the late 1910s, Finland was a pre-industrial, agricultural society and that most people lived and worked within a small geographical area. This also holds true for the Pori region. Further, several empirical studies have tackled the question of the impact of geography on social networks, resulting in a rather promising theoretical consideration of how geographical proximity supports social closeness and interactions.⁵⁸ For example, in his seminal study on kin and neighbours, Smith raises the role of residential propinquity by concluding that the “family systems may well have been ‘functionally extended’ both in horizontal and vertical directions”.⁵⁹ Smith continues – in accordance with our assumption that political ideas and information were disseminated among close neighbours – that neighbours “who in many cases were more important than kin, played a significant role through the giving of pledging support and aid in agricultural tasks”.⁶⁰

To test whether the idea of “functional extension” through neighbourliness is supported in our case, we enriched our network by adding geographically based connections – i.e. the place of residence information available in our data – to our initial network. We followed a simple procedure: if two women lived in the same location, a geographical connection was deemed to have existed between them.

The geographically extended social network of the Red women is visualized in Figure 4.2, where the geographical links are coloured blue (all other visual effects as in Figure 4.1). Due to the projected one-mode data, the places of residence determine the network representation (blue ties). Especially when Figure 4.2 is compared with Figure 4.1, this helps us to understand how the membership of different organizations actually connected different geographical locations. But also, how the geographical distance (Map 4.2) *disconnected* certain actors from the core network revolving around the centre of Pori. What is evident is that the geographical neighbourliness explains approximately half of the connections between two distinct women. In other words, the social interaction structure established through shared memberships in a workers’ association or a trade union branch was functionally extended though

of Helsinki, 2011), pp. 17–18, 84; Marja-Leena Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty ja kehitys punakaarteiksi 2* (Helsinki, 1985), pp. 68ff, 422.

58 Ling Yin and Shih-Lung Shaw, “Exploring Space–Time Paths in Physical and Social Closeness Spaces: A Space–Time GIS Approach”, *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*, 29:5 (2015), pp. 742–761.

59 R.M. Smith, “Kin and Neighbors in a Thirteenth-Century Suffolk Community”, *Journal of Family History*, 4:3 (1979), pp. 219–256, 247.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 247.

neighbourliness. Theoretically – but based, too, on the empirical facts about the role of the local People’s Halls and shared activities – all the women were able to join a workers’ association or a trade union branch. But they decided not to do so, making the organizational *non*-tie between women in the outer and inner layers just as important as a tie.⁶¹

The geographically expanded social network comprises twenty-two components, or separate sub-networks, that have no shared connections with the other components. If the original network based on associational connections had 124 isolated women, the second network has only eleven non-connected nodes (women). These nodes consist of housewives, maids, or women who were independent craftswomen. A majority of these isolates resided rather far from the industrial centres in the countryside in rural communes or in smaller villages in the Ulvila region.⁶² However, these women constitute only about four percent of our total sample, thus forming a tiny minority. The biggest sub-network – in network terminology, the giant component – can be easily identified in the topmost part of the graph. This giant component consists of 172 women (sixty-four per cent of all the women) and has about 2,500 edges. The dense area in the centre of the giant component connects women who lived in the IV, V, and Toejoki districts of the cities of Pori and Ulvila. These areas are marked in Map 4.2. As Map 4.2 shows, those districts were all within walking distance of one another.

The “functional extension” thesis referred to above seems to apply to our network as well, especially when we focus on the connections between those women who lived in different districts but were members of the same organizations. The workers’ association and trade union branch networks were rather small, but, as previous research has evidenced, smaller networks tend to produce a higher level of emotional closeness typical of families or/and kin relations.⁶³ In our case, the organizational connections among the geographical districts were fewer than those within the districts, resulting in what Ronald S. Burt defines as “a network of strongly interconnected elements [...] in which people can broker connections between otherwise disconnected segments”,⁶⁴ thus creating competitive advantage with respect to information access for

61 Morrissey, “Archives of Connection”, p. 72.

62 National Archive, Court for crimes against the State (VRO and VRYO).

63 Sam G.B. Roberts and Robin I.M. Dunbar, “Communication in Social Networks: Effects of Kinship, Network Size, and Emotional Closeness”, *Personal Relationships*, 18 (2011), pp. 439–452.

64 Ronald S. Burt, “Structural Holes versus Network Closure as Social Capital”, in Nan Lin, Karen S. Cook, and Ronald S. Burt (eds), *Social Capital: Theory and Research* (Berlin, 2001), pp. 31–56.

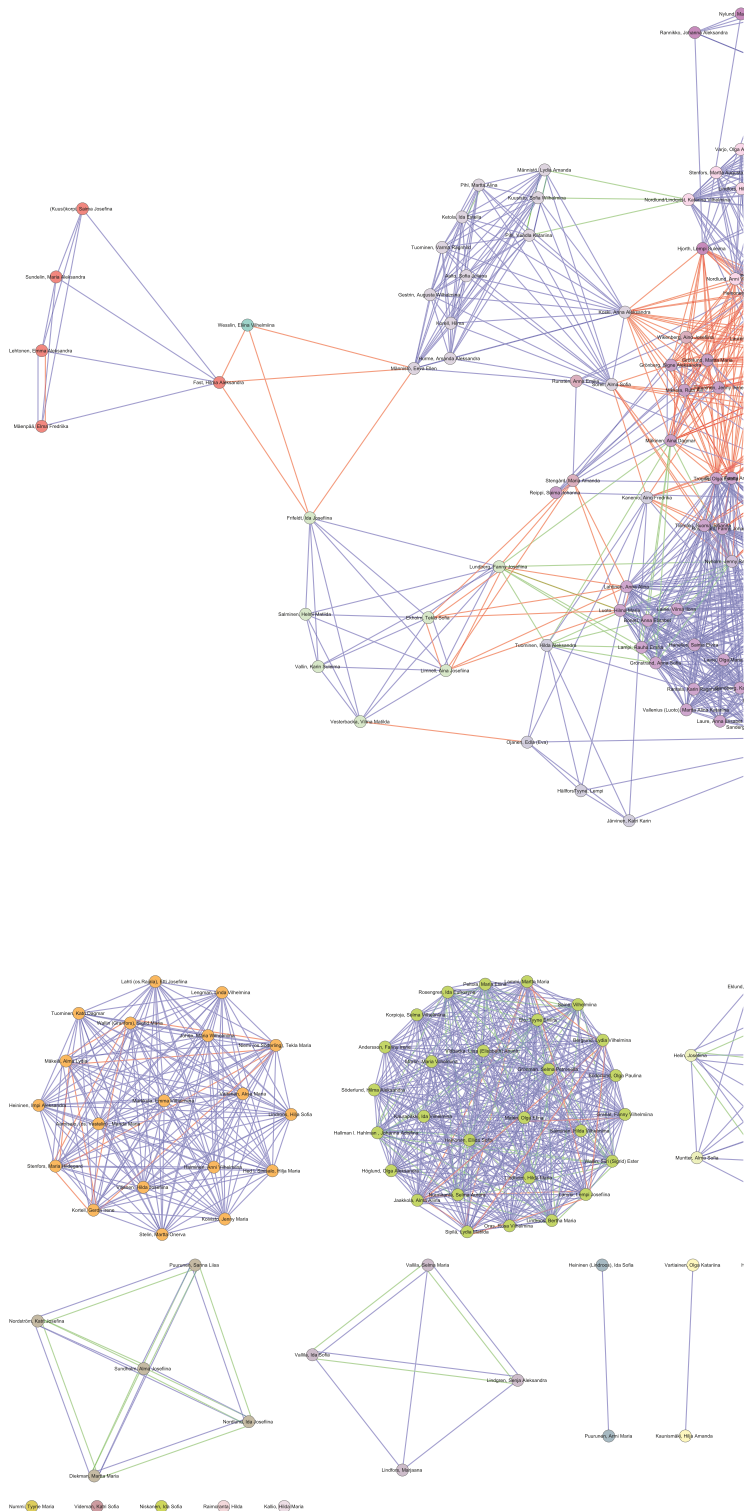
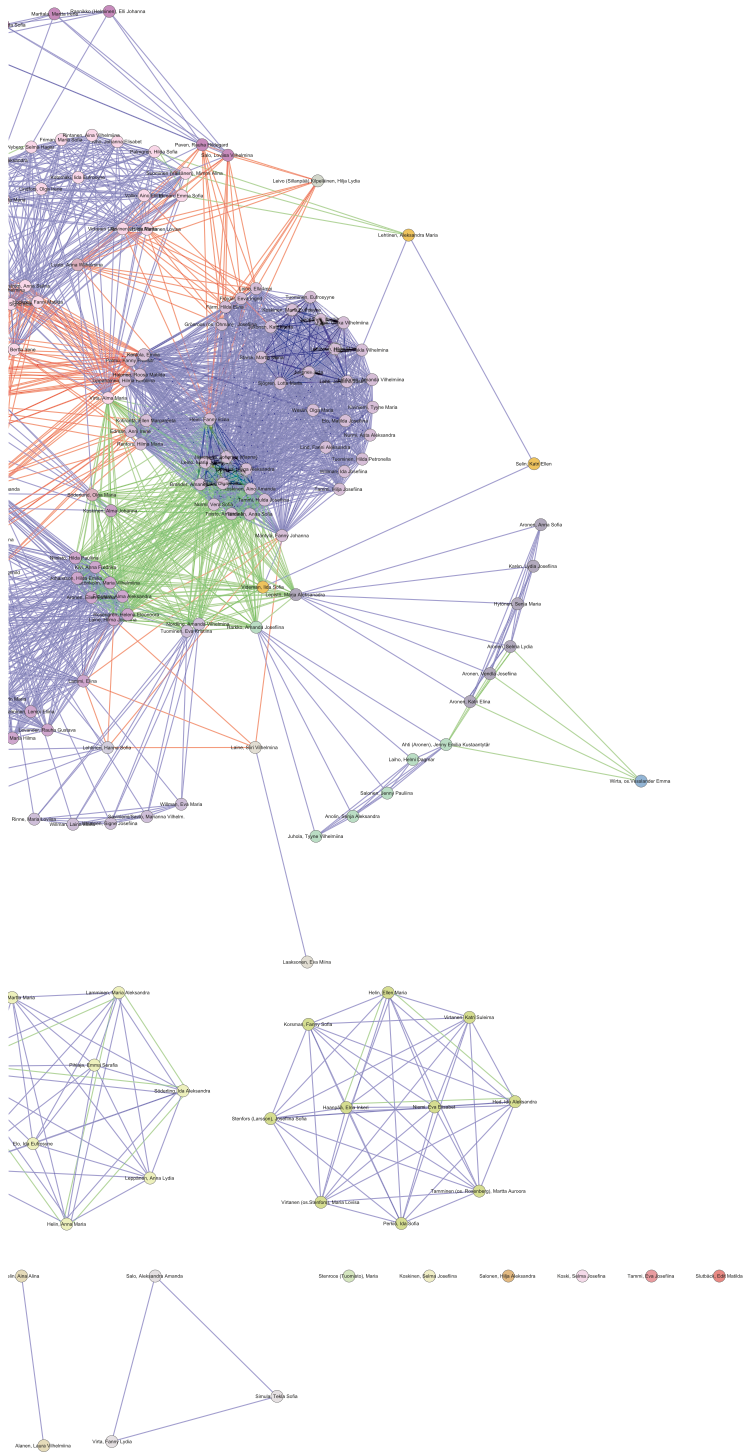


FIGURE 4.2 The complete network of Red women in the region of Pori in western Finland

FOR FULL-COLOR VERSION, SEE [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1017/S0020859019000336](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859019000336)



those women having organizational connections to women in other districts.⁶⁵ This is exactly what we observe when focusing on the role of membership of an organization: these women could transfer valuable information; they could also gatekeep it from one group to another. At the same time, however, they were dependent on their neighbours within their district, because their success in reaching non-members in a certain district depended heavily on the neighbourhood's ability to act as a "functional extension" for political communication. This also helps explain why not all women living in geographically close districts joined a workers' association or trade union branch: in a situation where the neighbourhood truly acted as a functional extension for the organizations, there was no need to join an organization in order to maintain ideological closeness.⁶⁶

The following case illuminates our argument. During the Civil War, Aino Helin, an eighteen-year-old girl, was talking on the street with two of her friends from the same village when a man from the Guard struck up a conversation with them. He asked if they would be willing to join the Guard's First Aid. Aino was a member of a social democratic youth organization and immediately felt enthusiastic. The other girls wanted to follow as well. They hoped to join the Guard together and work together, as friends. It felt like an adventure and the three girls did not need to think long, Aino Helin later explained in an interview.⁶⁷

7 Kinship

There is a special form of social connection relevant for our case as well: kinship. Although a vast majority of historical network studies deal with social relations among families, clans, or other forms of kin relations,⁶⁸ the kin itself has been studied as an end in itself: "Charting 'who lived with whom' became the answer to the question of how people related to each other in the past", resulting in a rather scarce number of empirical studies on kinship and

65 *Ibid.*

66 See also Roberts and Dunbar, "Communication in Social Networks", p. 440.

67 Interview with Aino Helin, *Uusi Aika*, 27 May 1978.

68 See, for example, Barry Wellman and Charles Wetherell, "Social Network Analysis of Historical Communities: Some Questions from the Present for the Past", *The History of the Family*, 1:1 (1996), pp. 97–121; Charles Wetherell, "Historical Social Network Analysis", *International Review of Social History*, 43:S6 (1998), pp. 125–144.

social relations.⁶⁹ Generally speaking, kinship relations enjoy a special status in social network analysis since they seem to be less prone to decay,⁷⁰ foster emotional closeness,⁷¹ and are important for maintaining identity.⁷² Also in our data, kin relations seem to be important: of our total of 267 women, fifty were related to one another. In most cases the degree of relationship was close; there were mothers and daughters, sisters and in-laws. It was the rule rather than the exception that the men of these families also participated in the Red Guard, whether as a husband, a father, a brother, or a son. The families often shared the same ideological worldview and even encouraged one another to join. For example, seventeen-year-old Ida Perkiö said her brother had advised her to join the Guard. Anna Kivi explained that her own husband, who worked for the Guard, had asked her to join since they did not have children and she was not employed.⁷³

We selected the Aronen family (Figure 4.3) for a closer analysis since they played an exceptionally remarkable role in the district. Six women from this single family were prosecuted. They were suspected of treason not only due to their own actions but also due to the important positions of the men in the family. For example, Nestori Aronen, Anna Aronen's son and the husband of Selma Aronen, was the right hand of the Red's chief procurator and worked in the headquarters of the Red administration. But these women were not simple bystanders. For example, Selma had been a key figure in the pre-war labour movement. She was the chairwoman of the women's section of the local workers' association and thus had influence and access to information.⁷⁴ Anna, in turn, lived in a house that also served as the headquarters first of the workers' association and later of the local Red Guard. She was able to acquire information and pass that on to her acquaintances.⁷⁵

All the husbands of these women were members of the Red Guard. The Aronen brothers were leaders of the local Guard, and after the war the entire family were branded as rebels and charged with treason. None of the six women had joined the Red Guard, but they had supported it. They were accused

69 Hilde Bras and Theo van Tilburg, "Kinship and Social Networks: A Regional Analysis of Sibling Relations in Twentieth-Century Netherlands", *Journal of Family History*, 32:3 (2007), pp. 296–322, 297, 300.

70 Ronald S. Burt, "Decay Functions", *Social Networks*, 22 (2000), pp. 1–28.

71 Roberts and Dunbar, "Communication in Social Networks", p. 446.

72 Ralph Piddington, "The Kinship Network among French Canadians", *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 6 (1965), pp. 145–165.

73 National Archive, Court for crimes against the State (VRO), doc. 141/73 and 47/120.

74 National Archive, Court for crimes against the State (VRYO), doc. 20898.

75 *Ibid.*, doc. 20897.



FIGURE 4.3 The Aronen family. A photograph of the Aronen family, taken in 1917. The women in our research are indicated as follows: 1. Anna, the matriarch (69); 2. Jenny, daughter (33); 3. Selma, daughter-in-law (39); 4. Vendla Josefina, daughter-in-law (36); 5. Ellen, daughter-in-law (23); 6. Katri, daughter-in-law (21). Juha Kuoppasalmi, *Nestori Aronen – tunteita ja taisteluuta* (Helsinki, 2018), p. 36. USED BY PERMISSION. PHOTOGRAPH EDITED BY TIINA LINTUNEN

of agitating for rebellion and of hiding guns and stolen property. Only the two youngest women, Katri and Ellen, were acquitted on all charges. The other four were sentenced to penal servitude, though they were all released within a year in general amnesties.

Figure 4.4 focuses on the social network of the Aronen family by dimming all nodes and edges other than those around its members, thus highlighting the central position of the Aronen clan in our network. The Aronen family are visualized in red, the members of their ego networks are marked in blue, and their neighbours are visualized in cyan. In total this “Aronen network” was at most only two steps removed from 143 (54 per cent) of the 267 women in our sample and covered – as the visualization evidences – the core geographical area located in the central districts of Pori (see also Map 4.2).

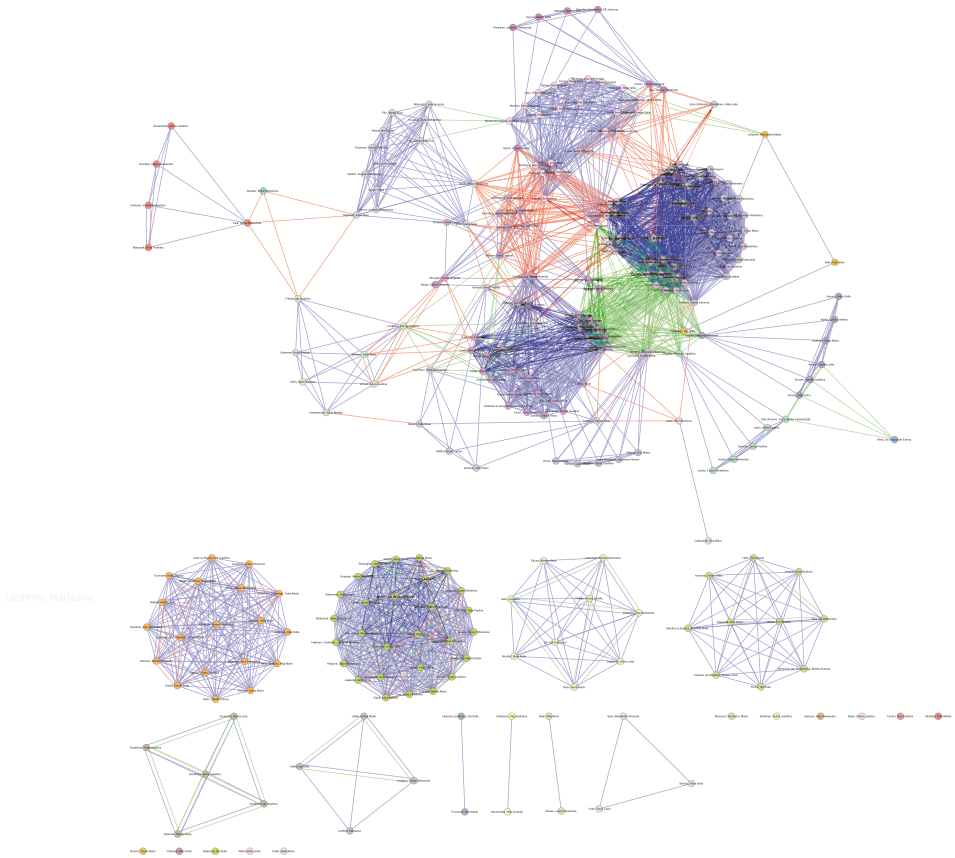


FIGURE 4.4 The social connectivity of the members of the Aronen family
 FOR FULL-COLOR VERSION, SEE [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1017/S0020859019000336](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859019000336)

The central position of the members of the Aronen family is supported also by network measures. We use the *closeness centrality* measure to analyse a woman’s structural position in the network. Closeness centrality measures the mean distance from a node to other nodes in the network, thus providing information on how easily a node can reach other nodes in the network, or, in other words, how close a node is to all other nodes in the network.⁷⁶ Normally, closeness centrality is standardized on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates an isolated node and 1 a

76 Scott, *Social Network Analysis*, pp. 84ff. See also Ulrik Brandes, Sven Kosub, and Bobo Nick, “Was messen Zentralitätsindizes?“, in Marina Hennig and Christian Stegbauer (eds), *Die Integration von Theorie und Methode in der Netzwerkforschung* (Wiesbaden, 2012), pp. 33–52.

node having a direct connection to all other nodes in the network. By definition, nodes with a higher closeness centrality might have better access to information at other nodes or more direct influence on other nodes.

Closeness centrality measures of the six members of the Aronen family support their central position in the network of the Red women. Ellen Aronen, whose ego network covers Pori's central districts with forty-six connections, has a closeness centrality of 0.340, the highest in the family. Jenny, Selma, Vendla, and Katri Aronen each have a closeness centrality of 0.215, followed by Anna Aronen with 0.212. An interesting observation is that all women with the highest closeness centrality measures (from 0.355 to 0.343) are Ellen Aronen's ego connections. Hence, Ellen Aronen not only had better access to information and more direct influence on other women, she could also mobilize women in her direct neighbourhood in order to gain even more influence.

As these results evidence, the Aronen family were able to reach practically all the members of the most central network in the Pori region. This confirms a central insight from network analysis, which is that most networks tend to have certain key individuals – in our case the Aronen family – with multiple connections.⁷⁷ At the same time, the Aronen network confirms the importance of weak links: the kinship network of the Aronen family was rather small, but it had access to a huge network of associates, enabling the Aronens to reach women in most central associations and districts.

As can be seen, these women were politically active and had wide connections through the labour movement. This was important since their husbands were in leading positions and had knowledge of the revolution's progress. Thus, these women could pass on information through their networks to other women in the district. Kinship with the Aronens proved to be a dangerous connection after the war, as was highlighted in the court statements. For instance, Anna was described as a mother “who has raised sons who have stirred up the whole world ‘to rebellion’”.⁷⁸ In Jenny's papers it was claimed that “she is one of the socialist villains of Aronen”.⁷⁹ The entire family were labelled Red rebels. This was common after the Finnish Civil War; the acts of one family member could define the reputation of the entire family in the eyes of society. In addition, membership of a trade union or socialist association was considered an aggravating factor after the war since the Social Democratic Party

77 Morrissey, “Archives of Connection”, p. 77.

78 National Archive, Court for crimes against the State (VRYO), doc. 20897.

79 *Ibid.*, doc. 7019.

was regarded as a scapegoat for the rebellion. Thus, the Aronen women had both their political background and their kinship with revolutionary leaders on their crime sheet.

The experiences of 1918 also united these women more strongly. Both Anna and Jenny lost their husbands in the aftermath of the war. The men died in POW camps. Jenny moved back home to live with her mother. Selma, Vendla, and Katri also needed support since their husbands were given long sentences and were not released until the 1920s. They all had young children; Vendla gave birth to a baby in the autumn of 1918.⁸⁰ In a crisis like this, support networks were of the utmost importance. The support of people with similar ideas was crucial since White society was hostile and distrustful of the Reds. Evidence of this negative attitude can be found, for example, in a letter that two schoolmistresses and the mistress of a wealthy house sent to the authorities concerning Selma Aronen:

She has always been the first one to sing and rage behind the red cloth and has agitated others to strikes and riots. She has raised her children to be snoopers both in school and in the village. [...] From many years' experience we know that Selma Aronen's secret and public actions are very dangerous to society.⁸¹

The women of the Aronen family continued to have political influence even after the Civil War. And this happened rather soon. Despite the sentences, the social democrats were again the largest party in parliament in 1919. Many of the reforms they had demanded in 1917 were legislated after the war. Thus, the Civil War ended in a compromise. It is quite unique for the losers of a war to be able to gain their demands so soon afterwards.⁸² At the beginning of the 1920s, the labour movement split into social democrats and communists. Three women from the Aronen family formed a new communist association for women in the Pori region and became members of the board. They later became local communist leaders. All the younger women in the family later became communists; only Anna remained a social democrat.⁸³

80 Parish Archives of Pori and Ulvila; Juha Kuoppasalmi, *Nestori Aronen – tunteita ja taistelu-ita* (Helsinki: self-published, 2018), p. 93.

81 National Archive, Court for crimes against the State (VRYO), doc. 20898.

82 Pertti Haapala, "Yhteiskunnallinen kompromissi", in Haapala and Hoppu, *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen*, pp. 395–404, 404.

83 Lintunen, *Punaisten naisten tiet*, p. 205.

8 Discussion

This chapter had two main objectives. First, we wanted to empirically study Red women's social relations at different levels. Second, we wanted to test how historical network analysis could be applied as a tool for distant reading in order to quantify and model social networks.

Our analysis shows that the Red women came as closely tied groups from certain quarters of the town. Furthermore, membership of workers' associations and the local trade union branches united women from different neighbourhoods. The trade union memberships prove that the women worked in the same workplaces. They were thus able to meet daily and also to discuss the revolution together and ponder whether to join the Guard or not. Put in more theoretical terms, daily encounters with politically like-minded sisters strengthened emotional closeness, which broadened the connections of these women and provided both information and support, helping them to survive after the war. Our results support the hypothesis that there was a strong social basis for Red activity. Socialist activity in the spring of 1918 in Finland was not only an outcome of ideological manipulation.

Our results support the assumption that membership of a trade union branch or workers' association was an important factor in support for the Red Guard. Previous studies have evidenced this phenomenon with regard to men. Our study indicates a similar tendency among women. There were thus strong similarities between the two genders with regard to the impact of organizational membership.

The application of network analysis helped us to improve our understanding of the social cohesion among these Red women, and of how organizational membership strengthened the geographical connectedness between different districts. Our analysis showed that the most active people lived in different districts and were connected by membership. At the same time, this network analysis helps us to understand why not all women needed to be members of labour organizations in order to gain access to political information.

The network structure underlines the importance of geographical closeness. Since the most active women lived in various districts, they acted as mediators and gatekeepers between the organizations and non-members in their own districts. Another interesting finding is that network components correlate with geographical distance to Pori city centre. Those districts further than walking distance from Pori city centre form isolated localities in our network structure. A closer look at the giant component in our network structure

reveals that this component brings together women living close together in Pori's city centre.

Our findings also provide support for the relevance of geographical closeness as a factor intensifying social interaction patterns. Although we cannot document how the women included in our material really interacted, or how intense connections between them were, the idea of emotional closeness fostered by geographical and social closeness gains support from the findings of previous studies on kinship and elite networks.

The use of HNA has yielded many interesting and valuable insights into the social structure of Red women in the Pori region on the eve of the Civil War, but the real analytical power lies in combining the quantitative analysis with a qualitative interpretation. On the one hand, the network analysis helped us to identify important women in the network. On the other, through qualitative analysis we were able to reconstruct the historical context and thus explain why these individuals were so important in our networks.

In his critical article on historical network research published in 1998, Charles Wetherell listed three main reasons for the slow adoption by historians of quantitative, computational methods: a lack of familiarity with the conceptual orientation, the fact that the number of quantitatively oriented historians is so few, and the formidable requirements in relation to data in a discipline "plagued with an incomplete historical record and imperfect understandings of past social relations".⁸⁴ This is also partly connected with the so-called cultural turn and microhistorical turn, both of which have diminished the role of quantitatively oriented research. This is alarming, since "the present status of digital history studies shows that the history project benefits from applying digital humanities tools to the study, obtaining new answers to old questions without denying the benefits of digital archives and methods".⁸⁵ Our chapter combines the microhistorical approach with strong computational orientation. Since the method is rather independent of the amount of data used in the analysis, it can help researchers to cope with very much larger datasets

84 Wetherell, "Historical Social Network Analysis", p. 125. A similar assessment can be found, for example, in Raymond L. Garthoff, "Foreign Intelligence and the Historiography of the Cold War", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 6:2 (2004), pp. 21–56, Claire Lemerrier, *Formal Network Methods in History: Why and How?*, available at <http://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00521527/fr>; last accessed 4 March 2019, and Christian Rollinger *et al.*, "Editors' Introduction", *Journal of Historical Network Research*, 1 (2017), pp. i–vii.

85 Qing Wang, "Distribution Features and Intellectual Structures of Digital Humanities: A Bibliometric Analysis", *Journal of Documentation*, 74:1 (2017), p. 238.

containing information on social interaction, thus helping us gain new insights into the past.

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The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and Its Consequences for the Ikarus Bus Factory

Technology, Workforce and Power Relations

Zsombor Bódy

In scholarly work dealing with the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, emphasis with regard to factories has been placed largely on the political activities and influence of the workers' councils, which were revolutionary in spirit.¹ Attention has also been paid to the suppression and disbanding of these councils after the defeat of the uprising. This is understandable, since for a short time the workers' councils did indeed represent a threat or challenge to the Kádár regime, which was trying to consolidate its hold on power after having been installed by the Soviet troops.

As Hannah Arendt has observed, in the case of the Hungarian revolution – which in her view was the only real workers' revolution in the twentieth century – it is worthwhile to make a distinction between the workers' councils and the other councils, which were hastily formed and had political goals. “At any event, the Revolutionary and the Workers' Councils, though they emerged together, are better kept apart, because the former were primarily the answer to political tyranny, whereas the latter in the case of the Hungarian revolution were the reaction against trade unions that did not represent the workers but the party's control over them”.² However, the emphasis in later scholarship was on the political and armed clashes. Accordingly, questions about the conditions in the factories at the outbreak of the revolution and the state of the factories themselves were relegated to the background; as was

1 István Kemény and Bill Lomax, *Magyar munkástanácsok 1956-ban (Dokumentumok)* [Hungarian Workers' Councils in 1956 (Documents)] (Paris: Magyar Füzetek, 1986); Imre Varjasi, *Az 1956-os munkástanácsok tevékenysége és dokumentumai Hajdú-Bihar megyében* [The Works and Documents of the 1956 Workers' Councils in Hajdú-Bihar County] (Hajdúböszörmény: Fábíán, 2008); József Géczai and Éva Szrenka, *8 napért 8 év. A munkástanácsok 1956-ban és ami utána jött ...* [Eight Years for Eight Days. The Workers' Councils in 1956 and what Came in their Wake] (Szeged: Bába, 2012). This research was carried out within the frame of 'MTA – SZTE – ELTE History of Globalisation Research Group'.

2 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of totalitarianism* (Cleveland and New York: World Pub. Co., 1964), 498. Not all of the editions include the chapter on the Hungarian revolution.

the question of the extent to which the revolution and its fall brought about changes in the relationships among the various groups in the inner world of the factories (and if so, then how).³ Nevertheless, the actions and roles of the workers' councils during the revolution were not limited entirely to the national political context. If one considers the events of the revolution that took place at the factory level, then it quickly becomes apparent that – like other dramatic upheavals that stirred the masses – to a significant extent the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 constituted an outburst of tensions that were not tied directly to the spectacular events of national politics at the time, and even less to political ideologies or conscious political stances. These tensions had built up more in everyday life, particularly in the workplace and in relations between workers and plant directors. Thus, to further a more nuanced understanding of the causes and the consequences of the revolution, these tensions should not be analysed exclusively from the perspective of political theory or great power politics, but also from the perspectives of everyday life and the workplace.

The “corrective measures” taken by the Soviets after Stalin’s death in 1953 to reform the Rákosi regime’s dictatorial approach to rule fragmented the regime in Hungary and created factions within the power structure that turned against one another. This was of crucial importance in the path that led to the outbreak of the revolution three years later. Because of these divisions, the regime was unable to deal with the very real social tensions. Thus, the attempt by the Soviets to address the situation – which in their assessment was already on the verge of exploding in 1953 – failed. The approach that relied on the use of force (in this case, violence), which from time to time had gained the upper hand, also failed to stifle people’s calls for change. Instead, the proverbial genie had been let out of the lamp. By October 1956, students in Hungary and the youth movements had become unmanageable by the authorities, because they had been joined by broad strata of the working class. It only took the Soviet troops, who returned to Hungary to quell the revolution on 4 November, about a week to defeat the Hungarian forces. However, for quite some time, the workers’ councils in the factories remained a significant opposition force to the Kádár government, which had arrived in Budapest quite literally on the back of Soviet tanks. The central workers’ councils, which consisted of delegates from the workers’ councils of the individual factories, were forcefully dissolved before Christmas 1956. However, in the

3 For example, Zoltán Ripp, *Forradalom és szabadságharc Magyarországon 1956-ban* [Revolution and Freedom Fight in Hungary 1956] (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2002).

factories, the workers' councils that had been freely chosen during the few days of revolutionary freedom, continued to function, and it took the regime months to subdue them.⁴

Thus, the conduct and activities of workers and labourers in factories were of crucial importance in the unfolding of the revolution and the continued resistance against the Soviet forces, even after the military forces fighting against the Soviets had been defeated. Their decisions and actions, however, were shaped by tensions that had become increasingly palpable in the years before the revolution. These tensions were aggravated by technological circumstances, the prevailing work culture and the expectations of the regime. Historians, however, have only rarely devoted any energy to this subject.

Based on the secondary literature on the earlier and later periods, one would have every reason to assume that the inner world of the factories was rife with conflicts and tensions, both before and after the revolution.⁵ The political upheaval certainly did not leave the power relations between the different groups in the factories unchanged (for example the skilled labourers, the technicians and the factory managers). In the current chapter, I examine the events that took place at, and the shifting relations within, the Ikarus Car Body and Motorized Vehicle Factory (which primarily produced buses) during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. I seek first and foremost to present the medium-term changes in the operations of the factory that came about as a result of the revolution. In order to put these into context, I begin by examining the conditions and internal relations within the enterprise before the outbreak of the revolution, and subsequently the manner in which the factory was run in the period after it. Thus, I do not limit myself narrowly to the relatively short period of the revolution itself and the repressive measures taken in its wake, but instead I examine the shifts that took place at Ikarus in a broader temporal framework (roughly from 1950 to 1960). In order to offer an accurate assessment of the effects of the revolution, I examine the relationships and power

4 A short summary of the history of the revolution can be found in János M. Rainer, "The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Causes, Aims and Course of Events", in *The 1956 Hungarian revolution: Hungarian and Canadian Perspectives*, ed. Christopher Adam, Tibor Egervari, Leslie Laczko and Judy Young (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2010), 12–31.

5 Gyula Belényi, *Az állam szorításában: Az ipari munkásság társadalmi átalakulása Magyarországon, 1945–1965* [In the Grip of the State. The Social Transformation of the Industrial Working Class in Hungary, 1945–1965] (Szeged: Belvedere Meridionale, 2009); István Kemény, *Veliük nevelkedett a gép. Magyar munkások a hetvenes évek elején* [The Machine was Raised with Them. Hungarian Workers at the Beginning of the 1970s] (Budapest: Művelődéskutató Intézet, 1990).

hierarchies between the groups and the individuals who played important roles in the operations of the enterprise in the relevant period. The revolution should accordingly not be understood as a single point that can be detached from the flow of events, but as an intersection of processes that were underway at the time; processes that were given a new direction by the revolution itself, at least in part. What was this new direction, and to what extent did it influence shifts in relations at Ikarus?

In 1956, the Ikarus factory was a plant in operation in Mátyásföld, an area on the outskirts of Budapest. Investments in the first half of the 1950s notwithstanding, the Mátyásföld factory unit continued to function essentially on the same scale as it had done when it was built during the Second World War as the Uhri Brothers' Automobile Bodywork and Motorized Vehicle Factory. When the revolution broke out, the factory was employing approximately 4,000 workers. Plans had already been made for the plant to acquire a form of monopoly as the sole provider of large buses for the entire Eastern Bloc, though this was only actually realized towards the end of the 1960s. The plant, however, was still one of the most important motor vehicle enterprises in Hungary at the time. When the revolution started, the earlier plant management was removed and control shifted to the workers' council and a few directors, who until then had been on the second level of the management. All the signs suggest that the workers' council and the new management were able to work together effectively. Some of them were later affected in one way or another by the reprisals that were taken following the defeat of the revolution, including István Cséfalvay (head of the design division), head engineer Béla Zerkovitz (the son of operetta and pop music composer Béla Zerkovitz, who was well known in Hungary) and Emil Hant (the chief accountant).

A monograph written at what could be called the height of the Kádár period and describing the history of Ikarus Factory in Hungary, offers the following assessment of their roles:

The fact that, after 4 November,⁶ the [people] mentioned offered assistance to anti-communist measures can be considered political naïveté, lack of experience, and short-sightedness. With these acts, they not only sinned against their own workers, their past, and their earlier friends, they also – locking themselves out of life at the company – rejected the amazing and unbelievable development, development which had risen

6 This was when the soviet invasion of the country began and the Kádár government started to be formed.

almost from nothing, of which they themselves had been the initiators, directors, active participants, and soldiers.⁷

Neither Cséfalvay, Zerkovitz nor Hant remained at Ikarus after the revolution. In 1957, along with many others, they left the company. Hant was arrested and condemned, as was Ignác Balogh, the chairman of the workers' council. Although not explicitly, the monograph suggests that some of the failures in connection with the development of new types of buses were consequences of the revolution.⁸ In other words, the departure of some of the technical staff leaders and skilled employees brought an end to the "amazing and unbelievable development" of the company. According to the monograph, the acts committed by the people in question, and their general conduct during the revolution, were due to their "political naïveté" and "lack of experience", although the consequences were dire, both for them personally and for the company. In total, according to the monograph, 26 people – mainly workers – were arrested in the wake of the revolution.

I first offer an overview of the "amazing" development of the company in the period before the revolution, and political experience of the people at the company who ended up taking part in the revolution. In fact, these people were not "lacking" in political experience by any measure, the contention found in the aforementioned monograph notwithstanding. I continue my discussion with an examination of what took place at the Ikarus factory in Mátyásföld (now within district XVI of Budapest) during the revolution, and the way in which repressive measures were implemented in 1957. Lastly, I describe the consequences of the fall of the revolution up to the mid-1960s.

1 Operations at the Ikarus Factory before the Revolution

In order to understand the course of events during the revolution, and their consequences, one needs to know something about the history of the factory in the decade between the end of the Second World War and the outbreak of the revolution. The factory was nationalized in 1947, which was before the wave of nationalization that took place in 1948. The position of managing director changed hands relatively frequently. Béla Zerkovitz, however, was given

7 Károly Jenei and József Szekeres, *Az Ikarus Karosszéria – és Járműgyár története 1895–1980* [The History of the Ikarus Bodywork and Motorized Vehicle Factory, 1895–1980] (Budapest: Ikarus Gyár, 1981), 160–161.

8 *Ibid.*, 173.

the job of chief engineer in the summer of 1947, and remained in this position until the tumultuous days of October 1956. István Cséfalvay had been given the position of head of the design division at the beginning of the war. Thus, these two Ikarus employees were at the plant for a relatively long time. This was important, because in the second half of the 1940s, the factory was at the intersection of various conflicts of interest (the effects of which were still being felt in the 1950s), and new internal tensions were added to these clashes.

In 1946, the plant started to become an arena for conflicts of interest between the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party. Both sought to recruit Ikarus workers into their organizations. The Social Democratic Party was far more successful in its efforts, until the two parties were forcefully united. The two “workers’ parties” nevertheless had strikingly different visions for the role of the plant in the economic policies of the country. The Social Democratic Party had planned on procuring the vehicles necessary for mass transportation in Hungary by relying on foreign imports. By contrast, the Communist Party had wanted to produce buses domestically, and had planned to use the Ikarus factory in part to address this need. When the political struggle between the two parties at the national level came to an end and the Communist Party emerged victorious, it prevented the Budapest Capital Transportation Joint Stock Company (the enterprise responsible for transportation in Budapest) from being able to order buses from abroad. In the Ikarus factory, the social-democratic organization was eliminated, and the positions of power within the plant were occupied by communist party activists. However, some people who assumed central positions in the network of the social-democratic organization in the plant before 1948 remained employees of Ikarus. Balogh – who served as chairman of the workers’ council during the revolution – was one of them, as was Béla Grandits, who was the chairman of the *Üzemi Bizottság* (Plant Committee) before the nationalization of Ikarus and who became deputy chairman of the workers’ council in 1956.

After 1948, when foreign imports were banned for political reasons, the actual delivery of buses at the necessary scale in Hungary constituted a challenge that the domestic industry and Ikarus were only able to meet with considerable difficulties, and only at a questionable standard from the perspective of quality. One of the difficulties was the lack of suitable-sized modern engines. This was again a source of conflict between people who supported acquiring the necessary materials abroad and purchasing foreign licenses, and those who preferred the idea of developing and producing the engines in Hungary. The first solution was expensive. The cost of the second solution was also an issue, but equally importantly it would only have been possible after development work had been carried out. It was not easy to say how long this would have

taken, since the process of designing an engine and perfecting it through series of time-consuming tests would itself take a great deal of time.⁹

Ikarus, however, was affected more directly by other design questions concerning bus production, since the company did not manufacture its own engines. As part of their vision for cost-effectiveness, the politicians responsible for decisions concerning economic policy wanted the engines and the chassis for the buses to be made using the same main parts that were used for lorries. The engineers at Ikarus, however, knew that it was not possible to design modern buses that would meet the users' expectations of them (that they should be comfortable, efficient and relatively inexpensive to use and maintain) using lorry chassis. After the Second World War, the production of buses all over the world essentially separated once and for all (in terms of the technology involved) from the production of trucks. Buses with self-supporting bodywork were considered pioneering experiments within the industry. This shift in the industry was in part a consequence of a change to the production of aeroplanes that had taken place during the war, because the self-supporting bus bodywork was based essentially on an adaptation of the construction methods used to make aircraft fuselages. During the war, the Ikarus factory was used for the production of aeroplanes, and the industrial knowhow gained in this process was then applied to the production of buses. Thus, with regard to fundamental technical issues concerning bus production, Zerkovitz and Cséfalvy – the chief engineers – were in constant conflict with the higher authorities that were in charge of the plant.¹⁰

- 9 Béla Zerkovitz, "Újabb irányok az autóbusz építésben [New Directions in the Construction of Buses]", *Magyar Technika: Műszaki és gazdaságtudományi folyóirat* [Hungarian Technic: Journal of Technological and Economic Science] no. 4 (1949): 45–51. Béla Czére and László Prohászka, *Hazai Gépjárműközlekedésünk fejlesztése: A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Közlekedéstudományi Főbizottsága és a Közlekedési Minisztérium által 1952. július 11–12-én rendezett első Gépjárműközlekedési Ankét előadásai és hozzászólásai* [The Development of Domestic Motor Vehicle Transportation: Compiled from the material of the presentations and comments of the first Motor Vehicle Transportation Conference, organized on 11–12 July 1952 by the Main Transportation Sciences Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Science and the Ministry of Transportation] (Budapest: Közlekedési Kiadó, 1953).
- 10 With regard to the early years of the Ikarus factory, see Zsombor Bódy, "Egy szocialista járműipari vállalat születése [The Birth of a Socialist Enterprise in the Automobile Industry]", *Korall* 52 (2013): 91–112; Jenei and Szekeres, *Az Ikarus Karosszéria – és Járműgyár*. According to Jenei and Szekeres, there were continuous struggles surrounding "the oppositional elements among the engineering experts", who were nonetheless irreplaceable at the factory. Regrettably, Jenei and Szekeres offer no details concerning the individuals or the struggles in question. Cséfalvy, who had grown up in Czechoslovakia as a member of the Hungarian-speaking minority, had studied at the technical university in Brno. He came to Hungary following the First Vienna Award, a treaty signed following the

The organizations in charge of economic policy insisted that Ikarus should design buses on the basis of the lorry bodywork that was made at the Csepel Automobile Factory. The proposals that were devised by Ikarus, which recommended developing buses with self-supporting bodywork, were rejected. Therefore, the designers at the factory worked on plans for the buses they were expected to provide. Nevertheless, Cséfalvy and Zerkovitz did not give up on the idea of using self-supporting bodywork and they continued to work on designs for these vehicles, while of course continuing to develop designs as requested by the policymakers. Thus, in a way, they resisted the expectations of the higher authorities, by working as employees of the company on an idea that, in their view as engineers, was preferable. However, this was without having any authorization to do so. Finally, in the summer of 1951, the authorities gave permission for plans to construct buses with self-supporting bodywork, though alongside rather than instead of work on ones designed for the Csepel bodywork. For quite some time, the work on these two different types of designs did not actually yield practical, functional models. It was not until 1955, with the production of the Ikarus 55 model, that a self-supporting bus was actually made by the plant, and that could be regarded as a success.

In addition to the conflict concerning matters of technology and engineering (which was also, of course, a conflict of personalities and personal interests), there was also an internal affairs aspect. Zerkovitz had been under continuous observation by the secret police since 1952. They believed he had been making mistakes that impeded completion of the plans issued by the regime and hurt the national economy. They also thought that he had been breaking various resolutions issued by the Council of Ministers. The secret police could not prove that Zerkovitz's "mistakes" were deliberate sabotage, but they suspected it. They also suspected him of hindering the labour competition movement,¹¹ and the switch from hourly wages to piece rates, which was one of the most important tools used by the regime in striving to improve production

partitioning of Czechoslovakia in 1938 (the Award ceded significant territories in southern Czechoslovakia, which were populated largely by Hungarian speakers, to Hungary). In 1945, Cséfalvy became a member of the Hungarian Communist Party, and later joined the Hungarian Workers' Party, so he could not have been characterized as an "oppositional element". Zerkovitz could, however, as he had originally belonged to the Social Democratic Party.

- 11 A strategy used by the regime to motivate workers by placing them in competition with one another and offering rewards to those who outdid their peers. It is also known as the Stakhanovite movement, after Aleksei Grigorievich Stakhanov, a coal miner in the Soviet Union who allegedly produced more than fourteen times his quota in 1935 and who was made the paragon of the overachieving socialist worker.

following the introduction of a command economy. The labour competition movement did not serve simply as a means of providing evidence that workers were indeed labouring enthusiastically to further the construction of the socialist state. It was also intended to improve the pace of work by emphasizing the importance of performance and production.¹² Other sources mention the accusation against Zerkovitz concerning the shift from hourly wages to piece rate, and it seems likely that there was ongoing tension at Ikarus about wages. According to the official monograph of the Kádár era mentioned at the beginning of this essay, for the Ikarus factory, the collective agreement negotiated – or rather, imposed – following nationalization was a tremendous disappointment for the workers. According to the text of the monograph, this was because in their negotiations with the “capitalists”, the trade unions had managed to reach an arrangement over wages that the company simply could not afford. The real reason, however, lay in the conflict and struggle between the two so-called workers’ parties. The members of the factory committee (a body brought into being by law in 1945 with the task of exercising oversight over companies in labour affairs), most of whom were Social Democrats, continuously raised the workers’ wages in order to ensure that the Hungarian Communist Party organization at the plant would not be able to undermine them and drum up support for their own party by making demands for better pay.¹³ At Christmas time in 1951, around 100 workers were arrested after a riot, which broke out because of the timing of wage payments.¹⁴ The assessments of the factory that were carried out at the time by the higher authorities overseeing economic policy also noted tensions concerning the form of the wage system and the amounts that were paid.

According to a factory assessment dated 3 October 1952, only slightly more than half of the manual labourers were employed on a piece rate basis. The rest were paid hourly wages, though the goal was to have as many employees as possible on piece rate, which was supposed to motivate them to work more efficiently. The assessment noted several other problems, including the management of materials and the storage of tools. The most important problem,

12 Miklós Haraszti, *Darabbér: Egy munkás a munkásállamban* [Piece Rate: A Worker in the Workers’ State] (Budapest: TEKA Könyvk., n.d.).

13 Bódy, “Egy szocialista járműipari vállalat”.

14 Jenei and Szekeres, *Az Ikarus Karosszéria – és Járműgyár*, 126. The proceedings lasted for years, with the various party organizations at different levels making decisions, and the appeals submitted by those effected in the case of party members who had taken part in the uprising. Budapest Főváros Levéltára, XXXV 157 a 3. A Budapesti MDP Pártbizottság üléseinek iratai.

however, was that only half of the manufacturing work (or during the most productive periods only two-thirds) carried out was in accordance with an appropriate operations plan.¹⁵ According to a domestic affairs report on Zerkovitz's performance at the time, he would allow the work (being carried out in order to reach the goals set by the authorities) to fall behind during normal working hours. In this way, he would then need the employees to work overtime, for which they were naturally paid more, thus incurring additional costs for the factory and the state.¹⁶ It is quite possible that Zerkovitz used this strategy to alleviate tensions at the factory concerning wages, which also at least in part explains why, during the revolution, he was one of the factory leaders who were able to remain in their position. Indeed, he even gained some room for manoeuvre. As someone who had the trust of the workers, he was able to push through personnel changes at the plant's head of department level during the revolution.¹⁷

A source that was produced after 1956 sheds light from a distinctive perspective on the earlier problems with production in the factory. In 1958, the regular annual factory assessment again noted serious failings at Ikarus, for which the management was blamed. Chief engineer Antal Hirmann, who was Zerkovitz's successor, wrote a long report dated 31 December 1958 in which he offered an explanation in a very personal tone. According to Hirmann's report, the "counterrevolutionary events of 1956 had a decisive effect on life at the factory. Precisely for this reason, I must touch on operations at the factory before 1956". Hirmann, who had worked at the factory before 1956, did not dispute the contentions that were made in the annual assessment. He merely felt that these observations could only be understood properly if seen in their historical context. That is, with some grasp of operations at the factory before 1956 and

15 Hungarian National Archives box XXIX F 187 – r 178. Ikarus Bodywork and Motorized Vehicle Factory. The reports drawn up after factory assessments in previous years (which are also held in this box in the archive) clearly reveal that the factory was continuously struggling with major losses. After nationalization, it was given a large injection of capital in order to settle debts from the previous period and to address the lack of floating capital, but capital remained a problem and every year new subsidies were given, even though the volume of production grew quickly. In financial terms, the plant was not viable.

16 Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security 3.19. v-141867. The investigation dossier on Dr Emil Hant and Associates.

17 According to the report submitted by resident "Rezső Németh", Zerkovitz often put the managing director of the company in a difficult position when he let employees work overtime in order to complete a task or promised to give workers bonuses for which no money had been set aside by the people in charge of budgeting. Thus, the managing director (whichever one happened to be holding the position at a given time), who was always trying to cut wage costs, always looked bad in the eyes of the workers. *Ibid.*

an understanding of the consequences of the revolution. The most significant problem, according to the assessment, was that buses were being produced without the necessary documents for the plans and the methods involved. There were no technical drawings illustrating the processes for assembling the various parts, nor was there even a proper inventory of the parts that needed to be assembled. These failings led to problems with the quality of the buses that were produced, and significant inconsistencies, meaning that there were undocumented variations in one model of bus. Models that were manufactured and delivered, and were in principle part of the same series, were in fact not identical.

Hirrmann offered an explanation that concerned the circumstances at the factory before 1956. The plant did indeed produce the models in the series, which were manufactured in relatively small numbers, “under the oversight of several of the superb engineers at the plant ... and a relatively large number (considering the number of vehicles manufactured) of first-class skilled workers” without the technical documentation that would have been necessary for standardized production. According to Hirrmann, they simply did not have the capacity to produce the technical drawings that would have been necessary as a form of detailed documentation, since they would have had to produce the corresponding technical drawings and descriptions for several different smaller series (50 per cent of which were made for military purposes). Hirrmann insisted that the management had indeed sought to enforce discipline, compelling employees to adhere strictly to the expectations placed on them, but “this ambition was also defeated by the opposition with which it was met in the workshop”. In other words, when it came to the production of buses, the plant relied to a large extent on the experience and knowledge of its engineers, and first and foremost its skilled labourers, who performed the tasks they were assigned without precise documentation. The production of the motor vehicles, or more precisely, the assembly of principal parts that were produced elsewhere, and the manufacture of the bodywork (the only part of the vehicles that Ikarus actually manufactured) rested on an industrial work culture in which the bodywork mechanics were the key figures. At the plant, they were referred to as “emperors of sheet metal”, able to produce any type of bodywork panel with a small amount of mechanized labour.¹⁸ Clearly, they were people

18 Pál Michelberger makes mention of the “emperors of sheet metal”. Michelberger started working at Ikarus after 1956, and he later became one of the directors of the so-called Public Roads Motorized Vehicle Development Programme. As part of this programme, at Ikarus – where changes had been made to attain the highest possible production numbers – high-performance pressing machines were developed and

who did not consider the technical documentation, which specified precise standards, terribly important. As Hirmann remarked in his report,

the workers consider the documentation completely unnecessary, and only after considerable re-educational work has been done will they be persuaded to consider this question important to them, since at the moment they see only the unpleasant side . . . This leads to particularly challenging problems in the case of a few of the old trained labourers who really can work.¹⁹

The production capacity and work culture at Ikarus were consequences of the economic circumstances during the war. The employees who were part of this culture had worked at the plant either during the war (for instance Cséfalvay, whose knowledge of engineering was highly valued by his successors)²⁰ or immediately after it.

2 The Revolutionary Events and Their Aftermath

For the most part, work at the factory came to a halt in the immediate wake of the events of 23 October 1956. In response to the news concerning the political upheavals, many employees did not go to their workplace. On 28 October, a workers' council was formed at the Ikarus factory, in which the managing director and other members of the factory leadership took part. Originally, this was on the initiative of the ruling party itself, as was the case at other factories. The regime hoped that the factory workers' councils would serve as buttresses against armed insurrections. Ultimately, things went very differently, since the factory workers' councils across the country ended up supporting the demands of the revolution. These demands included holding people who had taken part

produced. See Pál Michelberger, "Előszó [Preface]", in *Földön – vízen – levegőben. Uhri testvérek története 1941–1942* [On the Ground – In the Water – In the Air. The Story of Uhri Brothers, 1941–1942], ed. Finta László (Budapest: Finta László, n.d.). Michelberger later became the dean of the Faculty of Transportation Engineering at the Budapest University of Technology, and subsequently rector of the university. See the collection of interviews with him, Zsuzsa Szentgyörgyi, *Mérnök – tudós – iskolateremtő. Michelberger Pál és kora* [Engineer – Scholar – School Creator. Pál Michelberger and his Era] (Budapest: Typotex, 2008).

19 Hirmann's report. Hungarian National Archives, XXIX F 187 – r 178.

20 See Michelberger's assessment, Michelberger, "Előszó".

in the earlier regime responsible, arranging elections and, first and foremost, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary.²¹

According to Balogh's later confession to the investigators, the first workers' council at the Ikarus plant had not been elected. It had instead been appointed, because on that particular day (28 October) there had been very few workers in the factory. Balogh had been entrusted essentially with the position of chairman by members of the company management. We do not know why someone who had been employed as a mechanic at the Ikarus factory was considered suitable for this role. Two days later, when there were more workers at the plant, they demanded that the members of the council should introduce themselves at an assembly, and when some of the names were announced, the workers expressed their disapproval with vehement jeers. A new workers' council was chosen the same day.²² The managing director and people in his close circle were not elected, but Balogh remained as chairman. On 11 November (after the launch of the Soviet counteroffensive), another workers' council was elected, and again Balogh remained the chairman. The council had 53 members. Indeed, the organizational culture of the party seems to have had an influence on the workers, because they also elected 29 alternate members.²³ This relatively large body elected an 11-member presidium, which from the last days of October onwards (when the person who had previously held the position of managing director stopped going to the factory), dealt with the affairs of the company. According to data later compiled by the political police, skilled labourers formed the vast majority of the 83-member council. There were very few so-called "déclassé elements" among them. In the usage of the Hungarian regime in the 1950s, this term referred to former army officers and members of the middle classes who had lost their former positions and had

21 A collection of memoirs and interviews with the one-time leaders of the workers' council, "Szuronyok hegyén nem lehet dolgozni". Válogatás, "1956-os munkástanács-vezetők visszaemlékezéseiből [One Cannot Work at the Tip of a Bayonet'. Selections from the Memoirs of the 1956 Workers' Council Leaders] (Budapest: Századvég K., 1993), 148–167. See in particular the interview with Sándor Rác, chairman of the Workers' Council of Greater Budapest, 148–167.

22 Similar processes took place at other enterprises. Workers' councils were created from above at first, and the leaders of the enterprise also served on them. A few days later, a new workers' council would be elected, on which the representatives of the plant management did not serve. Attila Szakolczai, "A győri vagongyár munkástanács: Bevezető tanulmány [The Workers' Council of the Győr Railway Coach Factory. Introductory Essay]", in *A győri vagongyár munkástanácsa. Dokumentumok* [The Workers' Council of the Győr Railway Coach Factory], ed. Attila Szakolczai (Győr: Attila Szakolczai, 2007), 9–46.

23 The various bodies of the party were always comprised of members and alternate members.

become workers of some sort, but who were still regarded as potential enemies of the socialist state. Most of the people on the council were from working-class families or families with peasant backgrounds, and as far as their education was concerned, this comprised only the vocational training they had been given after having completed elementary school.²⁴ The chairman, Ignác Balogh, was born in 1925 in Szamosszeg, a small village in eastern Hungary. He was a child of a peasant with just over four hectares of land. In 1944, Balogh had been given a position at the company that would later become Ikarus. In 1948, after the two workers' parties had been united, he had not been admitted into the new Hungarian Workers' Party, which meant he was also dismissed from his position.²⁵ After having worked in various other places, in 1954 he was given a job at Ikarus again. Grandics, who as mentioned earlier served as deputy chairman of the council, was the chairman of the factory committee in the company which later became Ikarus, and he too had been a member of the Social Democratic Party. Like Balogh, he had not been welcomed as a member of the new Hungarian Workers' Party, though oddly enough, he was eventually allowed to join in September 1956 (one month before the outbreak of the revolution), when the decision originally made in 1948 was re-examined and he was rehabilitated.

The workers' council dealt at least in part with the economic affairs of the factory, for instance delivering the buses that had been ordered and finding solutions to enable the factory to pay wages. However, it also dealt with questions that belonged to the pressing topics of national politics at the time, as well as personnel issues within the company. The Ikarus workers' council unquestionably took a clear stance on questions that were unrelated to the factory itself, and it very clearly adopted positions in support of the revolution and in opposition to the Soviet intervention. The workers' council for district XVI, consisting of delegates sent from the factories in the area, was also formed in the Ikarus plant, since it was the largest enterprise in the district. Balogh became the chairman of this council as well, which also enabled him to become a

24 Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security 3.1.9. V-150384/5. Budapest. Summary report of the VI/2. group of the Political Investigative Division of the Police Headquarters on the Workers' Council of the Ikarus Bodywork and Motor Vehicle Factory. 29 September 1959. Even when this report was issued, almost three years after the suppression of the revolution, the political police still felt that the "object remains a fairly infectious area from the perspective of the enemy".

25 The same thing happened to János Vörös, who had served as the secretary of the party organization of the Social Democratic Party at the company, and also to some of his colleagues when the two parties were unified. See Bódy, "Egy szocialista járműipari vállalat" [A Socialist Motorized Vehicle Enterprise].

member of the Greater Budapest Workers' Council. The Ikarus workers' council received leaflets from the Greater Budapest Workers' Council, of which it made copies that were then distributed among workers in the factory. Balogh often took part in sittings of the Greater Budapest Council. He brought leaflets from the council meetings to the factory and read out the resolutions over the public address system.²⁶ The Central Workers' Council emerged as the body that, for a few weeks at least, functioned as a form of parallel power in opposition to the Kádár government, even after the Soviet soldiers had defeated the uprising and put an end to armed resistance. The Ikarus workers' council called for a boycott of the official newspapers of the Kádár regime, and in response to an appeal by the Greater Budapest Workers' Council in December, it actually organized a strike. Initially, it also attempted to hamper any organizational efforts on the part of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party within the company, when it tried to refuse to give the party organization any space in which to operate within the plant. The workers' council drafted, printed and distributed leaflets on 30 October and 13 November. These leaflets expressed the Ikarus factory employees' views and demands, which included the withdrawal of Soviet troops. In the case of the second batch of leaflets, printed after the Soviet attack, the demands also included the reinstatement of the Imre Nagy government, more specifically the last embodiment of this government, comprising a coalition of parties that had been revived.²⁷

However, in addition to the stance adopted by the Ikarus workers' council to general political questions, it is also worth taking into consideration its activities within the factory, since the support of the broader segments of the workers definitely depended in no small part on them. The council had to have this support in order to maintain its presence in the factory from the end of October 1956 until March 1957, especially taking into consideration the fact that the regime forcefully rid itself of the Central Workers' Council on 11 December 1956.

As far as changes within the factory were concerned, the council seems to have been led by a desire to see "justice" done in response to earlier events and processes. As part of this, on 31 October, the presidium of the workers'

26 Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security 3.19. v-141867. The investigation dossier on Dr Emil Hant and Associates.

27 Several parties were formed during the revolution, among them parties that had enjoyed widespread support in the period between 1945 and 1948, when they had formed the governing coalition. During the revolution, Imre Nagy, who was a member of the communist party, accepted a position at the head of a coalition government consisting of delegates of the parties that actually enjoyed the support of the people.

council banned 38 employees from the plant, including the former director. As the list was being compiled, the head of the personnel division was summoned to appear before the council. He had been asked to name people in individual departments who had been stool pigeons. Undoubtedly alarmed by the course of events, the man did name a few people who were then added to the list of those to be banned. Essentially, all the members of the workers' council made suggestions concerning individuals from their spheres of work who should be banned. The council accepted the suggestions, though most of them did not actually know the individuals in question; only the person making the proposal. In an attempt to justify himself, Hant later alleged to the investigators that the people whose names had ended up on the list would have been at risk had they gone to the plant during the revolution, and thus the decision to ban them had actually been in their best interests. Patek simply contended that these "people had been banned from the factory because, as a consequence of their conduct in the earlier period, they had lost the trust of the workers".²⁸ The list was signed by Balogh and his deputy, Béla Grandics, and was displayed on the notice board and the factory gates. According to some of the confessions made after the revolution, the factory guards were given instructions not to let the people on the list into the plant, but whether this actually happened is a question that remained unresolved in the proceedings of the political police. While the list was being compiled, the workers' council had also taken steps to seize the material in the personnel division, a measure that was implemented by council member Patek. Anyone who came to claim his or her professional documents and records was given them. The rest of the material was destroyed in the presence of witnesses. The delivery of personnel records to those concerned or the destruction of this material (which was a type of shared ritual of the revolution) was a symbolic act of the liberation of the individual from control from above and the triumph over fear.

These events, which historians can reconstruct on the basis of confessions later made to the police, show that the workers' council took measures against people who were regarded by its members as "communists". However, this term was not understood as a matter of ideological conviction. During the revolution, they regarded the leaders of the factory who had been appointed by the higher management as "communist" enemies, who had forced measures intended to increase production. This included wanting to transform work practices based on the expertise of the skilled labourers towards production

28 Confession of Alajos Patek, 18 April 1957. Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security 3.19. V-141867. Investigation dossier on Dr Hant Emil and Associates.

technologies that were more standardized and relied much less on individual contributions. The desire of the workers to maintain as much control as they could over the work practices was in harmony with the efforts of the engineers, whose goal was not to increase production from the perspective of quantity, but to produce new models which met high standards of quality. During the revolution, these two groups that shared common interests were able to take active steps and free themselves from the “communist” management. The workers were not enamoured of this management, which sought to maintain control over them and over production that was hardly innovative in terms of the technologies and expertise involved.

The workers were linked by the training they had received as skilled labourers, the similar positions they had held at the company and – at least some of them – by their membership of the Social Democratic Party before it had been essentially dissolved by the Communist Party. Between 1945 and 1948, Zerkovitz had also been a member of the Social Democratic Party, but he had become a member of the Hungarian Workers’ Party immediately upon its founding, without any interruption in his status as a party member. Thus, the people who were active in the factory during the revolution seem for the most part at one time to have been members of the Social Democratic Party, and this clearly constituted a shared experience and common link. Cséfalvay, who had originally been a member of the Hungarian Communist Party, was an exception, having worked in the factory from the beginning of the Second World War. Alajos Patek was the only one of those arrested in the trial against the “counter-revolutionaries” at Ikarus who had never been a member of the Social Democratic Party or any political party. However – in common with the others who had accusations levelled against them – he had worked at the factory since 1940, although in the autumn of 1944 (during the Nazi occupation of Hungary), the Arrow Cross authorities had briefly arrested him because he had hampered the delivery of machines from the factory to Germany, that had been ordered by the Nazi authorities. Thus, during the revolution, the management of the factory ended up in the hands of people who, for the most part, had been working at the plant during the war (Balogh, Grandics, Patek and Cséfalvay) or who had been given positions in the immediate aftermath of it (Zerkovitz), and who at some point had been members of the Social Democratic Party (with the exception of Cséfalvay and Patek).²⁹

29 As Standeisky has observed, in some revolutionary committees, people who had been active in the so-called coalition period immediately after the war also came into the foreground. Éva Standeisky, *Népralom ötvenhatban* [Rule by the People in 1956] (Bratislava and Budapest: Kalligram, 2010), 306.

During January 1957, by which time the Kádár regime has consolidated its hold on power, the Ikarus workers' council clearly refrained from taking any official political stance, although according to the political police, even then the "composition of the WC [Workers' Council] was bad". Again according to the information gathered by the police, in February the council was still trying to dismiss "communists" under the pretext of downsizing.³⁰ On 7 March 1957, sensing that it was being rendered powerless, the council resigned; or to be more precise, the presidium resigned. This did not save the most important leaders of the council or the people in their immediate circle from being arrested; even while a new council was being elected, comprising people acceptable to the regime. On 13 and 14 March, Ignác Balogh, Emil Hant and Erzsébet Alberti were taken into custody, as was Alajos Patek on 1 April. Trials were launched against these four individuals for the "counterrevolutionary" events that had allegedly taken place at Ikarus. However, many other people were interned, including István Balázs, who had served as the commander of the factory guards during the days of the revolution. They were among the 26 people mentioned in the aforementioned monograph who were arrested, but in the course of the repressive measures taken by the regime in the months following the revolution, it was Balogh, Hant, Alberti and Patek who were condemned for "counterrevolutionary" activities at the Ikarus plant.

The investigation relied on interrogations of the detainees and witnesses, material evidence that had been gathered and searches of premises, including the private residences of the accused. The political police considered the confessions made by the accused and the witnesses statements (which were supposedly compared in an effort to ensure their reliability), together with the material evidence (which included leaflets and stencil machines), adequate proof that the accused were indeed guilty of having committed "counterrevolutionary acts".

On 18 October 1957, the court of first instance pronounced its verdict. Balogh was sentenced to three years in prison and a fine of 400 forint, Patek was sentenced to two years in prison and a fine of 600 forint, Hant was sentenced to two years and six months in prison and a fine of 1,000 forint, and Alberti – a typist who had kept the minutes during the sittings of the workers' council and had taken part in the duplication of the leaflets – was sentenced to seven months in prison.³¹ In the case of Balogh, the court recognized as a mitigating

30 Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security 3.1.5. O-11804/1. Reports of the IV division of the II department of the National Police Headquarters from 4 January and 22 February 1957.

31 According to the verdict, Balogh, Patek and Hant were guilty of having taken active part in a movement that sought to topple the people's democratic state system. Patek was also

circumstance that apart from his training as a skilled labourer, he had no education other than elementary school. Further, he had not been a figure who had incited or initiated insurrection, unlike the intellectuals who had led the company during the “counter revolution”. This again raises the question of why Zerkovitz, who was one of these intellectuals, was not among the accused. On 3 March 1958, after appeals had been submitted by the prosecution and the defence, the Supreme Court announced its verdict. Balogh’s sentence was unchanged and Patek’s prison sentence was increased to four years and his fine to 1,000 forint. Hant’s prison sentence was increased to 10 years and all of his property was confiscated. From the perspective of the regime, which was eager to consolidate its hold on power, this made perfect sense. As the court explained in its verdict, it regarded Hant as the leader in spirit of the counterrevolutionary events at Ikarus. Alberti’s sentence was changed to one year in prison, and she was put on probation for three years (she had essentially already spent a year in custody by then).³²

Other people could just have easily been chosen as scapegoats. As became clear on the basis of other confessions, from late October, Zerkovitz did indeed oversee the actual work of the factory, but he also took part in political acts. These included the drafting of leaflets, compiling the list of people who were banned from the plant and organizing the strike. As the chief engineer, Zerkovitz submitted suggestions to the workers’ council concerning the replacement of two division leaders and the head of the personnel division; proposals that the council accepted. Zerkovitz also painted one of the leaflets issued by the central workers’ committee onto a billboard and put it on the notice board.

guilty of aiding and abetting theft (because of the stolen stencil machine), and Hant was guilty of having served as an accessory to theft. Alberti was found guilty of having committed incitement against the people’s democracy (i.e. the letters she had written to her two friends).

- 32 This summary of the events that took place at Ikarus during the revolution is based on the material from the investigation carried out by the political police, and documents from the subsequent trial. In all likelihood, it is not entirely reliable or complete. However, as far as the most important events are concerned, it is probably accurate, at least broadly, even if the confessions do not agree on every point. These differences may simply be due to the natural and inevitable differences in the ways in which people recall the same events, or they may be consequences of attempts on the part of the accused (and in part the witnesses) to defend themselves. It is likely, however, that some of the events or some of the acts committed by various figures did not come to the knowledge of the political police or were deliberately ignored. As noted, the sources offer no explanation for why Zerkovitz was not among the accused, nor do they explain why the authorities showed no interest in Cséfalvay, who had been a member of the Hungarian Communist Party since 1945. We only know that he left Ikarus as a consequence of the revolution.

Zerkovitz, as part of the management of the plant, was present at every sitting of the council. The police officer in charge of the investigation even suggested to his superior that he “try to broaden the case with the inclusion of Zerkovitz”.³³ On 18 April 1957, a “summary report on the case of Béla Zerkovitz” was issued, according to which, “on the basis of the above, in our view, Béla Zerkovitz can be remanded into custody”.³⁴ However, he spent only one day in custody and was then released. Considering that there were suspicions concerning Zerkovitz a good four years before the outbreak of the revolution, it is all the more surprising that no case was brought against him in 1957.³⁵ He was also not among the accused in the trial of those allegedly responsible for “counterrevolutionary” acts at Ikarus, in spite of the fact that several witnesses contended he had taken part in the drafting of both leaflets, had initiated changes in personnel and had been the leader in spirit of the workers’ council. A worker in the factory who went by the code name “Rezső Németh” also contended this. Neither the documents used in the course of the investigation nor later material concerning Zerkovitz held in the historical archives of the Hungarian state security reveal why he was not in the end included among the accused.³⁶ He was compelled to leave Ikarus, but for him, that was the only consequence of the revolution.³⁷

33 Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security 3.19. v-141867. The investigation dossier on Dr. Emil Hant and Associates. A suggestion was made in connection with the “H” report submitted by resident “Rezső Németh” as part of the further additional measures.

34 Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security 3.19. v-141867. The investigation dossier on Dr. Emil Hant and Associates.

35 The earlier material concerning Zerkovitz (reports submitted by agents and expert assessments of the mistakes he allegedly made) were lost during the revolution. When the investigation was launched against him in 1957, the facts that allegedly spoke against him were based on the knowledge of the officials working on his case. Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security 3.19. v-141867. The investigation dossier on Dr. Emil Hant and Associates.

36 There were other individuals against whom accusations could easily have been brought, but who were also left out of the trial. Their cases are as difficult to explain as that of Zerkovitz, if not necessarily as striking. The accusations brought against Hant included the charge that, after the Soviet forces attacked on 4 November, he had hidden a stencil machine with the intention of later using it to duplicate leaflets. No charges were brought, however, against the person who took the machine from an office of the Union of Working Youth during the revolution and hid it, at Hant’s suggestion.

37 In a letter dated 15 April 1957 and addressed to the Minister of Metallurgy and Engineering, the chairman of the executive committee of the Ikarus organization of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, the director of the factory and the chairman of the new workers’ council (which was loyal to the regime) asked that Zerkovitz be removed from Ikarus. They contended that he was unable to perform the organizational tasks of a chief engineer, his technical expertise notwithstanding, and that politically he was a turncoat

3 The Ikarus Factory after the Revolution

During the revolution, engineers with considerable experience and firm views concerning the production of vehicles – such as Cséfalvay and Zerkovitz – were able to play roles and were even able to act independently of the Ikarus former management, which had been appointed by the Ministry of Metallurgy and Engineering. They found partners among the skilled labourers, whose trust they clearly enjoyed.

The defeat of the revolution caused this circle to disperse. Zerkovitz managed somehow to avoid being brought up on charges, but he was not allowed to remain at Ikarus. Cséfalvay was also forced to leave the factory in 1957. Of the people who had served on the workers' council or had played significant roles in its operations, only Grandics remained at Ikarus, though he was demoted from workshop director to a mere worker. Many others outside of this circle left Ikarus (and perhaps the country). Hirmann's abovementioned report offers the following description of the situation. The "number of people working as designers, production engineers, and foremen, which was already low, suffered a serious loss because of the counterrevolution, a loss which I don't need to describe in detail here".³⁸ These changes meant that the very model of production at the factory – which was based on the expertise of skilled labourers with experience in the fundamental work processes of bus manufacture, and which also involved continuous strife over wages and overtime pay – underwent a significant transformation because of the 1956 revolution. As Hirmann laments, with the loss of experienced skilled labourers and the core of specialists, it became impossible to continue production within the framework of the work culture that had existed before the revolution. This resulted both in failures in the planning and testing of new models (as mentioned earlier) and continuous problems with the manufacture of the models that were already in production. Hirmann offered the following description of the relationship between the engineering staff, many of whom were new, and the old skilled labourers: "since they have already seen many solutions, they think, 'what is this young engineer or technician doing explaining things to me, when I was making much better stuff back when he was still a kid'". The undated record books of a later factory assessment,

who, one could easily sense, "would prefer to work in the service of the other system". Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security 3.1.5. O – 16656/15. Dossier on Béla István Zerkovitz.

38 Hirmann's report. Hungarian National Archives, xxix F 187 – r 178.

probably from the late 1950s, noted the lack of competent skilled labourers, and it insisted on the importance of regular production as the primary goal. Production was constantly interrupted and constantly falling behind. As a consequence of this, some of the individual factory units did not have anything to do at times, while at other times, they had to complete a huge amount of work relatively quickly.

Thus, though it unquestionably improved from the perspective of quality, production at Ikarus did not actually show “amazing development” – even before 1956 – since the company suffered continuous financial losses and there were always serious tensions among the employees and management that hindered production. After 1956, with the removal of many of the engineers and skilled labourers who had overseen manufacture, production along the lines of the earlier model was no longer possible at all. The old guard of skilled labourers and technical experts had enjoyed some degree of independence. Some of them, for example Cséfalvai, had belonged to the Hungarian Communist Party. In the wake of the revolution, however, many of them disappeared from the workplace, and others simply had their will broken. These changes gave the new management more power in its dealings with the workers, and also cleared the way for a new generation of engineers. The “two sides” that had earlier stood in opposition to each other at Ikarus – with a little oversimplification, employees who had begun their careers at the company owned by the Uhri brothers during the war, and those who had been made part of the management in the 1950s – disappeared as clearly defined opposing groups. One of the paradoxes of the revolution is that the young engineers brought in to replace people who had been dismissed from their posts at the factory also lost their positions because of the events of the revolution. Most of them had been military engineers involved in a programme designed around 1950 in preparation for the outbreak of the next world war. However, after 1956, preparation for a new world war was no longer an item high on the agenda of the regime, which in Kádár’s quest for consolidation reduced military expenditure in order to fund a rapid rise in living standards. Many of the engineers whose training had focused primarily on military needs became superfluous, or were considered unreliable because of their conduct during the revolution. The Faculty of Military Engineering at the Budapest Technical University was closed. According to Pál Michelberger, who was a central figure among the engineers sent to Ikarus after the revolution (and who later had a very successful career), the bodywork for the busses in the period after the revolution was designed by aeroplane engineers and the mechanical engineering for the vehicles was carried out by people who had been trained as tank engineers. According to Michelberger,

there was a need for a change of approach at Ikarus. Many people had left the country as dissidents. The aforementioned airplane engineers replaced them. ... They brought new constructions and new attitudes. They merged the traditional automobile with the idea of the airplane. One or two good engineering technologists came who solved the technological problems of mass series production. They automated [production]. They had tricks that you would not have been able to use for small production series. It was not for nothing that the 200 series was in production ... for 20 years.³⁹

However, the new management and engineering staff only became able to tackle the complexities of production when, thanks to new investment – first in the paint shop and then in the production of bodywork with the use of large-capacity stamping machines – it managed to introduce a new industrial work culture. This made it possible to produce significantly larger series, in part by relying significantly less on the experience and expertise of skilled workers (though of course new problems emerged). Thus, the events of the revolution made it possible, or even necessary, to introduce change in the production technology at Ikarus. With what amounted essentially to the destruction of the work culture that had previously prevailed, it was simply no longer possible to continue production according to the methods and technologies that had been in use. This, however, belongs to the history of the investment programme of the 1960s, which was founded on a fundamentally technocratic vision.⁴⁰

4 Conclusions

In 1956, a significant number of the employees at the Ikarus factory clearly took positions. These positions touched on the major political questions of the revolution, but they also constituted stances with regard to the representatives of power at the factory itself. The group or network of workers and staff who were moved to act were linked by shared experiences before the nationalization of the plant. The tools with which the regime sought to compel workers to perform more effectively and efficiently set them against the system. They

39 Szentgyörgyi, *Mérnök – tudós – iskolateremtő*, 139.

40 See Zsombor Bódy, “Enthralled by Size. Business History or History of the Technocracy in the Study of a Hungarian Socialist Factory”, *Hungarian Historical Review* 4 (2015): 964–989.

put up lasting resistance to the changes that were implemented from above, and they insisted – at least as far as they were able to – on supervising and maintaining control over the work processes themselves. The engineering staff at the plant who disagreed with the higher bodies of economic policy on technical questions, shared their stance. During the revolution, they were able to take power into their own hands. It took the new factory leadership, which had been appointed by the Kádár government after the suppression of the revolution by the Soviet forces, months to eliminate the workers' council at Ikarus as an alternative centre of power. The series of events also made it necessary, however, for the factory to recruit a new circle of engineers and adopt new production techniques and technologies. These did not rely nearly so heavily on skilled labour, and gave workers far less leeway in the supervision of the production processes. The annual factory reports (and the monograph on the history of the enterprise) note that in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the level of turnover among the workers was very high; in three years, it amounted to 75 per cent of the workforce. This shows that the workers, who enjoyed less control over production practices than had earlier been the case, had a weaker attachment to the factory. In addition, they were less likely to address their concerns within the factory by adopting collective strategies, which given the new level of technological automation, would no longer have been possible. In the search for better prospects, they were more likely simply to look for better job offers.⁴¹ This process was part of the larger effort of the Kádár regime to atomise society itself.⁴²

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- 41 Reports on Ikarus factory, Hungarian National Archives, XXIX F 187 – r 178. doboz Ikarus Karosszéria- és Járműgyár, Jenei – Szekeres, *ibid.* The struggle of workers in Hungarian industry to maintain some control over or say in the supervision of the work process naturally did not come to an end in the 1960s or the 1970s. According to István Kemény, during these two decades, it remained the most important source of conflicts in the workplace. István Kemény, “La chaîne dans une usine hongroise”, *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 24 (1978): 62–77.
- 42 János M. Rainer, “‘A hatvanas évek’ Magyarországon: (politika)történeti közelítések [The ‘1960s’ in Hungary: (political)historical approaches]”, in *A ‘Hatvanas évek’ Magyarországon. Tanulmányok* [The ‘1960s’ in Hungary. Essays], ed. M. J. Rainer (Budapest: 1956-os Intéze, 2004), 11–30.

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The Antinomy of Workers' Control in Socialist Eastern Europe

Adrian Grama

How might the experiences of East European workers between 1945 and 1989 fit into a general history of the left in the twentieth century?¹ Writing in the mid-1990s, the great Italian trade union leader Bruno Trentin offered one possible answer. *La Città del lavoro*, his bitter indictment of the Western European labour movement's failure to respond to the crisis of Fordism, makes the story of state socialism central to understanding the setback of trade unionism after the 1970s.² The book narrates an all too familiar history of defeat: the increased mobility of capital after the termination of Bretton Woods, coupled with the emergence of transnational value chains and the relocation of production away from the core industrialized countries spelled the end of Fordism as a model of growth rooted in a specific "post-war" social order.³ Against this background, according to Trentin, trade unions found themselves confronted with a double challenge. First, in Italy and other West European countries, the sheer range of employment relations expanded to accommodate new forms of less secure, more precarious work contracts. Second, inside factories, management successfully secured control of the production process, reorganizing work teams, pushing for speed-ups and redesigning work schedules.

Less familiar is Trentin's explanation for the historical failure of the labour movement to negotiate a favourable transition out of Fordism.⁴ This failure

1 For comments and criticism, I thank Goran Musić, Ștefan Guga, Andrei State, Pieter Troch, the members of the social anthropology study group at the Graduate School for East and Southeast European Studies in Regensburg/Munich and last but not least the editors of this volume.

2 Bruno Trentin, *La città del lavoro: Sinistra e crisi del fordismo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1997).

3 From a vast body of literature, see Andrew Glyn, *Capitalism Unleashed: Finance, Globalization, and Welfare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 104–129; Jeffrey A. Frieden, *Global Capitalism: Its Fall and Rise in the Twentieth Century* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 363–385; Robert Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence: The Advanced Capitalist Economies from Long Boom to Long Downturn, 1945–2005* (London: Verso, 2006), 145–229.

4 It falls outside the scope of this article to evaluate Trentin's overarching argument about the historical trajectory of the left in the twentieth century. It is worth noting that *La Città del lavoro* is a polemical book, deeply rooted in the Italian debates of the 1970s and Trentin's

was not merely contingent on national contexts and economic sectors, but structural, grounded in the original sin of its early twentieth-century founding fathers, Lenin and Gramsci. Trentin argued that this was because irrespective of their differences, the two shared a fascination for Taylorism and Fordism as the embodiment of science and progress. Their combined legacy, in the East and the West, was an across-the-board acceptance of both Taylorism and Fordism as neutral production technologies that could generate economic growth, when placed under collective property regimes.⁵ Their followers throughout the century – whether communist parties in power in the Soviet Union after 1921 and Eastern Europe after 1947, or socialist parties partaking in the post-war economic boom of Western Europe – carried on from this initial fascination, adapting variants of scientific management and borrowing the toolkit of Fordism to fashion planned and market economies alike. Western European trade unions, according to Trentin, turned their attention away from the factory floor and enthusiastically supported various productivity bargains well into the 1970s, making wages and working time the cornerstone of their struggles. These redistributive strategies left union leaders unprepared to grasp the crisis

own experiences within the Italian (communist) labour movement. A critique of Trentin's book would arguably focus on his narrow conception of Fordism, his sidelining of social-democracy and of the various experiments with the humanization of labour relations during the postwar epoch. Moreover, such a critique would also call for a more encompassing notion of "the left" that can accommodate its manifold traditions.

- 5 Trentin understood Fordism much along the lines sketched by Antonio Gramsci in the early 1920s. From this point of view, Fordism was on the one hand a technology of production defined by the large-scale, vertically integrated industrial plant, standardized production and the assembly line. On the other hand, Fordism was also a technology of mass consumption, to the extent that it pioneered higher wages and directly helped the expansion of nationally-embedded markets for durable goods. For Trentin, however, Fordism also rested on a trade-off between higher wages and higher productivity in which the former were seen as a precondition for the latter. The notion of "workers' control" denoted this precise trade-off – workers' shop-floor solidarity had to be constantly dislodged (or at least fought against) in order for the assembly line to run according to managerial imperatives rather than workers' established work routines and rhythms. See, first, Antonio Gramsci, "Americanism and Fordism", in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. ed. Quinn Hoare and Geoffrey Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 277–318. For Trentin's uses of the concept, see Mimmo Carrieri, "Tra politica e organizzazione del lavoro: Fordismo da regolare, Taylorismo da controllare", in *Bruno Trentin: lavoro, libertà, conoscenza*, ed. Alessio Gramolati and Giovanni Mari (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2010), 95–106. For a partial review of various definitions of Fordism, see Adelheid von Saldern and Rüdiger Hachtmann, "Das fordistische Jahrhundert. Eine Einleitung", *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 2, no. 6, (2009): 174–185. For Fordism as a "regime of accumulation" that cannot explain the dynamics of a centrally planned economy, see Marcel Drach, "Crise du travail et non-lieu du fordisme dans les économies de type soviétique", *Revue d'études comparatives East-Ouest* 14, no. 1 (1983): 105–120.

of Fordism and the ensuing managerial revolution that transformed the dynamics of industrial production.

Moreover, Trentin suggested, voices critical of the acceptance of Taylorism and Fordism on the left were seldom given their due. Therefore, *La Città del lavoro* revisits forgotten figures such as Simone Weil and Georges Friedmann, both of whom allegedly better understood the darker side of celebrating the productive capacity of scientific management. However, Trentin was also critical of his fellow trade unionists in Italy and beyond for having ignored the writings of East European dissidents such as Rudolf Bahro and Miklós Haraszti that could have taught them about the “oppressive character” of such production technologies under state socialism.⁶ Lastly, Trentin's book might be read – as Alain Supiot argues – as a plea to rethink the relationship between citizenship and work; a relationship that ought to entail remaking the factory floor into a terrain of the struggle for rights.⁷ How, then, would such a goal be served by the writings of these East European critics of scientific management? Or to put it differently, how adequate is the representation of state socialism seen through the writings of Bahro and Haraszti? Is Trentin's story of a gradual loss of workers' control over the production process – however contentious for Western Europe after 1945 – valid for Eastern European state socialism?

The current chapter is arranged in four steps. In the first section, I show that the representation of the state socialist production process that one obtains from dissidents such as Haraszti and Bahro does not satisfactorily explain the dynamics of the shop floor in Eastern Europe after 1947. Because workers under state socialism enjoyed a comparatively higher degree of autonomy at the point of production, stories of deskilling tend to distort the facts. Instead, I argue that we need to revisit the importance of skills and turn the spotlight onto the craft masters of the assembly lines. Conceptually, this move involves paying more attention to currently obsolete categories of analysis in global labour history, such as “workers' control”. In the second section, I show how the productivity bargain never really came to define the relationship between management and workers under state socialism. The idea of a productivity bargain was that higher levels of productivity, and implicitly less control over the production process on the part of the workers, would be traded off against higher wages. However, this was difficult to implement under state socialism and in a context in which repressed consumption was the norm of capital accumulation. The third section moves on to a comparative assessment of what I call

6 Bruno Trentin, *La città del lavoro. Sinistra e crisi del fordismo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1997), 35, 117.

7 Alain Supiot, “Introduction”, in *La Cité du travail. Le fordisme et la gauche*, ed. Bruno Trentin (Paris: Fayard, 2012), 28.

the “antinomy of workers’ control” in Eastern Europe. This antinomy refers to the fact that in all socialist countries of the East, reforming wage relations was the exclusive way of dislodging workers’ entrenched control of production. For central planners, workers’ autonomy on the shop floor was conducive to what they called “wage levelling” and “norm over-fulfilment”, accompanied by a supposed loss of motivation and low productivity. For industrial managers, workers’ autonomy was a safety net for coping with the inherent shortages occurring in a shortage economy. These two middle sections of the chapter draw on empirical material from the monitoring section of Radio Free Europe (RFE). Lastly, in the concluding remarks I reflect on Trentin’s interpretation of the fate of the left in the twentieth century in light of the trajectory of labour in Eastern Europe after 1989.

1 The Slightly Eerie Abstraction

It is not hard to understand what Bruno Trentin found appealing in the writings of Rudolf Bahro. On the one hand, Bahro had a good knowledge of the East German shop floor and, much like Trentin himself, was interested in the creative potential of work.⁸ In interviews with the West German media, Bahro repeatedly pointed out that East German workers suffered from a lack of work morale and that they were caught up in a system of “organized irresponsibility”.⁹ The alienating effects of Taylorism were part of the story. Yet even more important was the structure of politics in communist societies, with the party ruling hierarchically from the top down and thus curtailing any attempts to democratically organize the production process. On the other hand, Bahro’s most famous book, *Die Alternative*, put forward the argument that communist parties in power across Eastern Europe were pursuing a politics of growth that was antithetical to the emancipation of labour. Under state socialism, production for the sake of production did trickle down to the workers in the form of mass consumption, but the price of “quantitative compensation” was political subordination; or what Bahro famously called *Subalternität*.¹⁰

8 Rudolf Bahro, *Plädoyer für schöpferische Initiative: Zur Kritik von Arbeitsbedingungen im real existierenden Sozialismus* (Köln: Bund Verlag, 1980).

9 See, for example, the interview with Lutz Lehmann in Rudolf Bahro, *Eine Dokumentation* (Köln: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1977), 98 and passim.

10 Rudolf Bahro, *Die Alternative. Zur Kritik des real existierenden Sozialismus* (Köln: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1977), 190.

In these arguments, Trentin might have found confirmation of his own intuitions. Bahro's concern with the emancipating, creative potential of work resonated with Trentin's guiding idea of providing workers with the tools for pursuing "liberazione e autorealizzazione *nel lavoro*".¹¹ Equally important, the emphasis on the logic of "quantitative compensation" in *Die Alternative* sounded remarkably similar to Trentin's own attack on the strategy of productivity bargaining, through which Western trade unions gave up control of the shop floor in favour of higher wages and a larger share of the growth pie.¹² In other words, the East German dissident could have been taken as criticizing a variety of Fordism; an impoverished one for certain – and one backed by a repressive political order – but nevertheless one that could be acknowledged as such. Fordism, after all, had been an object of admiration, transplantation and local adaptation in the early Soviet Union. As Stefan Link put it, in the interwar period, modernizers of all sorts "were attracted by the immense gains in productivity brought about through the rationalized production organization and full utilization of automatic machinery found in Fordism".¹³ Soviet leaders dreamt of an "Americanized Bolshevism", and Soviet industrial experts regarded Fordism as "the decisive repudiation of craft-based principles".¹⁴

It was therefore reasonable to assume that a variety of Fordism structured the planned economies of state socialism, and it was equally reasonable to argue that Taylorism ruled the socialist assembly line. Miklós Haraszti's *A Worker in a Worker's State* depicted a shop floor structured by an alienating form of remuneration – piece-work – the unfolding of which subjugated workers to machines, crushing them under the pressure to meet ever higher output targets.¹⁵ Haraszti found the piece-rate system and its associated practice of norm-setting to be the epitome of exploitation and the best symbol of the perversion of socialism. During his trial in October 1973, he declared before the

11 Alessandro Casellato, "Bruno Trentin", *Belfagor* 64, no. 3 (2009): 308 (emphasis in the original).

12 Trentin describes here what Charles Maier called "the politics of productivity", namely the bundle of industrial policies that underpinned the boom of the West European economies during the 1950s and 1960s. Charles S. Maier, "The Postwar Social Contract", *International Labor and Working-Class History* 50 (1996): 148–156.

13 Stefan Link, "Transnational Fordism: Ford Motor Company, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union in the Interwar Years" (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2012), 9.

14 David E. Greenstein, "Assembling *Fordizm*: The Production of Automobiles, Americans, and Bolsheviks in Detroit and Early Soviet Russia", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56, no. 2 (2014): 259–289; Link, "Transnational Fordism", 7.

15 Miklós Haraszti, *A Worker in a Worker's State*. Translated by Michael Wright (New York: Universe Books, 1978).

judge that piece-rate working was a capitalist, not a socialist institution. Yet the logic of the system was not merely exploitative, because no matter what forms of solidarity workers might develop on the shop floor, it was the sense of generalized powerlessness that pervaded the socialist factory. Workers had little control over the production process, and even less over the dynamics of norms and income.

This was a bleak picture indeed. In form rather than intent, Haraszti's book resembled the genre of the factory reports produced by incognito activists in the aftermath of May 1968, of which Robert Linhart's *L'Établi* is arguably the most famous. It went to great lengths to describe the rhythms and routines of the shop floor, paying attention to clues that might indicate the possibility for oppositional sentiment among workers.¹⁶ One reviewer noted with some disappointment the sheer ambiguity of this strategy:

Evil is equated with the status quo while Good is left as an undefined alternative. One may agree or disagree with him, but in neither case can one really acquire any deeper insight or understanding of the author's reality – the only explanation allowed is the Evil attributed to the deus ex machina, be it called 'Them', a 'New Ruling Class', 'Communist Totalitarianism', or whatever. At the same time, the deus ex machina quality that makes *A Workers' State* – along with much other dissident writing – ultimately unsatisfying as literature is the main source of its notoriety as a political document: the same Manichaeism making it politically inadmissible in the East gave it all too warm a welcome in the West.¹⁷

Literary style and political implications aside, Trentin might have cared more about Haraszti's thick description of work under state socialism, notably the impact of Taylorism run amok.

Yet in this respect too, academic sociologists found Haraszti's grasp of the shop floor problematic. Michael Burawoy, who took up work in several Hungarian factories during the early 1980s to test out his comparative sociology of "factory regimes", found Haraszti's book "a work of critique, not explanation".¹⁸ Because the book presented a "picture of atomized, oppressed, alienated,

16 Robert Linhart, *L'Établi* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1981). For more on the *établissement* literature in France, Italy or the United States, see the special issue dedicated to the topic in *Les Temps Modernes*, *Ouvriers volontaires les années 68*, 3–4, no. 684–685 (2015).

17 Ellen Turkish Comisso, "A Worker in a Worker's State", *Telos* 21, no. 54 (1982): 218.

18 Michael Burawoy and János Lukács, *The Radiant Past. Ideology and Reality in Hungary's Road to Capitalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 30.

degraded working class" in order to pit it against an ideal socialist society, the end result could not be anything other than a description of a "homogenized society with no dynamics or variation", not unlike the simplified paradigm that framed the research agenda for Soviet area studies in American universities for much of the Cold War.¹⁹ A more serious objection, however, is related to Haraszti's choice to universalize his experience, implying that all work under state socialism resembled the bundle of characteristics he observed at the Red Star factory on Csepel Island. This "slightly eerie abstraction", the editors of *New Left Review* suggested, was parallel to abstract labour itself, indicating that no matter how different one task is from another, labour under state socialism became homogeneous and thus replaceable: "Haraszti's silence as to its location emphasizes the similarity of conditions elsewhere".²⁰ Burawoy saw differently:

The most distinctive difference was our conception of social relations on the shopfloor. Haraszti painted a picture of atomized individuals, and here I think he was projecting his own (unreflected) placement within the factory. As a dissident, a Jew and an intellectual, he was shunned by his fellow workers. He was thrown into competition with them, he was ruled by them, and he was most certainly not one of them. To be sure, I was not one of them either – but my strangeness had an appeal. They laughed at my inept Hungarian and at my incompetence as a machine operator, and I was embraced as an exotic foreigner. Within hours of hitting the shopfloor, I was ringed by workers asking me about the USA. From my vantage point, I could see and experience the spontaneous cooperation that made production possible in the socialist factory.²¹

"Spontaneous cooperation", linked to what Burawoy would later identify as workers' autonomy on the shop floor, was one side of what I term here as "workers' control". The other side of it was, *pace* Haraszti's editor at the *New Left Review*, workers' irreplaceability; a phenomenon most clearly identified by another Hungarian sociologist carrying out research on Csepel Island in the 1970s. István Kemény was equally interested in the effects of Taylorism on Hungarian workers, but rather than focusing on the piece rate remuneration system, he started out from the observation that in centrally-planned economies,

19 Ibid.

20 "Introduction to Miklós Haraszti", *New Left Review*, no. 91 (May-June, 1975): 6.

21 Michael Burawoy, "Working in the Tracks of State Socialism", *Capital & Class* 33, no. 2 (2009): 45–46.

the more rigid the plan is, the more flexible the production process becomes. In this context, it was the practical knowledge, autonomy and initiative of the skilled workers that kept production going amidst shortages galore. Without doubt, Kemény's workers were equally as exploited as were Haraszti's; their labour on the assembly line was monotonous and repetitive, while their official wages could barely keep them above the poverty line. In reaction to these grim circumstances, two intertwined processes took shape: first, skilled workers engaged in extra hours, working well beyond the eight-hour legal norm in order to boost their take-home pay; second, the very same skilled workers exercised a high degree of control over the rhythms of the production process:

Most every gesture is indeed mechanical, but the general deployment of work is not. From a certain point of view, workers are able to control what they are doing on the shop floor, yet their work is less easily controllable. They have come to master every detail that pertains to the pace of work. It is during extra hours that they can better control and adjust the pace of work. Those among workers employed by the pre-assembly workshop can even control it during the regular working day. But even the skilled assembly workers can dictate their own pace of work, which means that neither the rhythms of the assembly line nor the norm set for its various tasks are particularly tight. The choice of technology, of work methods and tools is determined by objective conditions. However, within the limits of these objective conditions, each worker on the assembly line freely chooses his methods and devices. He selects his own tools, sometimes he even manufactures them, or he simply invents new ones. [...] No worker on the assembly line has the possibility to influence the quality and quantity of the produced goods. The production of these goods is subjected to the tyranny of the monthly plan, as well as to the quantity and quality of tools and component parts available at any given time. Workers are less able to exert control over the duration of their work. If they can manage to achieve in only four hours what they were supposed to do in eight, it is obvious they cannot afford themselves to work only four hours a day.²²

Writing in the 1970s – a decade of crisis and transformation for capitalism, but also one of intense labour militancy across the developed economies

22 István Kemény, "La chaîne dans une usine hongroise", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Vol. 24 (1978): 75–76 (my translation).

of Western Europe and North America – David Montgomery felt compelled to go back to the turn of the century in order to explore the competing visions of organizing the shop floor that emerged out of workers' resistance to scientific management. Much like Bruno Trentin, Montgomery understood that the transition out of Fordism plays out as much on the shop floor as away from it, and he attempted to revisit the past experiences of workers' opposition to earlier managerial revolutions of the production process. The central figures in this story were the so-called "quintessential workers": male, white, skilled master craftsmen, predominantly in metal industries, who engaged in the defence of their autonomy at the point of production via union and non-union methods.²³ These were, in short, the type of workers targeted by scientific management, as their control of the shop floor was taken to reside "in the superiority of their knowledge over that of the factory owner."²⁴ Montgomery emphasized that he was not writing about the traditional clash between artisanal routines and industrial discipline, but rather about:

[T]he patterns of behavior which took shape in the second and third generations of industrial experience, largely among workers whose world had been fashioned from their youngest days by smoky mills, congested streets, recreation as a week-end affair and toil at the times and the pace dictated by the clock (except when a more or less lengthy layoff meant no work at all). It was such workers, the veterans, if you will, of industrial life, with whom Taylor was preoccupied.²⁵

The concept of workers' control, after a moment of fame during the heyday of social history, did not fare well.²⁶ Comparative historical sociologists found Montgomery's depiction of the everyday struggle for control at the point of production a welcome insight into the emergence of labour militancy at the

23 With regard to the notion of "quintessential worker", see Sonya O. Rose, "Class Formation and the Quintessential Worker", in *Reworking Class*, ed. John R. Hall (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 133–166.

24 David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 9.

25 *Ibid.*, 10.

26 See the studies collected in Jonathan C. Brown, ed., *Workers' Control in Latin America, 1930–1979* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997). More recently, Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini, ed., *Ours to Master and To Own. Workers' Councils from the Commune to the Present* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 172–190.

turn of the century; not only in the United States but also across continental Europe.²⁷ It certainly helped that the notion itself was already part of the political language forged by workers' representatives during the general strikes and failed revolutions of the late 1910s and early 1920s.²⁸ Empirical sociologists exploring the abodes of production, however, opted to speak of labour rather than of workers' control; perhaps a more neutral term, unencumbered by historical legacies and hence more readily adapted to scholarly research.²⁹ The meaning of the two terms is practically interchangeable, both denoting what David Harvey called the "perpetual guerrilla warfare" on the shop floor between management and workers around the issue of just how much autonomy the latter might enjoy in decisions concerning the piece rates, the distribution of tasks, personnel and workloads, the rhythms of work or the adoption of new technology.³⁰

Be that as it may, the historiographical revolution that swept across the field of labour history over the recent decades has brought about new research objects and moved beyond the concern with such "veterans" of industrial life. The concept was devoid of any explanatory value for writing histories of marginal and marginalized workers, women, racial minorities and immigrants, just as it was when the centre stage of historical research was taken by the integrated working consumer of mature Fordism. The global turn in labour history also entailed leaving behind the factory as the main arena for investigating the fate of the working multitude: farmlands and sweatshops, the informal economy of the Global South and the expanding service sector of the Global North were all inhabited by different workers, for whom exerting control at the point of production was barely a question at all. Nor was the question particularly salient for workers defending their livelihood against capital relocation, plant closures

27 Carmen Sirianni, "Workers' Control in Europe: A Comparative Sociological Analysis", in *The Experience of Labor in Europe and America 1900–1925*, ed. James E. Cronin and Carmen Sirianni (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 254–310.

28 Georges G. Assan, *La question du contrôle ouvrier en Italie, avec un aperçu dans les autres pays* (Paris: Marcel Giard, 1922).

29 The body of literature is vast and multifaceted. For a discussion of labour control around the issue of workplace alcohol consumption, see Michel Pialoux, "Alcool et politique dans l'atelier. Une usine de carrosserie dans la décennie 1980s", *Genèses* 7, no. 1 (1992): 94–128. For a gendered analysis of labour control linking labour market dynamics and factory regimes, see Ching Kwan Lee, *Gender and the South China Miracle: Two Worlds of Factory Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Taking into account company size, the classic typology of labour control remains Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

30 David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (London: Verso, 2006), 117.

and looming unemployment.³¹ Nevertheless, with regard to understating the historical trajectory of state socialism in Eastern Europe after 1945, the concept remains seminal for two complementary reasons.

One reason is structural, and derives from the logic of the centrally-planned economy. Against the background of full employment, these economies invariably generated a higher demand for labour relative to supply, creating recurrent labour shortages, particularly with regard to skilled workers.³² In turn, these labour shortages endowed specific groups of workers across industry with significant bargaining power, which translated into control of the production process.³³ In conjunction with labour shortages, the socialist shortage economy imparted high mobility on the less skilled, usually younger workers, for whom job switching within the same industrial sector or even across sectors became common. This turnover of personnel – a genuine obsession for communist industrial relations experts – only reinforced the control of the production process the skilled minority enjoyed. The main consequence of this runaway dynamic, as I show below, was the equally recurrent attempts of communist policymakers to reform the wage system and periodically experiment with wage dispersion ratios and incentive schemes.

The other reason is contingent, and emerged out of what the late Mark Pittaway called “the Stalinist revolution in production”; a process of translation and adaptation of Soviet labour relations to Eastern Europe during the early 1950s.³⁴ The revolution unfolded together with the exponential growth of the working class across the region, beginning in the late 1940s. One of its premises (and promises) were to dislodge the pre-war working-class culture, forge a new socialist work culture and integrate new generations of industrial youth, women and workers of peasant origin. Stakhanovism, for example, was regarded as a training method for the unskilled, who could circumvent traditional apprenticeship routines through a sheer commitment to a higher pace of work. It is

31 The above paragraph summarizes the arguments of Nelson Lichtenstein, “David Montgomery and the Idea of ‘Workers’ Control’”, *Labor. Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 10, no.1 (2013): 68–69.

32 The classic analysis is János Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

33 In other words, it is the structural logic of the shortage economy that makes the form of workers’ control I describe here unique. For while empirically similar processes could also be observed across market economies, explanations for the occurrence and/or persistence of workers’ control under those conditions would most likely identify the rigidity of the labour market or the power of trade unions as causal mechanisms.

34 Mark Pittaway, “The Reproduction of Hierarchy: Skill, Working-Class Culture, and the State in Early Socialist Hungary”, *The Journal of Modern History* 74, no. 4 (2002): 737–769.

no wonder that the most hated workers of the time were precisely the same Stakhanovists – so-called “labour heroes” – who challenged the established rhythms of the production process by working faster. The famous burning brick scene in Andrzej Wajda’s *Man of Marble* (1976) must have been an everyday reality for quite a few “labour heroes”.³⁵ In practice, therefore, the revolution only produced a deeply segmented working class, with skill, gender, social origin and age acting as markers for exclusion and marginalization. In Hungary and other socialist countries of the region, the early 1950s led to a reproduction of hierarchy at the shop floor level, allowing for the skilled minority of veteran, urban workers to retain their control of the production process and reach informal bargains with management over access to better tools, raw materials and higher wages. In this formative context, workers’ control was not merely a form of resistance against the Stalinist revolution in production; it was also a ground for cooperation between skilled workers and management.³⁶

This brief incursion into the reception of Miklós Haraszti’s *A Worker in a Worker’s State* by representatives of the West European left shows a fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of the state socialist shop floor. For readers such as Bruno Trentin, Haraszti’s book was supposed to confirm the original sin of the global labour movement, originating from the embrace of Fordism and Taylorism by Lenin and Gramsci. This early commitment to supposedly neutral production technologies produced either entire socialist societies built on the “tyranny of the norm”, homogenization and the exploitation of the working class, or – as with the Italian trade unions of the 1970s and 1980s – labour leaders blinded by the promise of higher wages and hence incapable of mounting any opposition to post-Fordism at the point of production. However, a closer look at the socialist shop floor reveals a different picture, as no matter how exploitative labour relations were in Eastern Europe after 1945, the system was premised on a minority of skilled workers being able to

35 The scene, halfway through the film, follows the main character – the Stakhanovist worker Mateusz Birkut – on tour. As a “labour hero”, Birkut travelled through Poland from one construction site to another to hold demonstrations on the art of laying bricks, working faster and better than the average labourer. On one such construction site, immersed in the process of erecting a wall, Birkut is handed a hot brick, which instantly burns his hands and stops the demonstration. This is a typical depiction of acts of resistance by workers against the higher pace of work forced on them by the Stakhanovist movement.

36 The cooperation aspect has often been ignored in literature by authors who assign little explanatory value to the shortage economy and instead emphasize the exploitative nature of the relationship between management and workers. For example, see Donald Filtzer, “Labor Discipline, the Use of Work Time, and the Decline of the Soviet System, 1928–1991”, *International Labor and Working-Class History* 50 (1996): 9–28.

dominate the production process and exert control over the pace of work, the distribution of tools and the division of tasks. Rather than a gradual loss of workers' control under the combined impact of Fordism, Taylorism and higher wages, the state socialist regimes of the East exhibited an inverse historical dynamic: higher wages resulting from the ability of a segment of workers to master the production process.

2 Dinu's "Darkened Period"

What, then, of Bahro's "quantitative compensation" – the supposed socialist equivalent of the productivity bargains that structured the post-war boom in Western Europe? Was this a more accurate description of the socialist labour relations that might suggest the presence of Fordism east of the river Elbe? Fordism, after all, does not exclude workers' control altogether. As Simon Clark argued, the Fordist organization of work proceeds by a strict separation of skills, grounded in a dual labour market "composed of a small stratum of skilled workers and a mass of unskilled immigrant workers".³⁷ The separation of skills is also conducive to increased interdependence, which makes the vertically integrated modern large-scale factory ever more vulnerable to various breakdowns along the supply chains and production lines. This in turn requires a certain degree of flexibility on the part of the workforce. The need for flexibility might then open up room for manoeuvre for some workers, allowing them to reconquer their autonomy at the point of production. It is for this reason that the perennial problem of Fordism is workers' control (what sociologists call "labour control"), which tends to manifest itself in various ways; from quota restrictions and the deterioration of quality, to goldbricking and other forms of foot dragging. The resolution of this problem of workers' control in Fordism usually takes the form of the "five-dollar day" (that is, higher wages).

Romanian industrial experts and their peers across Eastern Europe were, of course, not unaware of this method of resolution. An entire strand of literature published throughout the 1950s, sometimes translated from Soviet sources, purported to analyse the wide gamut of problems that plagued supply chains and production lines. The vocabulary developed to grasp the haphazard supply of raw materials or breaks in the production process aimed to underline the crucial duty of managers and workers alike to maintain the steady flow of

37 Simon Clarke, "What in the F---'s Name is Fordism", in *Fordism and Flexibility: Divisions and Change*, ed. N. Gilbert, R. Burrows and A. Pollert (London: Macmillan, 1992), 19.

production. So-called “bottlenecks” are an example of one such pathology of industrial production. This referred to the practice of intermittent work due to the chaotic supply of necessary raw materials, thus causing clogging. “Storming” was the other side of the coin. Once raw materials finally arrived at the workbench, workers were summoned to make up for the lost time and put their effort into achieving the planned output targets. More serious, however, was the issue of “overblown” or “over-fulfilled” norms, which – as Kemény argued – was often associated with working extra hours. For industrial experts, the over-fulfilment of norms indicated various forms of workers’ control at the point of production, through which some workers could appropriate better tools and materials, enter into agreements with the supervisory personnel and increase their income. In so doing, however, they were believed to distort productivity indicators. Let us take one example from the first decade of state socialism in Romania.

In May 1950, an aspiring young journalist by the name of Radu Cosașu took up a job in one of Bucharest’s leading metal factories, then named Timpuri Noi (New Times). Of middle-class background, Cosașu became a committed communist at the end of the war and set out to explore the daily life of the working class out of a mix of ideological persuasion and party sanctions for his bourgeois upbringing and family connections. This experience would make it, thirty years later, into his justly celebrated novel, *Armata mea de cavalerie*, a first-person fictionalized retelling of the author’s biographical trajectory. The fragment that builds on Cosașu’s first-hand knowledge of factory work revolves around a made-up conflict between a skilled worker by the name of Dinu and the author’s alter-ego, an apprentice lathe operator, the details of which do not concern us here. What is important for the argument in this chapter is the work routine that Cosașu unwittingly recorded in his novel. Dinu would regularly divide his working month into two periods: one in which he could afford to take it easy, fool around and devote time to training his apprentice; and a second one, just before the payday, when Dinu would work without any interruptions, neglect everything else and break the norm.³⁸ This latter timeframe was dubbed by Cosașu *perioada vânătă* (roughly translated as the darkened period); days during which Dinu was so focused on over-fulfilling the norm and securing a higher income for himself that no horseplay, and not even ordinary chat, was tolerated around the lathe. Any attempt by the apprentice to trouble Dinu during his darkened period would often result in physical punishment,

38 Radu Cosașu, *Opere IV. Supraviețuirile: 1. Rămășițele mic-burgeze, 2. Armata mea de cavalerie* (Iași: Polirom, 2011), 184–210.

the exact opposite of the jovial and friendly atmosphere Dinu created around himself for the rest of the month, when his spirits were so high that he cavalierly tolerated myriad mistakes on the part of the apprentice.

Perhaps no other depiction of workers' control is more apt than Cosașu's metaphor. It stood for Dinu's ability to thoroughly control the routine of the shop floor, dictating the pace of work and the level of take-home pay; not only for himself, but also for his apprentice. Nothing was more damaging to the entire socialist norm-setting and wage system than the ups and downs of the darkened periods. Industrial experts in Romania and beyond regarded such displays of workers' control as inimical to higher productivity, and nothing but bulwarks against attempts to rationalize industrial work and push for efficiency. The most common answer to this perceived pathology of the shop floor was the so-called policy of "mutual material interests" (*cointeresare materială*) – the state socialist equivalent to the productivity bargain of Fordism.³⁹ The scope of this "mutual material interests" arrangement was to empower management in undertaking the transition from so-called "statistical-experimental" to "technical-economical" norms. The first type of norms governed much of industrial production in socialist Romania up to the late 1950s: they were arrived at through informal negotiations between management, norm-setters and some of the most experienced workers in various branches of industry, and were supposed to record the maximum output per worker expected, given the existing machinery. The second type of norms relied far less on the practical input of the skilled workers and would be decided, in turn, by planning and ministerial agencies on the basis of the technological specifications of the machinery and other "objective" production indexes. Extending "technical-economical" norms across industry was believed to increase productivity per worker and make Dinu's darkened periods the rule rather than the exception in the working month. In other words, this was the socialist strategy of enforcing managerial control over the shop floor with the aim of boosting efficiency.⁴⁰

What could workers expect in exchange for accepting the work rhythm of the "technical-economical" norms? In a similar way to the Fordist productivity bargain, they could enjoy higher take-home pay. The socialist wage was divided into two main component parts: first, the basic or "tariff" wage, which was compounded according to the type of industry, difficulty

39 I. Blaga and F. Burtan, *Principiul leninist al cointeresării materiale* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1961).

40 For a similar dynamic in the interwar Soviet Union, see Lewis Siegelbaum, "Soviet Norm Determination in Theory and Practice, 1917–1941", *Soviet Studies* 36, no. 1 (1984): 45–68.

of tasks, nature of working conditions and skill; second, on top of the tariff wage there was an entire, often highly complex, system of premiums and bonuses that rewarded dedication, dexterity and commitment to higher output. In principle, both components of the socialist wage were dependent on fulfilling output targets: the norms for the tariff wage were usually within the reach of every worker irrespective of age, skill level, gender or location in the production process; the norms for receiving premiums and bonuses were harder to fulfil, at least by those who lacked experience, access to better tools and a steady supply of materials. Dinu, for example, would typify a worker in the first category. For much of the working month he would be content with working to the extent necessary to secure the tariff wage, all according to his own pace of work and established routine. In his “darkened period”, however, Dinu would push himself hard to amass as many premiums and bonuses as possible, thereby increasing his wage. For the vast mass of unskilled workers, young apprentices and fresh recruits to factory work, such darkened periods did not exist. Their take-home pay would amount to the tariff wage alone, and they were seldom able to engage in episodes of norm-breaking.

The logic of this wage system was deeply divisive and skewed towards a minority of skilled, usually male, veteran workers, who were able to earn significantly more due to their privileged position in the production process. However, it was precisely this minority of “quintessential workers” – who could profit most from the system and appropriate its logic for higher income – that effectively hindered the proper functioning of norms. Their control of the production process afforded them the luxury of taking it easy on some days and making up for this on others; a dialectic of working time and task fragmentation that was the very opposite of Taylorism. The haphazard supply of materials characteristic of a shortage economy only reinforced their privileged position, as management could rely on their commitment on those occasions when “storming” was deemed necessary. In this context, the socialist variety of productivity bargaining premised on “mutual material interests” could only alter the significance of the tariff wage in the sum total of the take-home pay. The first major wage reform in socialist Romania implemented at the end of the 1950s raised the proportion of the tariff wage from just above 50 per cent to over 70 per cent across industrial branches. At the same time, tighter norms elaborated by industrial experts replaced the allegedly obsolete “statistical-experimental norms” that had guided industrial output for the first post-war decade. The immediate consequence of this reform was a general wage increase for unskilled workers and a slight decrease in the income of the skilled ones, the latter having been

suddenly confronted with harder to achieve target outputs via premiums and bonuses.⁴¹

By the mid-1960s, Romanian policymakers were contemplating yet another overhaul of the wage system. In little under a decade, the scenario seemed to be repeating itself. A report commissioned by the government in 1967 noted with some alarm that in many cases, workers were receiving inadequate norms, since as much as one quarter of the entire workforce was able to “over-fulfil” norms by 130 per cent.⁴² Therefore, the new wage reform insisted on redressing the balance in favour of efficiency, and once again boosting the tariff wage at the expense of premiums and bonuses. As the RFE expert monitoring Romania put it:

The better part of income from exceeding norms and premiums achieved so far as additional benefits, will in the future be included in the tariff wage. In this way, the worker or employee will be more interested than in the past in the tariff wage and thus will be more anxious than formerly to qualify for a higher tariff wage. It appears that in the past, by consensus of management, the trade unions, etc., the norms were artificially kept low so as to facilitate the fulfilment of certain plan indices. The workers relied increasingly on the over-fulfilment of norms. Norms were often not raised internally although new and more productive machinery was introduced. The new wage system, which practically envisages a considerable increase of norms, will provide a higher income from the tariff wage but a lower one from exceeding norms. On balance, the workers will profit only if he manages to be highly efficient and his industrial unit prosperous (the criterion will be the sale of marketable production or export).⁴³

In their basics, the Romanian wage reforms of the late 1950s and late 1960s were essentially identical. Both offered much the same solution to virtually the same problem: the tariff component of the workers' take-home pay was pushed up with the hope of empowering management to impose tighter, supposedly more scientific norms and mine for efficiency deep in the abodes of

41 For an extensive analysis of this reform see Adrian Grama, *Laboring Along. Industrial Workers and the Making of Postwar Romania* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 232–242.

42 ANR, PCM, 6/1967, 11.

43 “Situation Report: Romania, 13 October 1967”, 13 October 1967. HU OSA 300-8-47-181-15; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Situation Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

production. It could not have been otherwise. When the tariff component of the wage made only half of the take-home pay, as was the case up to 1957, the hindrance to increased productivity was high wage dispersion. A wide gap between the income of the skilled and the unskilled, resulting from the first being able to over-fulfil their norms, perpetuated a situation in which the majority of workers eking out a living on the tariff wage alone could hardly have had any interest in over-performing on the shop floor, let alone the means to do so. High wage dispersion, therefore, was incompatible with the strategy of “mutual material interests”. Giving the tariff wage more weight in the final wage, however, was equally troublesome. First, as the report mentioned above observed, at least a quarter of workers were still able to earn significantly more through their control over the production process. Second, in the longer term, increasing tariff wages tended to drastically reduce wage dispersion, a phenomenon that communist policymakers dubbed “levelling” (see table below). It is little wonder that in 1973, a new wage reform was deemed necessary in socialist Romania; this time not to redress the norm of over-fulfilling, but instead to widen again the gap between the wages of the skilled workers and the rest of the workforce.⁴⁴

The logic of wage reform under state socialism made plain the sheer difficulty of implementing productivity bargains in a shortage economy. Yet what also frustrated the strategy of “mutual material interests” was the overall intention of policymakers to keep the cost of labour low.⁴⁵ Because socialist economies were geared towards overinvestment in capital goods at the expense of mass produced consumer goods, the most common growth pattern available to policymakers was repressed consumption, which allowed the planning apparatus to divest funds away from consumption (and implicitly, light industry).⁴⁶ Harry Trend, the RFE expert on wage policy, correctly noted in a survey of the various wage reforms undertaken across Eastern Europe during the mid-1960s that

44 The wage differential was supposed to be cut from 1.92 to 1.45. See “Situation Report: Romania, 7 December 1973”, 7 December 1973. HU OSA 300-8-47-193-21; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Situation Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 9.

45 For a general assessment, see also “Wage Differentials and Economic Reform in Eastern Europe”, 2 May 1966. HU OSA 300-8-3-15908; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Background Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

46 Even during the 1970s, a decade that saw a relative boost of private consumption in Romania, the catchword remained consumers’ “sacrifice”. See Ronald H. Linden, “Socialist Patrimonialism and the Global Economy: The Case of Romania”, *International Organization* 40, no. 2 (1986): 364.

TABLE 6.1 The dynamic of wage dispersion before and after the 1967 wage reform

Wage group in lei (6 lei = 1 \$)	1960 (in % of total workforce)	1965	1967	1970
up to 700	37.5	15.2	—	—
701–1,000	35.8	36.0	38.5	23.5
1,001–1,500	21.6	35.0	40.9	47.3
1,501–2,500	4.7	12.6	18.3	25.0
over 2,500	0.4	1.2	2.3	4.2

SOURCE: "SITUATION REPORT: ROMANIA, 18 OCTOBER 1967", 18 OCTOBER 1967. HU OSA 300-8-47-181-17; RECORDS OF RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE: PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT: SITUATION REPORTS; OPEN SOCIETY ARCHIVES AT CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY, BUDAPEST, 3

even if nominal wages were to go up, this would be "accomplished through a redistribution of existing wage payments rather than through a larger share of the savings from reductions in production costs and the introduction of improved technology or management techniques".⁴⁷ The situation was not unlike the one that underpinned the South Asian export-led industrialization boom of the same decade. In both contexts, the assumption was that growth must be premised on the comparative advantage of cheap labour that emerging economies enjoyed within the global economy.⁴⁸ Trend's suggestion to Eastern European communist policymakers could have very well been directed at South Korea in the 1960s:

Finally, a wage policy which will largely depend on redistributive measures rather than on a change in the manner of distributing newly gained savings and on a change in economic policies favouring a more rapid

47 "The New Residual Claimant Wage System in Eastern Europe", 28 April 1966. HU OSA 300-8-3-15909; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Background Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 3.

48 Soon-Kyoung Cho, "How Cheap is 'Cheap Labor'? The Dilemmas of Export-led Industrialization" (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1987). With regard to how Romanian economists saw the comparative advantage of low-cost labour, see Ion Rachmuth, "Trade between Countries with Different Socio-Economic Systems", *Soviet and Eastern Foreign Trade* 4, no. 1 (1968): 15.

growth of the consumer sector, is bound to provide only the most meagre effects on labor productivity and the standard of living. A page from Henry Ford's policy during the twenties – “high wage – high consumption” could serve as a much better guide.⁴⁹

Rudolf Bahro's notion of “quantitative compensation” and the Romanian strategy of “mutual material interests” could indeed be misread as socialist varieties of the Fordist productivity bargain. A closer look at the structural setting in which such bargains were supposed to operate reveals a different picture. First, the logic of wage reform shifted between high and low wage dispersion, which perpetuated workers' control on the shop floor, in turn making it hard for management to impose ever tighter norms in search of higher productivity. Second, even if such attempts might have occasionally been successful, the pattern of growth grounded in repressed consumption and low labour costs was at the opposite end of the spectrum from Ford's “high wage – high consumption” model. Put differently, no matter how much the fascination with such production technologies on the part of communist leaders in power, Fordist productivity bargains never quite caught on outside the capitalist core of the Euro-Atlantic area.⁵⁰ To interpret the industrial development under state socialism in Eastern Europe as a form of Fordism is likely to deprive the concept of all explanatory value.

3 The Logic of Wage Reforms under State Socialism

Above and beyond the conceptual stakes of correcting the interpretation of state socialism Bruno Trentin derived from the writings of Bahro and Haraszti, the problems that these dissident intellectuals identified on the state

49 “The New Residual Claimant Wage System in Eastern Europe”, 28 April 1966. HU OSA 300-8-3-15909; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Background Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 3.

50 For a similar argument in Latin American labour history, see Joel Wolfe, “The Social Subject versus the Political: Latin American Labor Studies at a Crossroads”, *Latin American Research Review* 37, no. 2 (2002): 247. Wolfe criticized his peers for mistaking factory redesign, rationalization campaigns and speed-ups for Fordism: “The key component of Fordism is a high industrial wage, for the system is predicated on increasing domestic markets for internally produced goods. Fordism is therefore defined largely by the consumption of goods and services by workers earning high wages that they often receive in exchange for labouring in monotonous and sometimes dangerous factory settings”.

socialist shop floor were real enough: lack of motivation, the atomization of the working class, low productivity and high labour turnover. Communist policymakers grappled with these alleged problems of industrial life through periodic wage reforms. Wage policies were widely regarded as the pillar of economic reforms, and often went hand in hand with the introduction of market mechanisms and the decentralization of decision-making at the level of the enterprise. Therefore, wage reforms can be interpreted as experimental attempts to overcome the inbuilt disequilibrium of the socialist command economy.⁵¹

Take, for instance, the Czechoslovak wage reform of the mid-1980s, the explicit goal of which was to make the tariff wage account for over 70 per cent of the take-home pay. An earlier reform undertaken in the first half of the 1970s aimed to normalize wage scales after the crisis of 1968 and the supposed disorganization of industrial production brought about by the events leading up to the Prague Spring and its aftermath. It granted more authority to foremen, extended the three-shifts work schedule, cut down on overtime and encouraged high wage dispersion. In addition to these measures, this earlier reform also targeted workers' control, by pushing up the tariff component of the wage, tightening norms and trimming the premiums and bonuses that came with over-fulfilling norms.⁵² In just over a decade, Czechoslovak policymakers saw themselves forced to reform the wage system once again, because as one RFE report noted, by the mid-1980s "the variable portion of an individual's wage (the portion determined by one's performance measured against production norms) grew until it came to account for up to fifty percent of the overall wage".⁵³ This was a clear symptom of workers' control on the shop floor that allowed some workers to engage once more in norm busting and to increase their income. Similar to the Romanian case discussed above, the Czechoslovak

51 For a general assessment of the reforms of the 1960s across Eastern Europe, see Besnik Pula, *Globalization under and after Socialism. The Evolution of Transnational Capital in Central and Eastern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 32–64.

52 "Situation Report: Czechoslovakia, 13 February 1974", 13 February 1974. HU OSA 300-8-47-65-7; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Situation Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest. This RFE report does not break down the reform on industrial sectors or branches, which would have arguably made it easier to grasp the many inherent contradictions of these policies.

53 "Situation Report: Czechoslovakia, 2 May 1986", 2 May 1986. HU OSA 300-8-47-81-7; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Situation Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 10.

wage reforms attempted to eradicate norm breaking, only to see it re-emerge again in the course of a decade.

Not all wage reforms under state socialism in Eastern Europe tried to break the vicious circle of norm over-fulfilling by increasing tariff wages. The Bulgarian wage reform of 1977, for example, eliminated bonuses for norm over-fulfilment and introduced a more “flexible” base salary, which would go up or down depending on the performance coefficients each worker displayed at the end of the month.⁵⁴ Yet another take on the issue is represented by the early 1970s wage reform in Poland, where policymakers decided to pay more attention to the correlation between the wages of managerial staff and white-collar employees, and the remuneration of workers. While in the Czechoslovak, Romanian and Bulgarian cases the assumption was that technological upgrading coupled with workers’ control rendered norms obsolete and required a reorganization of the wage system, Polish industrial experts put their money on the necessary role of supervision and expertise at the factory level.⁵⁵ As RFE argued in a detailed analysis of this policy:

The worker is treated as an object, not a subject. Up to now, all incentives were, in principle, distributed down to the workers, and the size of the white-collar employee bonuses was clearly based on the achievements of the workers. The reversal of this approach – although it does prove the ability to break with deep-rooted dogmas – means that the primary target is the intensification of the activities of the management.⁵⁶

Poland was, of course, an exception. In no other socialist country were workers able, and the government willing up to 1981, to push up wages through militancy, sovereign debt and collective bargaining. Equally exceptional was the

54 “Situation Report: Bulgaria, 25 March 1977”, 25 March 1977. HU OSA 300-8-47-33-9; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Situation Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 9.

55 In his famous study of the global spread of Taylorism during the first half of the twentieth century, French sociologist Georges Friedmann noted that in those national contexts in which labour productivity was more an outcome of higher employment figures than of technological upgrading, factories would be in need of highly trained “*cadres de direction et surveillance*”. See Georges Friedmann, *Le travail en miettes. Spécialisation et loisirs* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), 17 and passim.

56 “The Draft of a New Wage System in Poland”, 1 April 1970. HU OSA 300-8-3-4677; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Background Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 5.

Yugoslav case; a socialist state that allowed unemployment, strikes and labour migration to Western Europe. Here, wage reforms took on a similar dynamic to that recognizable in market economies. On the one hand, the economic reforms of the mid-1960s, granted labour-managed firms control over wages and investments, with deep consequences for the labour market. As Leonard Kukić put it: "even though real wages had collapsed during the 1980s, existing workers were able to capture a larger share of the wage bill than could have been possible if entry of labour into existing labour-managed firms was not restricted. This behaviour resembles insider-outsider models of labour markets characterized by strong trade unions".⁵⁷ On the other hand, the crisis of the 1980s in Yugoslavia was translated by policymakers into the more traditional anti-inflationary policy package of wage freezes, price controls and cuts in domestic consumption.⁵⁸ This macroeconomic context, underpinned by Yugoslavia's idiosyncratic industrial relations model and federalism, made problems resulting from workers' control more likely to be dealt with through the interplay of local labour markets and political compromise, rather than simply through wage reform as in the other East European socialist countries.⁵⁹

By far the most interesting case of wage reform under state socialism was in Hungary. For much of the 1970s, Hungarian policymakers struggled to introduce a certain degree of wage differentiation, aiming to widen the low wage dispersion by way of rewriting classification tables and encouraging skills acquisition. One decade of wage experiments, however, only produced further egalitarian effects, so much so that by the early 1980s, a new wage reform was needed in order to restore higher remuneration for the segment of skilled workers: "It is not the purpose of the new system to promote social justice through egalitarian incomes. On the contrary, its aim is to create economic inequality based on performance because, in the regime's view, at present that seems to be the best way of improving the lot of everyone".⁶⁰ This constant search for

57 Leonard Kukić, "Socialist Growth Revisited: Insights from Yugoslavia", *European Review of Economic History* 22 (2018): 403–429, 418.

58 "Situation Report: Yugoslavia, 4 May 1987", 4 May 1987. HU OSA 300-8-47-217-3; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Situation Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

59 Goran Musić, "Yugoslavia: Workers' Self-Management as State-Paradigm", in *Ours to Master and To Own. Workers' Councils from the Commune to the Present*, ed. Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 172–190. According to Musić (in a private communication), Yugoslavia was structurally more open to productivity bargains than the shortage economies of Eastern Europe.

60 "Situation Report: Hungary, 13 January 1981", 13 January 1981. HU OSA 300-8-47-112-1; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications

economic inequality in Hungary was nevertheless not only pursued through wage reform, which – as one official put it – was likely to “stop at the factory gates”.⁶¹ It was also pursued (and in this lies the originality of late socialism in Hungary) through the creation of semi-autonomous subcontracting teams of workers within factories. These teams comprised up to 30 workers who were allowed, in their spare time, to negotiate contracts with management for the production of goods using the factory’s machinery and materials. By the mid-1980s, almost a quarter of a million Hungarian workers out of a total workforce of five million were engaged in such schemes, bargaining with management over higher wages; a process that led not only to significant wage differentiation, but also to a re-segmentation of the workforce between a privileged minority and the rest.⁶² This legal innovation, as David Stark showed, merely brought to light well-established shop floor practices, officialising workers’ control and the bargaining routine over higher pay, extra-hours and better access to machinery that always came with it.⁶³

This brief examination of wage reform in state socialist Eastern Europe shows the conundrum faced by the policymakers involved in seeking to organize productivity bargains by means of wage reform. Almost every wage reform after the 1960s was intended to rectify two of the problems inherent in a centrally-planned economy: either norm over-fulfilment and high wage dispersion, or various forms of egalitarianism and low wage dispersion. Almost every other wage reform implemented during the 1970s and 1980s ended up reproducing the same problems it was supposed to rectify. The back and forth between cutting down on norm over-fulfilment and encouraging low wage dispersion, and struggling against “wage levelling” to promote high wage dispersion was structurally determined by what I have termed the antinomy of workers’ control. It is indeed one of the historical peculiarities of the socialist shortage economy to have turned wage policy into the pillar of various cyclical reform attempts. This historical peculiarity, I argue, was causally influenced by the phenomenon of workers’ control, which was itself perceived by managers

Department: Situation Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 15.

61 “Situation Report: Hungary, 15 December 1982”, 15 December 1982. HU OSA 300-8-47-113-18; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Situation Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest, 14.

62 László Neumann, “Circumventing Trade Unions in Hungary: Old and New Channels of Wage Bargaining”, *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 3, no. 2 (1997): 185.

63 David Stark, “Rethinking Internal Labor Markets: New Insights from a Comparative Perspective”, *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 4 (1986): 492–504.

and policymakers either as a problem to be solved in search for higher productivity or, more often, as a solution to improve economic efficiency. Every time new “scientific” norms were supposed to boost productivity, workers’ control was deemed a problem for the very simple reason that the quintessential veterans of the shop floor were able to manipulate the norms. Every time the shortage economy bumped into “bottlenecks”, faulty supply, “storming” and the like, the very same veterans were called upon to put in the extra hours, reach the planned quotas and save face.

On the socialist shop floors, therefore, rather than Taylorism subjecting a vast mass of atomized and oppressed workers to the rhythms of the stopwatch, as Haraszti would have it, some workers always managed to command sufficient control of the production process to afford themselves respite, better incomes and a modicum of leverage in their relationship with management. With regard to Fordist productivity bargaining premised on the payment of higher wages in exchange for more managerial control of the production process, state socialist Eastern Europe generally saw average monetary wages grow faster than labour productivity after the period of wage restraint of the 1950s.⁶⁴ If this observation is accurate, then Bahro’s “quantitative compensations” – such as bubbles of modest consumerism and urban expansion during the golden Eastern European decade of the 1970s – were strictly politically motivated, and mere socialist concessions to the first generation of socialist workers rather than genuine Fordist bargains.⁶⁵

4 Conclusion

I started this chapter with one possible answer to the following question: for writing a general history of the left in the twentieth century, how should one think about the trajectory of the working class under state socialism? The experience of East European workers between 1945 and 1989 was interpreted by an Italian trade union leader as a grim lesson about Taylorism and Fordism running amok. This was an understanding Trentin took from the writings of a couple of influential dissidents. Granted, this was an idiosyncratic interpretation

64 “Industrial Wages and Labor Productivity in Eastern Europe”, 5 September 1978. HU OSA 300-8-3-16266; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Background Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

65 See also Peter Hübner, *Arbeit, Arbeiter und Technik in der DDR 1971 bis 1989* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Verlag, 2014).

and – as I have tried to show – a deeply misleading one, but the practice of looking across the Iron Curtain for such lessons was once common, at least on the left. For much of the 1970s and 1980s, Yugoslav self-management and the Polish independent trade union *Solidarność* served as sources of inspiration for rethinking political strategies and renewing the conceptual vocabulary of the West European left. The narrative outlined by *La Città del lavoro*, however, does not accurately depict the experience of workers in Eastern Europe before 1989. The overarching story of an “original sin” attributed to Lenin and his followers’ fascination with Taylorism and Fordism that ill prepared the left to navigate the global transformation of the 1970s rests on shaky ground. Used by Trentin in support of his account of the failure of the left in Western Europe, the dissident writings of Miklós Haraszti and Rudolf Bahro cannot be taken as generalized depictions of labour relations under state socialism. Nor should the homogenizing concepts of Taylorism and Fordism be permitted to erase the historical specificity of macroeconomic contexts that lacked the basic pre-conditions for securing “high wages – high consumption” social contracts.

In this chapter, I have suggested that “workers’ control” – a category of analysis resurrected by David Montgomery in the 1970s – might prove more profitable for exploring both the lived experience of entire categories of workers and the policy decisions taken by communist governments. This notion, I further contend, might prove equally valuable in understanding the emergence of capitalism in Eastern Europe after 1989. Scholarship on the industrial transformation of the region in the aftermath of the collapse of state socialism has focused predominantly on processes of privatization and deindustrialization. Within these frameworks of interpretation, post-socialist workers appear mostly as symbolically dispossessed *Geldsubjekten ohne Geld*⁶⁶: eking out a living on the margins of industrial ruins, struggling against mass unemployment, taking early retirement and buy-out options, pooling resources across the urban/rural divide and kinship networks, or killing time on low wage jobs. Studies of post-socialist trade unions, moreover, customarily examine defensive struggles against plummeting living standards, plant closures, lay-offs and the general collapse of union density throughout the past two decades.⁶⁷

66 The expression belongs to Robert Kurz, *Der Kollaps der Modernisierung: Vom Zusammenbruch des Kasernensozialismus zur Krise der Weltökonomie* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn Verlag, 1991), 225.

67 The amount of literature is too vast to quote. Two landmark studies in this vein are David Kideckel, *Getting By in Postsocialist Romania: Labor, the Body, and Working-Class Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008) and Adam Mrozowicki, *Coping with Social Change: Life Strategies in Poland's New Capitalism* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2011). For a recent general survey of trade-unionism in the region see Martin Myant, “Economies

This strand of literature builds on the double constitutive paradox of post-socialism across Eastern Europe: the transition from centrally planned to market economies on the one hand, and on the other, the deep social and cultural implications of social change in essentially egalitarian societies.⁶⁸ “Rebuilding the ship at sea” after 1989 implied a sudden spike in inequality, “shock therapies”, the rapid accumulation (and display) of private wealth, the erosion of state-sponsored welfare and the sidelining of working-class dispositions, voices and lives. Research agendas construed in light of these characteristics of post-socialism have no need for the concept of “workers’ control”. Unionized or not, workers contemplating unemployment, precarity and a future without work are far removed from the type of “quintessential workers” analysed by Montgomery, Kemény or Burawoy. Nevertheless, post-socialist Eastern Europe offers plenty of cases of effective industrial restructuring via privatization and foreign direct investment in an entire array of industries; from textile and food processing to car manufacturing and steel. In these cases, the issue of workers’ control was arguably the most important socialist legacy to be overcome through disciplinary campaigns, productivity bargains and the reorganization of shop floor routines and workplace solidarities.⁶⁹ *La Città del lavoro* does not help us to grasp the historical trajectory of state socialism, but it could certainly come in useful for understanding the tremendous success of capitalism in contemporary Eastern Europe.

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- 68 *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies: Rebuilding the Ship at Sea*, ed. Jon Elster, Claus Offe and Ulrich K. Preuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Branko Milanović, *Income, Inequality, and Poverty during the Transition from Planned to Market Economy* (Washington: The World Bank, 1998).
- 69 See the masterful analysis of “workers’ control” before and after the takeover of the Dacia factory by Renault in contemporary Romania by Ștefan Guga, “Low-Cost Fordism? The Antinomies of Class in the Romanian Automobile Industry, 1989–2016” (PhD Dissertation: Central European University, 2017). Compare with Elizabeth C. Dunn, *Privatizing Poland. Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

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African Forced Labour and Anti-colonial Struggles in the Portuguese Revolution

A Global Labour History Perspective

Raquel Varela and João Louçã

The Portuguese Revolution took place between 25 April 1974 and 25 November 1975, and was the most profound revolutionary event in Europe following the Second World War. During those 19 months, hundreds of thousands of workers went on strike, and hundreds of workplaces were occupied; sometimes for months at a time. At some stage, almost one third of the population of about ten million people was engaged in some form of power structure outside the scope of the state, whether workers, soldiers or committees of residents.¹ The Portuguese Revolution was such a social explosion that US president Gerald Ford considered it capable of transforming the entire Mediterranean into a “red sea” and causing the downfall of all the regimes of southern Europe like dominos.² Although it did not produce the predicted domino effect, the immediate results of the revolution were considerable, including the nationalization of banks and large companies without compensation, the birth of the welfare state and social security, the agrarian reform of large estates in the south of the country, and the introduction of workers’ management for 300 companies. These measures were not realized by state decree or by governmental action, as some have tried to frame them, but through popular assemblies. The banks were brought under the control of their workers, who prior to nationalization had stopped capital flight; the strikes in the major companies resulted in salary increases and price freezes; a number of hospitals and schools were occupied and managed democratically; public transport came under the control of workers and users, who decided to extend these to peripheral areas and to reduce fares; and land was occupied by salaried agricultural workers, more than tripling productivity and employment.

On 25 April 1974, a coup led by the MFA (Movimento das Forças Armadas; Armed Forces Movement) – a group of middle-ranking officials in the

¹ Raquel Varela, *A People’s History of the Portuguese Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2019).

² *La Vanguardia* (Barcelona), 23 March 1975.

Portuguese Army, opposed to the colonial war – toppled the Portuguese Estado Novo (New State). Established after the 1926 coup, the Estado Novo had been the longest standing dictatorship in Europe, and its downfall marked the beginning of a revolutionary process. Despite the MFA's plea – people were urged via radio broadcasts to stay at home – thousands took to the streets. The government's leader hid at Quartel do Carmo, in Lisbon, surrounded by people outside shouting “kill fascism”. In Caxias and Peniche, the prison gates were opened and all the political prisoners were released. The secret police (PIDE) was disbanded, the headquarters of the regime's newspaper (*A Época*) were attacked, and censorship was consequently abolished. The dictatorship's fall was unheralded, and the social forces carrying out the April coup were not a consequence of the country's backwardness, but instead of its colonial situation, as is explained in the next part of this chapter. The liberation wars in Africa had led to the deepest crisis the regime had yet to face, and by the time of the Portuguese Revolution, thirteen years of colonial war had been fought on three fronts: Guinea Bissau, Angola and Mozambique.

The story of the Portuguese Revolution often starts, incorrectly, with the Movimento das Forças Armadas. We argue that in reality it was triggered by the anti-colonial revolution in 1961, even if it was the MFA that opened up the gates of revolution. On Sunday 9 September 1973, amid stringent security precautions, 136 officers – none more senior than captain – met deep in the countryside ostensibly for a “special farmhouse barbecue”. They were drawn together by self-interest; they resented the dilution of their ranks with conscript officers who had briefly attended the military academy. By April 1974, the MFA had built a network of 200 supporting officers from all three services and had drafted its first programme calling for “Democracy, Development and Decolonization”. Europe's oldest dictatorship needed to reorganize and modernize its industry. The MFA wanted a democratic modern “mixed economy” based on the Western European model, and refused to accept the blame for colonial setbacks. At that time, none of the officers would identify themselves as “socialist”.³

By early 1974, the PAIGC (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde; The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) in Guinea was on the verge of victory and FRELIMO (the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) had opened a new offensive. There was no prospect of winning the wars in Africa. The number of Portuguese dead – an estimated 9,000 – was greater than in any conflict since the Napoleonic wars, and

3 *Jornal República*, 26 April 1974.

the army was being blamed for these failures. Some officers were ashamed to wear their uniforms in the streets of Lisbon, and a crisis had been developing in the middle ranks of the army. Over the course of 13 years, nearly 200,000 men failed to report for enlistment and 8,000 had deserted.⁴ The crisis that emerged in the state's backbone – the armed forces – through the importance of its defeat, led to the fall of the longest-standing dictatorship in Europe. The impact of this crisis within the Portuguese army can be measured by the absence of any acts of repression against the workers' movement in the early days of the revolution. For the working class in the modern industrial and services sectors, the successful struggle for civil, political and social rights following the Portuguese revolution could not be dissociated from its founding cause: the widespread resort to African forced labour and the resistance triggered by it. Further research will probably establish that the widespread struggle of the liberation movement in the Portuguese colonies, mainly based in peasant areas in countries subjected to forced labour, allowed the PAICG (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde; African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde), led by Amílcar Cabral, to unilaterally declare Guinea's independence in 1973. Despite inflicting significant military defeats on the Portuguese colonial army in Angola and Mozambique, the war dragged on for thirteen years without the prospect of any political solution whatsoever in the framework of Marcelo Caetano's regime.⁵

The revolution profoundly changed Portugal, but it did not change the relations of production in a lasting way. The state recovered after a counter-revolutionary coup on 25 November 1975, the regime was stabilized and the government functioned without the involvement of the masses that had helped to make the revolutionary events in 1974–1975. The revolution was defeated, even if it was not crushed like that in Chile the year before or the uprisings in Hungary in 1956. As in other cases, the history of the Portuguese revolution was written by the victors, who left out the scale and the magnificence of the struggles from below and their transformative capacity. Some even likened it to a hallucinogenic dream.⁶ Most of the accounts that appeared at the time, and subsequently, have applied a top-down approach; they are often written by “important figures” who have focused on their own role. In other

4 Estado-Maior do Exército/Comissão para o Estudo das Campanhas de África 1988. Covered in more detail in Chapter five.

5 Caetano was Prime Minister from 1968 until the 1974 revolution. He was preceded by António de Oliveira Salazar, who died in 1970.

6 José Medeiros Ferreira, *História de Portugal*, Vol. VIII: Portugal em Transe (1974–1985) (Lisboa: Estampa, 2001).

cases, the narrative is about the army and the senior military personnel, or the bourgeois machinations, but almost never about the *povo*: the people. If the working class is referred to, it appears as “the threat of labour unrest”, and is thus seen from the outside, as a problem rather than the solution. These approaches have marginalized the working class in a political, administrative and economic sense, both in Portugal and in its former colonies. The current state’s short memory concerning historical facts is undoubtedly one of the key factors that have led to this dominant approach. Yet there is another set of pivotal causes related to the geographical and social aspects of the revolution: methodological nationalism, Eurocentrism and a limited conceptualization of the working class. These three major criticisms, which were raised in Marcel Van der Linden’s essential contribution to the global history of labour, are crucial to interconnect the Portuguese revolution, (anti)colonialism and forced labour.⁷

Some progress has been made in recent decades, with the publication of studies highlighting the exceptional history of a small country at the European periphery; a country that also was the last European colonial empire.⁸ Nevertheless, the social history covering the revolutionary period remains minimal when compared with the preponderance of political-institutional, diplomatic and military histories. As Manuel Redero rightly observed, “Research on dictatorships and revolutionary movements, quite abundant in the 1960s and 1970s, gave way to the study of democracy and the problems faced by transition processes and democratic consolidation”.⁹ More importantly, this chapter addresses a serious gap in the studies on Portugal, which have rarely established a link – either in terms of cause and effect, or of correlation – between on the one hand the dictatorship’s political regime, its “late modernization”, the revolutionary process and the end of the dictatorship; and on the other hand, the

7 Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008); Marcel van der Linden and Jan Lucassen, *Prolegomena for a Global Labour History* (Amsterdam: International Institute of Social History, 1999).

8 Encarnación Lemús, *En Hamelín ... La Transición Española más allá de la Frontera* (Oviedo: Septem Ediciones, 2001); Ana Mónica Fonseca, “O apoio da social-democracia alemã a democratização portuguesa (1974–1975)”, *Revista Ler História* 63 (2012): 93–107; Muñoz Sánchez, António, “Cambio mediante acercamiento. La socialdemocracia alemana y el régimen de Franco, 1962–1975”, in *Zeiten im Wandel. Deutschland im Europa des 20. Jahrhundert. Kontinuität, Entwicklungen und Brüche*, ed. Jürgen Elvert and Sylvain Schirmann (Bruxelas: P. I. E. Peter Lang, 2007), 119–140; Tiago Moreira de Sá, *Os Estados Unidos da América e a Democracia Portuguesa (1974–1976)* (Lisboa: MNE, Instituto Diplomático, 2009).

9 Manuel Redero, “La Transición Española, Cuadernos del Mundo Actual”, *História* 16, no. 72 (1994).

forced labour in the colonies and the way workers subjected to it supported the liberation movements against the Portuguese army. The vast majority of the studies on the Estado Novo (1933–1974) and the revolution (1974–1975) have focused on Portugal as a territorial unit, and have pinpointed the colonial war as the beginning of the end for the regime.

Among the studies on forced labour, those focusing on “where, under what conditions and who carried out the work” prevail. There is in fact a great deal of literature dealing with forced labour within the different colonial empires, as well as some relevant work on forced labour taking place inside Portugal’s former colonies, but none relate the political organization of the resistance to forced labour. Likewise, the relationship between forced labour and the political-military groups fighting against Portuguese colonialism on the battle front is never addressed. For an overview of forced labour, we refer to the two general studies published by Oporto University’s African Studies Centre (2005, 2007),¹⁰ Alexander Keese’s work on Angola,¹¹ Eric Allina’s study on Mozambique¹² and Augusto Nascimento’s study about servants in São Tomé.¹³ Many records concerning forced labour have been preserved by organizations and individuals, ranging from commissions, missionaries, journalists and public servants, to researchers and historians. The matter cannot therefore be attributed to a lack of sources, even if one considers the degree of illiteracy in a population with few written records and with underground political or military organizations. In addition, the reports of the regime’s own colonial missions and of its military actions, together with the archives, constitute important sources. As Eric Hobsbawm reminds us, “plenty of the resources for the history of popular movements were only acknowledged as such because someone asked a question and then desperately searched for a way – any way – to

10 Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto (Org.), *Trabalho Forçado Africano – experiências coloniais comparada* (Porto: Campo das Letras – Editores, S.A., 2005); Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto (Org.), *Trabalho Forçado Africano. Articulações com o poder político*, Coleção Estudos Africanos (Porto: Campo das Letras – Editores, S.A., 2007).

11 Alexander Keese, “The constraints of late colonial reform policy: forced labour scandals in the Portuguese Congo (Angola) and the limits of reform under authoritarian colonial rule, 1955–1961”, *Portuguese Studies* 28, no. 2 (2012): 186–200.

12 Éric Allina, *Slavery By Any Other Name: African Life under Company Rule in Colonial Mozambique* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012).

13 Augusto Nascimento, *Poderes e quotidiano nas roças de S. Tomé e Príncipe de finais de oitocentos a meados de novecentos* (Lousã, s.n. 2002); Augusto Nascimento, *Desterro e contrato: moçambicanos a caminho de S. Tomé e Príncipe: Anos 1940 a 1960* (Maputo: Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, 2002).

answer it. We ought not to be positivist and accept that questions and answers arise naturally out of material research".¹⁴

Studies on forced labour in the production chain – which was legally abolished in 1961, but remained in four of the colonies until 1974 – have failed to establish a link between the Portuguese Carnation Revolution on the one hand, and on the other, its pivotal role in the creation of a world market, the regime's crisis and its colonial wars. Nevertheless, we place this link at the centre of our study in the current chapter. Although well-informed studies on the historical background of forced labour are rare, there are two that stand out. The first is Perry Anderson's pioneering work that links primitive accumulation in the colonies to forced labour and subsequent demographic anaemia, and applies to it the theory of uneven and combined development.¹⁵ The second is Dalila Cabrita Mateus' study on conflict among forced labourers at the outbreak of the colonial wars.¹⁶ Research using books such as the highly regarded *A Guerra Colonial* (The Colonial War), by Aniceto Afonso, provides a detailed account of the number of fatalities inflicted on the Portuguese army, as well as of the brutality of its actions, such as the use of napalm against civilians.¹⁷ However, no information is provided concerning the number of casualties inflicted on the liberation movement's fighters – or among civilians, for that matter.

We believe it is essential to study production chains, as this can shed light on the extent to which the development of distinct social classes across the different continents is interconnected, and can clarify how the unequal wealth distribution emerged among core and peripheral countries.¹⁸ It is therefore questionable, as highlighted by Perry Andersen, that the anachronistic Portuguese empire failed to provide for a relatively impoverished working class in the urban areas with no means of social mobility, and that even in the colonies there was unemployment amongst the white community.¹⁹ Accordingly, this chapter also contributes to the study of the making of the working classes in the Portuguese empire, focusing on some of the most marginalized areas in social history: the resistance, organization and political struggles of forced labourers, and the relationship between these labourers and the Portuguese

14 Eric Hobsbawm, *Sobre História* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998), 220.

15 Perry Anderson, *Portugal e o Fim do ultracolonialismo* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1966).

16 Dalila Cabrita Mateus, *A PIDE-DGS e a Guerra Colonial* (Lisboa: Terramar, 2004), 420.

17 Aniceto Afonso and Carlos de Matos Gomes, *Guerra Colonial* (Lisboa: Bertrand, 2000).

18 Marcel van der Linden, "The Promises and Challenges of Global Labor History", in *Global Histories of Work*, vol. 1, ed. Andreas Eckert (Oldenbourg: Gruyter, 2016), 40–42.

19 Perry Anderson, *Portugal e o Fim*.

Carnation Revolution, in which the working class played a crucial role. As far as liberation movements are concerned, we do not refer simply to the armed struggle, but to the wider movement that was structured around the peasants and their social support networks, food supply, protective activities and resistance to forced labour.

1 Forced Labour in the Portuguese Colonies

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Portuguese colonies were facing a serious challenge: how to force black/native populations to work when slavery was no longer legal or accepted.²⁰ As Oliveira Martins stated:

It was still necessary to dry the swamps, navigate the rivers, pave the roads, build the warehouses and obtain the human working tool. Beforehand, slavery supplied all of this, while capital consolidated in the black people's (*market value*) – today, it consolidates on immigrants' wages, or on the black and ethnic workers hired to work in desolate areas. Capital acts similarly in regions inhabited by indigenous peoples liable of basic submission to civilization, although it might seem different at first glance. Force, instead of contracts, is its actual expression.²¹

In *Capital*, Marx looked at colonial relations in the eighteenth century to illustrate that the historical process severing the worker from the means of production is typical of capitalism anywhere it takes hold: "The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil, is the basis of the whole process. The history of this expropriation, in different countries, assumes different aspects, and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession, and at different periods".²² Primitive accumulation of capital, a concept developed by Adam Smith, is named by Marx as the root of the process of capitalism, whereas the expropriation of the agricultural producer's soil was the onset of primitive accumulation, a form of "original sin" in terms

20 Dalila Cabrita Mateus, "El Trabajo Forzado en las Colonias Portuguesas", in *Historia, Trabajo y Sociedad*, no. 4 (2013): 63–87; Valdemir Zamparoni, "Da Escravatura ao Trabalho Forçado, teorias e práticas", *Africana Studia*, no 7 (2004): 300.

21 Oliveira Martins. *O Brazil e as Colónias Portuguesas*, 1920. Cited in Zamparoni, "Da Escravatura", 301.

22 Karl Marx, *The Capital*, Vol 1, Part 8, Chapter 26, 508, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-I.pdf> [5 December 2016].

of political economy. Unlike in the Americas – where the flow of millions of Europeans together with enslaved Africans created the labour force required for capitalist modernization processes – in Portuguese Africa, European occupation remained relatively feeble. By 1955, Angola had fewer than 80,000 white European settler colonialists compared with over four million African natives. In 1925, the former numbered only 25,000, and in 1911, only 13,000. This fact is inextricably linked with Portugal's localization in the international state system as a weak metropolis, depending on an old alliance with England (negotiated in order to remain independent from Spain). The backward economy meant that until the 1950s, it was unable to settle a sufficient amount of its white population in the colonies, which thus attracted little capital from the metropolis – even though the regime had, from 1926 onwards, extended industrial restrictions to colonial possessions, controlling exports. In the 1930s, trade exchanges with the colonies remained as low as 15 per cent of the country's total. It was at this stage that cotton cultivation was imposed on the colonies. "It was not until the Estado Novo that the State apparatus is employed for colonial purposes",²³ despite the "peace-making" campaigns that took place between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1920s – a euphemism for the military occupation of African land.

Especially in Angola, the colonial regime tried to replicate Brazil, opening up coffee, cotton and large sugar plantations from the beginning of the twentieth century. Lack of investment, weather conditions and the soil turned this enterprise into a distant mirage. In fact, only the spirits industry prospered, aimed at the African market. The last years of legal slavery, between 1858 and 1868, saw a 30 per cent increase in the number of slaves in colonial possessions, but after 1878, cocoa production in São Tomé and Príncipe caused a spurt of new traffic from Angola. This growth of human traffic caused a boycott by the Cadbury company, since in 1909 the British chocolate maker learned that plantation owners, together with the Portuguese government, were to blame for the ongoing slavery in these islands. The boycott lasted until 1916.

In 1899, the Indigenous Work Regulation established the following types of forced labour: "compelled", "corrective", "in public interest works" and "hired". The "hired" workers left their villages, families and agriculture to work in large plantations for very low wages. The same regulation stated that the Portuguese colonies' indigenous peoples were subject to the moral and legal obligation of finding ways to survive and improve their social status by means of work.²⁴ In

23 Valentim Alexandre, "O Império Colonial", in *Portugal Contemporâneo*, ed. António Costa Pinto (Lisboa: D. Quixote, 2005), 71.

24 Dalila Cabrita Mateus, "El Trabajo forzado": 63–87.

1907, the “hut (*cubata*) tax” was introduced, only to be replaced in 1919 by an indigenous poll tax. In a similar way as in the remaining European colonies in Africa, this tax pushed Africans submitted to the colonial system into relying on a monetary economy, and forced them to work outside the scope of their own traditional livelihoods. However, the legal documentation claimed that this tax embodied a civilizing mission. At first, work assumed the form of cargo transport, effectively turning the men into packhorses. Then came compulsory farm work: in return for virtually no wages at all, men left their villages to go work on cotton, tea or rice fields. Afterwards, came work in the mines in Transvaal and Mozambique, on cocoa plantations in Sao Tomé and Príncipe, and domestic work throughout all the colonies. The 1928 Indigenous Labour Code asserted that indigenous people were not allowed to work for private purposes under any circumstances.²⁵ Nevertheless, it still underlined the moral obligation to work, and this code – which remained the backbone of all the labour schemes in the colonies – established a system of contracts that were only voluntary on the surface. On the other hand, any local administrator could label work carried out by Africans in private undertakings as “of public interest”.

2 Building a Racialist Ideology

Since the 1920s, many of the leading Portuguese figures in anthropology have come from the Oporto School, which in liaison with University of Porto and the Natural History Museum developed the subject’s close links with the colonial issue. Up to at least the 1940s, anthropology was a subject for doctors and biologists, who carried out anthropometric research into native populations and used racialist approaches, popular at the time, to assess people’s physical features and fitness for work. In 1934, the First Colonial Anthropology National Congress was held in Porto. In tandem with the Colonial Exhibit, which displayed a substantial amount of research material on physical, serological and psychological features of colonial populations, the subject was promoted based on the need to possess knowledge of such populations, specifically “towards a more rational colonization and the revaluation of the native workforce”.²⁶ António Mendes Correia, a professor in physical anthropology who was close to the regime and had served as Porto’s mayor and president of the Portuguese Geography Society, had for some time been in charge of the JMGIC

25 Dalila Cabrita Mateus, *Ibid.*

26 Rui M. Pereira, “Raça, Sangue e Robustez. Os paradigmas da Antropologia Física Colonial Portuguesa”, *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos*, 7/8 (2005): 209–241.

(Junta das Missões Geográficas e de Investigações Coloniais; Colonial Research and Geographical Missions Junta). This was a body that was established in January 1936, under the direct responsibility of the colonies' minister. The JMGIC coordinated all the research missions carried out between 1937 and 1956 in Mozambique, Guinea, Angola, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor.

Around 1935, Orlando Ribeiro, the founder of Portuguese geography and a keen observer of social phenomena, was travelling throughout Angola. On one occasion, he was amazed to find a group of hired people, tied to each other with rope and guarded by two armed men, more than fifty years after slavery had been abolished. He wrote: "We took pictures and filmed such a debasing display and asked the guards why those people were tied, what crime or offense had they committed. 'They are bums who do not want to work on their own land'".²⁷ Henrique Galvão, a colonial surveyor in 1947, disclosed his conclusions at a parliamentary session held behind closed doors: "the government has become the main recruiter and dealer of native labour, to such an extent that settlers unabashedly require in writing manpower 'supplies' from the Indigenous Affairs Office".²⁸ Both cases – Henrique Galvão's and Orlando Ribeiro's – illustrate the way in which prominent personalities in the country's political and academic life could react in face of the evidence of the brutality of forced work, risking their career and their own freedom in its denunciation.

There was also intensive use of African labour to build roads in Portuguese Guinea. With no other relevant investments to speak of, the communications network resulted in the Guinea population declining by more than ten per cent up to the mid-1930s due to internal migration, losing the capacity to sustain their own agriculture. The situation was different in Angola, where the native populations maintained control over their own crops. In Mozambique, the road maintenance impressed European visitors at the time, until they realized it was being carried out by women and children equipped with primitive tools and under the armed coercion of the colonial authorities. The situation was more blatant in the south, where natives were recruited to work in the South African gold mines. In 1966, Perry Anderson estimated that 100,000 Mozambican workers annually were sent to the mines in South Africa.²⁹ Introduced in 1909, this contract was successively extended and allowed a substantial proportion of freight transit to Johannesburg to pass through Lourenço Marques' docks. In addition to being paid 150 escudos for each worker, the government

27 Orlando Ribeiro, *A colonização de Angola e o seu fracasso* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, S. A., 1981), 192.

28 Cited in Perry Anderson, *Portugal e o Fim*, 51–52.

29 Idem.

kept half of their wages. This was paid in gold at the end of the contract, whereas the workers themselves were paid in the devalued colonial currency.

Marcelo Caetano, who had replaced Salazar as head of the government in 1968, estimated on a 1954 report that the number of Mozambicans working outside the province was about 500,000. That same year, the United Nations estimated there were a similar number of Angolans living outside the territory. With regard to Mozambique, over two thirds of the male workers were relocated, not only to the Transvaal mines, but also to cocoa plantations in São Tomé and Príncipe or cotton fields in Southern Rhodesia.³⁰ Anderson was adamant when describing what he labelled as “ultra-colonialism” that “human oppression experienced in Portuguese forced labour is so brutal and intense it has no parallel anywhere else in the continent. It is the absolute zenith of African misery”.³¹ He considered that there were more African emigrants, both legal and illegal, in Angola and Mozambique than in all the rest of Africa.

Since agriculture was the main activity and source of wealth, as much for the native populations as for the colonial occupation, its regulation by the state was of the highest importance. Thus, the Rural Labour Code was published in 1962. It permitted the government to defend itself against international bodies – such as the UN and the ILO – and international public opinion, because wages were fixed by collective bargaining. The truth was that with no trade unions in place, African workers’ wages were established in secret meetings or, as was often the case, they were never officially documented at all.³² It was all a mirage, as the wage gap in Mozambique in 1969 attests to.³³ In manufacturing, while unskilled native Africans earned 5 escudos per day, semi-skilled Africans earned 30 escudos; in agriculture, Africans considered to be citizens earned 5,478 escudos annually, Africans who were non-citizens earned 1,404 escudos and white settlers earned 47,723.

In its final stages, the Estado Novo regime bred an ideology of patronizing and protecting native populations, which provided a natural framework for the Christian civilizing missionary effort through work and assimilation. Rear Admiral Sarmiento Rodrigues, Mozambique’s Governor-General in 1962, described the Portuguese presence in Africa as follows:

30 Zimbabwe was a British colony with self-government established in 1923 and administered by the British South Africa Company. It remained a British colony until 1980.

31 Perry Anderson, *Ibid.*, 50.

32 Dalila Cabrita Mateus, “El Trabajo forzado en las colonias portuguesas”, 63–87, ISSN: 2172–2749.

33 Source: Anuário Estatístico [Statistical yearbook], vol. II (1970), cited in *Labour: forced or free?* CFMAG Topics, no 1.

From the onset, we did not ward off natives. We always dealt with them with humanity, and, quite often, welcomed them into our families. At the same time, we civilized them on our own terms, and gave them our laws and customs. In other words, moved by simple natural generosity, we wanted to turn them into equals. Nowadays, between us, in overseas Africa, there are only two classes of Portuguese people: civilized and natives. The latter are protected by their primitive customs. As for the civilized, we do not care whether they are black, white or mixed-race: they are all the same, all civilized. It could not be more Christian, human or kind. It is pure assimilation.³⁴

“Forced labour was, in reality, an in-kind tribute charged by the winner from the dominated peoples”,³⁵ as Phillip Havik described the situation. Portugal was a feeble empire, which turned the metropolis into a recipient of the wealth created by colonial despoilment. Paradoxically, from the 1960s on, it was the war economy that provided some investment to the colonies and started enabling a form of internal market. Nevertheless, destitution spread through the countryside, and with no industrial alternative in place this led to whole generations searching for better living conditions through emigration, mostly to France (around one and a half million emigrated between 1961 and 1974). At the same time, the regime produced one last imperial attempt in Africa: colonial war.

3 Forced Labour and Colonial War

For decades, the prison raid carried out by the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola; People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola) was depicted as the starting point of the colonial war. The main historical archive for the revolution (Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril) still labels it as such: “On the 4 February 1961, members of the MPLA raided the military confinement building, PSP headquarters and the National Broadcaster’s delegation in Luanda. 4 February 1961 marks the beginning of colonial wars in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique”.³⁶ The next milestone is usually credited

34 Sarmiento M. M. Rodrigues, *Caminhos do Futuro nos Horizontes da Nação: Grupo de Estudo e Trabalho* (Lourenço: Marques, 1962), 119.

35 Philip J. Havik, “Estradas sem fim: o trabalho forçado e a ‘política indígena’ na Guiné (1915–1945)”, in *Trabalho Forçado Africano – experiências coloniais comparadas*, coord. Centro de Estudos Africanos da Universidade do Porto (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2006), 243.

36 <http://www.ci.uc.pt/cd25a/wikka.php?wakka=Tc1312> [3 December 2016].

to the UPA (União dos Povos de Angola; Angola Peoples Union), when its militants attacked ranches and colonial villages in Northern Angola on 15 March 1961, brutalizing its populations. However, before these canonical events took place, something else had already happened. This was described by the historian Dalila Cabrita Mateus, who had already taken Portuguese historiography by surprise with her book *A PIDE-DGS e a Guerra Colonial* (PIDE-DGS and Colonial War).³⁷ Based on an assessment of the morphology regarding the secret police in the colonies – using African archives, as well as a number of interviews with freedom fighters – Dalila Mateus provided evidence for the brutal repression of the colonial freedom fighters. This came somehow as a surprise for those who had studied PIDE's behaviour in the metropolis, because it was regarded as relatively ineffective, despite the atrocities committed against Communist Party members. In the colonies, the police were just as callous: they arrested and tortured thousands of combatants, with widespread support from the settlers. An information and surveillance network was pivotal in assisting the war effort, as were the close links with the military leadership. Above all, it was extremely efficient: "The acts of colonial violence were a sort of lifeblood fuelling PIDE/DGS' crimes and brutality. In Africa, it embarked upon mass repression and played an instrumental role in Colonial War".³⁸

In February 1961, the Portuguese army reacted to the Baixa do Cassange (in Angola) cotton workers' strike, by bombing the communities with napalm. This strike had begun in earlier that month and lasted only around two weeks. Between ten and twenty thousand people were killed, and whole villages were razed.³⁹ This northern area was a monoculture monopoly exploited by Cotonang, a Portuguese-Belgian company: "There was open revolt on 4 January, when Cotonang foremen were tied at the Soba Quivota Sanzala, ten kilometers away from Milando. ... Then came the population's threat to bash whoever tried to force them to work in the cotton fields",⁴⁰ in

37 This historiographic output had been addressed before in some news features and literary novels. In this regard, Diana Andringa's documentaries *As Duas Faces da Guerra* (The Two Faces of War) and *Tarrafal: Memórias do Campo de Morte Lenta* (Tarrafal: Memories from the Slow Death Field) are crucial, as well as Joaquim Furtado's, *A Guerra* (The War). These made a successful attempt to display the two sides of the conflict, as well as the colonial army's inhumanity. With regard to literature, we could single out dozens of writers and poets, many of whom were active in the ranks of liberation movements: Luandino Vieira, Pepetela and Mia Couto are amongst the most popular.

38 Dalila Cabrita Mateus, *A PIDE DGS e a Guerra Colonial* (Lisboa: Terramar, 2004), 420.

39 Ibid. This was considered the starting moment of the colonial war, which continued until 1974.

40 Aida Freudenthal, "A Baixa de Cassange: Algodão e Revolta", *Revista Internacional de Estudos Africanos*, no. 18–22 (1995–1999): 260.

public works like roads and other infrastructures or paying the annual tax. Production stopped for a whole month, and nothing would subsequently be the same again:

Gathered in large groups, the insurgents attacked both private and official buildings, damaged vehicles, bridges and rafts, brought down the Portuguese flag's pole, but no Europeans were killed. In remote areas, such as Luremo, Cuango and Longo outposts, burnt cottonseeds piled up and native carnets were torn, alongside other signs of hostility. Gatherings became more frequent and threatening. Despite Cotanang's expressed concerns as the uprising was unfolding, and multiple requests by European dealers' for armed intervention to bring it to an end.⁴¹

No systematic survey was ever carried out into the conflicts or the collective action undertaken by forced workers within Portuguese colonies. However, there was a partial one, based on both oral and written sources from the army and secret police – sources that had never previously been scrutinized by history – and it provides evidence of much more widespread resistance to forced labour than previously thought, both in terms of the dimension of events and continuity over time. The Portuguese army's psychological action guide flags up the “non-improved group” (the masses) as the staunchest supporters of liberation movements – in contrast to “tribal lords”, “intermediate groups, and “improved groups” and settlers – in a typology based on qualification levels and territorial origins. According to the army, the “non-improved” group tended to “support subversion” because liberation movements pursue the struggle against the “moral duty to work”, “food and income culture” and taxes: “subversion capitalizes on taxes, portraying them as a kind of violence aimed solely at making the white man richer”.⁴²

Let us take the example of Pidjiguiti, Guinea-Bissau, a Portuguese colony on the African West Coast. Bissau itself used to be in the Bissau's docks catchment area, but fishing and coasting boats, sailing inside Guinea, used the adjacent Pidjiguiti docks. On 3 August 1959, a strike began in the general workshops, and spread to the whole of Pidjiguiti docks. Amongst others, it included sailors providing cabotage services, as well as those working for Casa Gouveia, linked to the powerful CUF (Companhia União Fabril; Industrial Union Company), the largest Portuguese industrial conglomerate. Detention orders for those on

41 Ibid.: 263.

42 General Staff of the Army, Memorandum of the functions of psychological officers in the overseas units (Lisboa: Estado-Maior do Exército, 1970), 37–68.

strike led to clashes, and the strikers fought back with sticks and stones. In response, the police shot and killed seven people.⁴³ The French newspaper *Le Monde*⁴⁴ mentioned a riot that had left five people dead and a significant number injured. According to the account of Pinto Rema, a Franciscan priest:

The insubordinate have paddles, sticks, iron bars, stones and harpoons. Both sides refuse to give in or talk to each other. On the first clash, two police chiefs, Assunção and Dimas, are brutally attacked after firing warning shots. The fray causes injuries to seventeen guards, the police loses control and starts shooting to kill without restriction to exact vengeance; the result is that thirteen to fifteen people laid dead on the Pidjiguiti docks. The bodies of more sailors and dock workers were swept away by the river Geba, we do not know how many.⁴⁵

Historian Dalila Cabrita Mateus points out that this strike was at the root of the PAIGC's decision to turn to armed struggle, with peasant support:

A confidential report on this meeting, the "most crucial" in PAIGC's history, according to Cabral, states it was the place where the move from nationalist unrest to national liberation struggle was prepared. Three instrumental resolutions were adopted: first, to shift the party's activity to the countryside, mobilizing the peasantry; second, to get ready for armed struggle; third, to move a share of the party's leadership abroad.⁴⁶

A PAIGC memorandum – undated, but archived between the 1959 and 1961 files – addressed to the Portuguese government urged an end to the brutality towards natives, and drew attention to the starvation caused by rice exports, since this was the sole food source for Guinean people, and increasing exports meant that food reserves were being drained. Between 1942 and 1947, the death toll reached "thirty thousand people, mown down by hunger", while their

43 Letter from 15 August 1959 (National Archive Torre do Tombo) – ANTT-PIDE-DGS-Proc.299-46-SR-Pt.9-1 (Pasta 81944).

44 Cutting from the newspaper *Le Monde*, 15 August 1959 (National Archive Torre do Tombo) ANTT-PIDE-DGS-Proc.299-46-SR-Pt.9-1_c0009 (File 81944).

45 Henrique Pinto Rema, "História das Missões Católicas da Guiné", ed. Franciscana (Braga, 1982), 856, cited in Dalila Mateus, "Conflitos Sociais na Base da Ecloração das Guerras Coloniais", in *Greves e Conflitos Sociais em Portugal no Século XX*, ed. Varela, Raquel et al., (Lisboa: Colibri, 2012), 180.

46 Basil Davidson, "Révolution en Afrique: la Libération de la Guinée Portugaise", ed. Seuil (Paris: Combats, 1969), 36–37, cited in Mateus, "Conflitos Sociais", 181.

children were forced to accept being exported as “hired workers on Portuguese farmsteads in other colonies”.⁴⁷

Other examples concern Mozambique, which had close ties with neighbouring countries, including South Africa and some that had already achieved independence. In the early hours of 11 June 1960, Faustino and Chibilite, members of a mutual assistance association for the Macondes Peoples Organization, insisted on talking to the Portuguese authorities to negotiate the return to Mozambique of the Macondes⁴⁸ who were in Tanganyika. In Tanganyika,⁴⁹ they had gained more rights, so should come back as “*uhulu*, meaning they could live freely, dismissed from forced labour”.⁵⁰ For four days, Faustino and Chibilite put pressure on the Portuguese authorities, and were followed by an increasing number of men, women and children, “on foot or bike”, heading to the Macon constituency. On the morning of 15 June, they numbered five thousand. It should be borne in mind that about 60 per cent of the wages of Mozambicans forced to work in South African gold mines was handed directly to the Portuguese state in gold, and workers only received a proportion of this, in local currency; the rest went straight into the metropolis’ coffers.⁵¹ On that day, the authorities met the Macondes’ demands with a barrage of gunfire – the Mueda Massacre – leaving fourteen dead according to an official report, or 150 as claimed by FREMLIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique; Mozambique Liberation Front): “From then on, the Macondes wanted war and were ready to follow FRELIMO when the organization sparked it on September 25th 1964”.⁵²

The secret police archives include several accounts of conflicts in Mozambique, at the docks, for example. On 11 January 1971, reference is made to a protest in 1970, during which production was halted: “low wages and ill-treatment at the hands of stowage officials in Nacala were at the root of the refusal to work, as for some time, stowage work was done by prisoners”.⁵³ A confidential

47 PAIGC memorandum addressed to the Portuguese Government (National Archive Torre do Tombo, n.d.), 1. Ref: PT-ANTT- AOS-CO-UL-32-C_0001, 1. (File 84619).

48 The Marcondes are a Bantu ethnicity living in the southeast of Tanzania and northeast of Mozambique, mostly on the Mueda plateau.

49 Tanganyika used to be a republic in Eastern African and a member of the British Commonwealth. It was named after the Tanganyika Lake, at its western border. Between 1880 and 1919, it was a German colony, but in the aftermath of the First World War it became a British one between 1919 and 1961. In 1964 it was unified with the island of Zanzibar.

50 Dalila Cabrita Mateus, “Conflitos Sociais na Base das Guerras Coloniais”, 183.

51 Dalila Cabrita Mateus, “El Trabajo forzado en las colonias portuguesas”, 69.

52 Dalila Cabrita Mateus, “Conflitos Sociais na Base das Guerras Coloniais”, 183.

53 Report, 11/17/1971, Ref: ANTT-PIDE-DGS-Proc.SC-12918-CI(2)-NT7664 (File 80320).

report from 2 August 1972 mentions a gathering of 60 men hired by CFM (Caminhos de Ferro de Moçambique; Mozambique Railways) at the Nacala Dock Police building on 29 April that year. The men were protesting against being scheduled to work a 24-hour shift with no assurance that they would ever be paid at all. An inquiry established that on the aforementioned date “one 160 men were hired by CFM to work on the Nacala docks, divided in two groups. One comprised one hundred men, who were to work from 7 a.m. to midnight, while the remaining 60 were expected to work for twenty-four hours, from 7 a.m. to 7 a.m. in the following day”. This second group would only be allowed breaks to eat. The report indicates that the demands of the “strikes” (the word is never used) were met.⁵⁴

4 Between the Metropolis and the Colonies

In July 1974, the revolution in the metropolis, the soldiers' refusal to fight in the colonies and the fissures within the state's leadership forced the government to concede and endorse the colonies' independence law. As a consequence, one sector of the state felt side-stepped, and moved towards a more extreme political stance, culminating in a failed coup on 28 September 1974 led by the conservative General António de Spínola. As claimed by Kenneth Maxwell, events in Lisbon, Luanda and Maputo were indissociable.

The same crises that shifted Portugal decisively to the left were the ones determinately pushing Portuguese Africa towards independence. They arose as a range of conflicts, sometimes long-term, whereupon political tension in Portugal, events in Africa and external pressure combined, leading to serious confrontations. The majority of those in Portugal who were politicized were fully aware of the underlying causes of these crises, although the national press seldom reported on them, or did it in rather vague terms. When the crises were over and their consequences became visible, what was publicly discussed was the resignation of Prime-Minister Palma Carlos on the 9th of July and Vasco Gonçalves' appointment for the job, or General Spínola's resignation on the 30th of September and his substitution by general Costa Gomes. Notwithstanding, no one involved in these crises ever doubted that the shape and substance of Portugal's

54 Report, 2/8/1972 (National Archive Torre do Tombo) ANTT-PIDE-DGS-Proc.SC-12918-CI(2)-NT7664 (File 80320).

political future and the independence of the colonies were inextricably linked. Achievements on one sphere would either consolidate victory or bring defeat to the other.⁵⁵

“Prompt independence for the colonies”, was the slogan on a famous poster. “At five o’clock, the situation at the gates of Estrela, the Hospital Militar Principal (Main Military Hospital), did not allow predicting the evolution of the events related to the demands for the release of Captain Peralta”.⁵⁶ Pedro Rodriguez Peralta, a short man with Caribbean features, was a Cuban armed-forces Captain, who had been captured and injured by the Portuguese military in Bissau in 1969 and later taken to Lisbon under arrest. Five years later, in 1974, the demand for his release was the motto for one of the many anti-colonial “demos” called by the far left. The demonstration turned out to be a large mobilization, despite facing an impressive repressive apparatus. The GNR (national guard) on horseback and some PSP (another police force) agents were stationed near Pedro Nunes High School, while Maoist militants of the MRPP (Movimento Reorganizativo do Partido do Proletariado; Movement for the Reorganization of the Proletariat Party) and the Trotskyists of the Liga Comunista Internacionalista (Internationalist Communist League) and other activists carried banners displaying anti-colonial slogans. A few Cape Verde workers who lived nearby joined them. Yet Captain Peralta was not released that day; only at the end of September 1974, as a result of the political friction that led to General Spínola’s resignation.

There were several demonstrations against the war throughout this period, organized mostly by the far left, that actually managed to prevent some soldiers from travelling to the colonies: on 3 May 1974, a group of MRPP demonstrators prevented the boarding of a military unit headed for Africa; the following day, the same happened at the Figo Maduro airport; on 5 May, an anti-colonial protest went from Estrela to Rossio, in Lisbon, and an anticolonial demo was dispersed by the GNR and PSP; on the 6th of May, the Movimento de Esquerda Socialista (the Socialist Left Movement) organized a gathering in Cabo Ruivo, supporting the liberation movements. These protests were usually led by far-left groups and students:

After successive preparatory assemblies, a final meeting took place yesterday afternoon, at the Faculdade de Ciências [Science Faculty],

55 Kenneth Maxwell, *A Construção da Democracia em Portugal* (Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1999), 99.

56 *Diário Popular*, 26 May 1974, 28.

attended by people from Angola and other colonies living in Lisbon, as well as plenty of progressive young students. Attendees headed to Casa de Angola [Angola House] and occupied its premises. Later, a military unit came up and, after being informed of the motives for the occupation, left. In a general meeting, the Angolans elected a provisional steering group and adopted a motion in support of their brothers and sisters who are fighting colonialism with guns in their hands, and addressed the salute not only to MPLA, but to all movements fighting for independence at the colonies.⁵⁷

The colonies' independence came about thanks to a combination of interweaving factors. These included a crisis within the army, reflected in a divide among the generals, the officials' refusal to continue the war and the demoralization of soldiers, who were still being killed after 25 April 1974 in areas where the war was continuing.⁵⁸ The political crisis fuelled the military crisis and vice versa. In the international framework of the Cold War, doors had been opened to allow the Soviet Union and the US to exploit the former colonies without having to share the gains with the Portuguese capital. However, one must not overlook the instrumental role played by the combination of social struggles in the metropolis, both those undermining the government by industrial action – even if they were not in outright opposition to the war – and those organized mostly by students and far-left organizations that challenged the colonial war directly. Albeit often forgotten, the strikes and shutdowns that took place in Angola and Mozambique at this time were also pivotal, insofar as they were an example for other workers in the region, specifically in South Africa. In May 1975, a wave of strikes hit companies and the public service sector in Angola and Mozambique, in the cities of Luanda, Lobito, Lourenço Marques, Beira and Vila Pery.

Rail traffic on the Benguela line was brought to a total halt, from Lobito to the border . . . The Rail Workers Union instructed all staff at Companhia dos Caminhos de Ferro de Buenguela [Benguela's railway company] to go on strike in order to push for collective bargaining, something rail workers had been fighting for over a long time. This strike does not only affect the Angolan economy, but also those of neighbouring countries such as Zaire and Zambia.⁵⁹

57 *Diário Popular*, 26 May 1974, 9.

58 *Diário Popular*, 19 May 1974, 11.

59 *Diário Popular*, 29 May 1974, 11.

The legendary Benguela line originally linked Lobito, the Atlantic harbour, to the inland areas. Its construction had begun in 1899 – in the early stages of inland colonization – at the hands of the also legendary explorer Cecil Rhodes, who died in 1902. His friend Robert Williams completed the project. It turned out quite rewarding, as it was the shortest route to bring mineral wealth from the inner African Congo to the Atlantic, to be shipped to Europe. However, strikes were not restricted to the transport sector. On 15 May 1974, in Lourenço Marques, Mozambique, staff at the *O Diário* newspaper went on strike, while suburban transport workers threatened to stop work if the “immediate dismissal of management”⁶⁰ did not take place. Two days later, the city faced widespread strikes. Towboat workers at the Lourenço Marques docks claimed they were working up to twenty-four hours in a row without extra pay; hence they went on strike on 17 May 1974. Workers at the cashew factory in Machava rejected a wage increase from 37 to 45 escudos, demanding 200. At the Fábrica Colonial de Borracha (Colonial Rubber Factory), where pay was on average 800 escudos, a rise to 2,500 was called for. On the same day, railway connections with South Africa, Rhodesia and Swaziland were suspended due to a strike by rail workers that involved all three thousand employees.⁶¹ In Lobito, workers on strike at the Sorefame company remained at their work stations, demanding “better wages and better working conditions”.⁶² Luanda was also “on fire”. Rosa Coutinho, who was appointed president of Angola’s Government Committee just before these events, made the following observation about the causes of the violence: “The first reaction I met in Luanda was the expulsion of cantineiros [local food merchants] from the musseques [slums]. Luanda seemed on fire. Houses were burned down. The population’s outrage against the cantinas ended up causing some trouble, for there was a shortage of supplies afterwards”.⁶³

Throughout the colonial regime, cantina shops were controlled by white or black settlers. Most were PIDE informants, because owning a cantina required a license from the secret police: “The level of exploitation was such that sugar was not sold by the kilo but by the spoon . . . Sewing thread was not sold in reels, but by the meter”.⁶⁴ The struggles with the burgeoning workers’ movement in the colonies added to another long-standing strain on the regime from

60 *Diário Popular*, 15 May 1974, 9.

61 *Diário Popular*, 16 May 1974, 1.

62 *Diário Popular*, 29 May 1974, 11.

63 Dalila Cabrita Mateus, *Memórias do Colonialismo e da Guerra* (Lisboa: Edições Asa, 2006), 150.

64 *Ibid.*

anti-colonial revolutions: soldiers' refusal to go to war. By 1973, the deployment of soldiers had reached unprecedented figures. The metropolitan troops in the African war theatres numbered 87,274, supplemented by 61,816 locally recruited troops.⁶⁵ In percentage terms, only Israel has deployed more men than Portugal, despite the fact that over the course of 13 years, about 200,000 men avoided the army call-up.⁶⁶ A study by the Army's Central Headquarters itself revealed that the scale of desertion⁶⁷ was huge and on the rise: in 1961, the percentage of those skipping the draft was 11.6 per cent; in 1962, it had risen to 12.8 percent, and reached 15.6 per cent in 1963. In 1964, the figure was 16.5 per cent, between 1965 and 1968 it hovered around 19 per cent and between 1970 and 1972, it remained close to 21 per cent.⁶⁸ In the early summer of 1974, three months after the military coup, Mozambique (25 June), Cape Verde (5 July) and São Tomé and Príncipe (12 July) became independent. Angola joined them on 11 November 1975.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have tried to demonstrate that the Portuguese Carnation Revolution (1974–1975) should be understood as a process that began not in Lisbon in 1974, but in the Portuguese colonies in 1961. In between lay 13 years of war and revolts in a socio-political space that connected a highly developed economy – with one of the youngest and largest industrial working classes in Western Europe – to the extractive economy and forced labour in African territories. While these two regions and their social dynamics have been treated separately in the historiography, we have underlined their entanglement, which is reflected for example in the fact that the revolutionary liberation movements in Angola, Guinea and Mozambique began after the resistance to

65 Estado-Maior do Exército, 1988 1: 260, 261 in J. P. Borges Coelho, "African Troops in the Portuguese Colonial Army, 1961–1974: Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique", *Portuguese Studies Review* 10, no.1 (2002): 129–150.

66 Miguel Cardina, "Guerra à Guerra. Violência e anticolonialismo nas oposições ao Estado Novo", *Oficina do CES*, no. 334 (2009): 14.

67 As an example, a statement from the most important leader of the officers' desertion in the whole Estado Novo, Fernando Cerdeira, exiled in Olof Palme's Sweden: "I speak primarily to those who know me best, the officers I taught in Mafra. ... I speak to you to tell you, once again, that the war they are taking part in is a crime. It is a war against people fighting for independence and freedom" (statement from Sweden to PAIGC radio).

68 Estado-Maior do Exército/Comissão para o Estudo das Campanhas de África, *Resenha histórico-militar das Campanhas de África (1961–1974)*, 5 vols. (Lisboa: EME, 1988).

forced labour was repressed in these countries by the metropolis. Hence, in the study of the Portuguese Revolution, it is crucial to reorient our historical gaze onto forced labour. There is no single explanation for the existence of forced labour in the colonies. It is beyond doubt that labour supply played a pivotal role in the period between the 1960s and 1970s – a view that is corroborated by the documented sources and by the statements of state officials and colonial authorities. As nationalist ideologies became influential, international opposition to colonialism increased, the colonial war intensified and resistance to forced labour in the colonies became stronger. The wave of resistance that emerged in this context in the Portuguese colonies is now considered as having been significant and widespread, but more research is needed to explore its various actors, dynamics and outcomes.

In turn, forced labour and resistance to it in the colonies had an indisputable impact on Portugal in the second half of the twentieth century. At that time, Portugal was going through a rapid industrial revolution that was centred around the industrial belts of Lisbon, Oporto and Setúbal; each strongly infused with foreign capital and investment from Northern Europe and the USA. It is therefore not surprising that Salazar said “All to Angola in full force” in his famous war speech on 13 May 1961, reacting to the UPA massacre, and sending several thousand young men to their death. In the words of the Portuguese poet Sophia de Mello Breyner, “That primary day, so whole and clean” was made possible thanks to African resistance and its contamination of the occupying army, and it also was the last day of forced labour under the colonial rule scheme.

There is a fine line between free labour and forced labour systems to produce value in capitalism, and the same applies to how it is resisted, as combined and hybrid forms demonstrate that even the most advanced capitalist system can encapsulate the most backward practices. Its demise came from its imperial features – its “colonial possessions” – and the impulse to undermine the Portuguese State’s might throughout 13 years of war came from forced labour, the most “backward” form of labour within the empire. The large scale involvement of the late industrial organized labour movement and its impact on African independence are combined parts of the whole process. We can no longer ignore the centrality of this “backwardness” in European “modernization”. Although, formally seen as being on opposing sides of the “Colonial war”, or the “Liberation war”, depending on one’s perspective, workers in Portugal and its colonies in Africa alike embarked on a process that created the conditions for the Carnation Revolution and the independence of new African states in 1974 and 1975. Together, they succeeded in defeating the longest-running colonial dictatorship of the twentieth century.

It is up to future research to further explore the forms of resistance, social ties and organizational relations that existed between forced labourers and liberation movement organizations. This will contribute to a non-Eurocentric perspective that is necessary to think of “class as a whole”, in order to include the formal and informal working class, and free and forced labourers in different territories, both in the colonies and in the metropole.

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Revolution Betrayed?

The Rebellion of Temporary Workers and the Chinese Cultural Revolution

Felix Wemheuer

December 1966 marked a unique moment in the history of state socialism.¹ In that month, as China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution reached fever pitch, the central government in Beijing issued official permission for workers to form what it termed "rebel organizations". These were to be directed in the first place not against traditional "bad elements" or external enemies, but against "capitalist roaders" inside the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) itself. Throughout the early years of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the party had portrayed itself as the champion of the worker. Now its own leaders proclaimed that "capitalist roaders" in the leadership were in fact turncoats. To save the party, workers would have to refashion it.

Labour unrest in the early days of the Cultural Revolution centred on Shanghai. In China's largest city, a range of disadvantaged groups took advantage of a moment of extraordinary political upheaval to demand improved treatment from the state under the banner of rebellion. Among the most vocal were the so-called "temporary workers" (*linshi gong*) – contract labourers employed alongside the regular, permanent workforce. The number of these temporary labourers had expanded dramatically in the years after the Great Leap Forward famine (1959–1961), producing a "dual system" of labour that allowed the government to expand the urban workforce while limiting access to the generous welfare system available to permanent workers. The rebels of the early Cultural Revolution attacked contract labour as "capitalist exploitation", demanding access to the same "iron rice bowl" of benefits and job security given to their permanent counterparts.

Western scholars have generally viewed the substance of the battle over workers' rights in late 1960s Shanghai in some crucial sense as subordinate to a larger game of revolutionary *Realpolitik*. From this viewpoint, the most important feature of the mobilization of temporary workers was not their own aims,

¹ This chapter is partly based on an early version of Felix Wemheuer, *A Social History of Maoist China: Conflict and Change, 1949–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

but how these aims were instrumentalized by leftist party leaders. These leaders, so the story goes, rode the wave of workers' anger and used it to overthrow the local government in Shanghai, which was toppled in the so-called "January Storm" of early 1967. Once the leftists had secured power, they promptly betrayed their temporary worker allies, initiating a campaign to restore production and retaining the dual system of labour almost unchanged. Some scholars have even argued for viewing the "power seizure" by rebel forces – backed as they were by the People's Liberation Army – as a restoration with Mao's blessing: a coup against worker unrest designed to curb popular demands and to demobilize out-of-control mass movements.²

The current chapter argues for a reassessment of this narrative, suggesting that although the rebellion of temporary workers did not secure an immediate change in labour relations, it did achieve what we might call a "deferred success". By 1971, the state had begun to enforce policies that allowed many temporary workers to become part of the permanent workforce, just as the rebels had demanded in 1966. To explore the background to this change, I start by introducing the role of workers in the state socialist economy and the dual system of labour. I then examine the conflicts created by the massive reduction of the permanent urban workforce in the aftermath of the early 1960s' famine, as well as the concomitant expansion of contract labour. It was these conflicts that came to the surface so dramatically in the Shanghai worker rebellion of late 1966. I follow earlier scholars in acknowledging that the new municipal government installed by the "power seizure" of 1967 demobilized this movement, rather than fulfilling its promise. I depart from earlier accounts, however, in stressing the massive increase of workers and staff in the urban state-owned and collective sectors of the economy in the later years of the Cultural Revolution. Statistical surveys make plain that far from continuing to shrink, the urban "iron rice bowl" expanded significantly in the late Mao era.

1 Workers and Chinese State Socialism

Workers in Maoist China enjoyed a higher level of prestige than any other officially recognized class. In the language of the CCP, "worker" (*gongren*) was a relatively exclusive term, referring only to permanent employees of industrial work units, who were lauded by the party as "masters of the country". In the

2 For example, see Andrew Walder, *Chang Ch'un-ch'iao and Shanghai's January Revolution* (Ann Arbor: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Yiching Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 139–140.

early days of the PRC, this was a highly select group: in 1951, Zhou Enlai estimated that there were three to four million industrial workers across the whole of China, accounting for less than one per cent of the population.³ Most modern industry was concentrated in Shanghai and Manchuria.

Chinese labour's relationship with the state had long been fraught. In the first half of the 1920s, labour movements had begun to develop in the cities, and large strikes had broken out. Antagonism between workers and the authorities reached a peak in 1927, when the nationalist government of the Guomindang (GMD) massacred large numbers of communists and labour activists. Organized labour in China never fully recovered from this blow. Later, urban labour movements played only a minor role in the Chinese Civil War and the 1949 revolution. As the People's Liberation Army swept through China's cities, the CCP's outreach to workers was limited to calls to maintain production and defer to the party's representatives. Following the establishment of the PRC, the CCP restricted representation of workers to the party-backed All-China Federation of Trade Unions. In the first years of the new China, urban unemployment remained high.

A number of scholars have pointed out continuities between the CCP's approach to managing the urban workforce and that adopted by the GMD before 1949. The establishment of official labour unions and workers' militias under party leadership were both nationalist innovations, as was the system of work units that the GMD had set up during the Anti-Japanese War.⁴ In the years after 1949, the party emphasized increased production, work discipline and the mutual benefits for labour and capital in a mixed economy; goals that differed little from those of corporatist regimes across the globe. Evidence from case studies adds to the impression of continuity with the old regime. To take one example, archival research on the silk industry in the city of Wuxi has shown that male overseers from the pre-1949 period, some of whom were known to have viciously beaten female workers, were still in charge of shop floors several years after the communist victory.⁵ Workers who had taken the promise of

3 Zhou Enlai, "Guanyu zhishifenzi de gaizao wenti", in *Jianguo yilai zhongyao wenxian xuanbian*, vol. 2, ed. Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 1992) (quoted as JCYL in the following notes), 446.

4 For details, see Elisabeth Perry, "Masters of the Country? Shanghai Workers in the Early People's Republic", in *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Paul G. Pickowicz (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 78; Mark W. Frazier, *The Making of the Chinese Industrial Workplace: State, Revolution and Labor Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

5 Robert Cliver, *Red Silk: Class, Gender, and Revolution in China's Yangzi Delta Silk Industry* (unpublished manuscript, Cambridge, MA: forthcoming).

“liberation” seriously were often disappointed that so little had changed, and many believed that the revolution had failed to live up to its early promise. In Shanghai, labour unrest and strikes in the early years of the PRC put the government under sustained and unwelcome pressure.

Against this background, how are we to understand the CCP’s lofty assertion that, under its rule, workers were “masters of the country”? The claim makes sense only in the context of the party’s Marxist-Leninist ideology. Karl Marx had argued that prior to the proletarian revolution, which would begin the transition to socialism, the bourgeoisie would seize power from the feudal classes and replace the system of feudal exploitation with one of capitalist exploitation, of which the bourgeoisie itself would be the primary beneficiary.⁶ The working class would then lead a second revolution, which would result not only in the liberation of the workers, but – through the overthrow of the capitalist system – of humanity as a whole. Thus, the proletariat was the ultimate liberating class, expected not only to seize power, but also to abolish class structures and exploitation entirely.

During the Chinese revolution of 1949, peasants had played a much more important role than the urban population. Urban workers, however, represented the future of the communist cause and were a key element of the industrialized, socialist country the CCP was seeking to build. In line with the rest of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe, the party in the 1950s saw workers as the most progressive class. Industrial labourers worked with advanced technologies in the factories of urban China, and their social relations were thought to be based less on kinship structures than on class solidarity, built through collective experiences of strikes and the class struggle on the shop floor. The growth in the number of industrial workers in state industries after 1949 therefore amounted to an expansion of the pool of future socialists. After private ownership of land and means of production were abolished, everyone was to be a worker.

In short, the CCP’s descriptions of “mastery of the country” grew out of the workers’ theoretical role in the construction of socialism and the expectation that as the new China modernized, the working class would inexorably expand with it. On these terms, “mastery” did not necessarily equate to governing authority. In fact, the party constitutions of 1945, 1969 and 1973 defined the CCP not as the servant of the working class but as its “vanguard”.⁷ The party was the

6 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007> [1 March 2017].

7 Zhongguo geming bowuguan, ed., *Zhongguo gongchandang dangzhang huibian* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1979), 46, 206, 212.

mouthpiece, not of the transient, subjective desires that workers might themselves express, but of their deeper, objective interests. Building a communist future required the party to inculcate “class consciousness” into the workers, encouraging them to act according to the laws of historical development that would lead humanity towards communism.

Hand in hand with this went the need to strengthen the proletarian character of the party, a goal that required continual struggle against the negative ideological influence of the petty bourgeoisie and peasant smallholders. Workers had to be systematically trained to become cadres and leaders to replace officials from the old regime. The CCP under Mao adopted a narrative that viewed purging “class enemies” and fighting against leftist or rightist deviation as a way for the party to purify itself. While only the most advanced and revolutionary workers could become party members, all the workers in state-owned enterprises were automatically enrolled in official labour unions. These were the “schools of communism” that would educate and raise the political consciousness of all workers, acting – in Lenin’s formulation – as the link between the vanguard and the masses.⁸ This link worked in both directions. On the one hand, the best trade union talent could be recruited into the party-state apparatus. On the other, unions were expected to implement government policies, enforce labour discipline and organize welfare in work units.

Despite their lack of independent representation and political power, many workers benefited significantly from the socialist transformation. For millions, the founding of the PRC brought safe jobs and entitlement to welfare. The number of Chinese citizens enjoying official worker status rose dramatically between 1949 and 1957, as relatively lax controls on internal migration allowed the urban population to boom. Over this period, the population of China’s cities and towns rose from 57.6 to 99.4 million,⁹ while the workforce in state-owned enterprises tripled from eight to 24 million. For those who managed to become part of the permanent workforce, the PRC’s promise of upward social mobility was a genuine reality. For the rest of their life, they were entitled to secure employment, welfare, food rations, free health care and cheap housing. The official retirement age was 55 for women and 60 for men, and workers could be reasonably confident that at least one of their children would be able to join their work unit in adulthood. Beyond the state sector, the workforce in collectively-owned enterprises also expanded rapidly; from 230,000 in 1952

8 V. I. Lenin, *The Trade Unions, The Present Situation and Trotsky’s Mistakes* (1920), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/dec/30.htm> [18 September 2017].

9 Lu Yu, *Xin Zhongguo renkou wushi nian*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhongguo renkou, 2004), 633.

to 6.5 million people in 1957.¹⁰ As was intimated above, the work unit system was not an invention of the CCP, but had its origins in Republican China and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, it was under the CCP's rule that almost the entire urban population became part of the system, with social life, sport and cultural activities all collectively organized by work units for their members. For those on the inside, the new regime brought tangible benefits, and these success stories of the early PRC should not be overlooked.

However, it should not be forgotten that only a small percentage of the population ever tasted the sweetness of the "iron rice bowl". During the Mao era, it remained beyond the reach of the entire rural population. To use the contemporary phrase, almost the whole of China beyond the cities was "outside the system" (*tizhiwai*), without access to state-backed entitlements. Peasants became members not of work units with defined welfare schemes, but of agricultural cooperatives (established nationally by 1956) and then, by 1958, of People's Communes. Their standard of living depended on the production output of their collectives, and they were not entitled to grain rations or state-mandated welfare. Mao was among a number of leaders to argue that the country was too poor for the urban welfare state to be expanded to the villages. Only by focusing on industrial development could China escape backwardness and poverty, and welfare for all would have to wait.¹¹ By 1958, the government had established a system of household registration (*hukou*) that divided China into "agricultural" and "non-agricultural" populations. An important goal of this innovation was to limit and control rural-to-urban migration. Agricultural *hukou* holders who left their villages without permission from the authorities had no legal access to ration cards, employment, schooling or housing in the cities. In Maoist China, life in the state-subsidized urban world was a privilege, and the government reserved the right to decide who was entitled to that privilege and who was not.

Significant inequalities existed within urban society as well. At one end of the scale was the permanent workforce of the state-owned enterprises, which existed "inside the system" (*tizhinei*), with high job security and generous benefits. Lower down the pecking order were workers in the collective sector, who generally earned reasonable salaries, but had reduced access to housing, medical care, social security and pensions. Below them sat a group of more

10 Zhonggong zhongyang shujichu yanjiushi lilunzu, ed., *Dangqian woguo gongren jieji zhuangkuang diaocha ziliao huibian*, vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1983), 105–107.

11 Mao Tse-tung, *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. v (Beijing: Verlag für fremdsprachige Literatur, 1978), 141.

or less casual labourers, known either as “temporary workers” (*linshigong*) or “contract workers” (*hetonggong*). This group, who enjoyed only minimal protection, comprised people recruited by work units for seasonal tasks or as additional labour to fulfil short-term production goals. Many were from a peasant background, and their stay in the urban world was strictly limited. In most cases they retained their original, agrarian household registration, meaning that they were expected to return to their village after the expiration of their contract. In addition to the rural labourers, urban women made up a large proportion of the temporary workforce. Particularly in industry, contract workers were often drawn from among the wives of male permanent workers. This gendered dimension of the dual system of labour needs to figure prominently in any analysis.¹²

Divisions between the permanent and non-permanent workforce were an important feature of labour conflict throughout the PRC’s twentieth-century history; from the wildcat strikes and unrest of 1956, through the early Cultural Revolution and even into the 1980s.¹³ All through the pre-reform period, temporary workers’ demands for access to the “iron rice bowl” met with a lack of solidarity from permanent workers, who generally defended the status quo. The early Cultural Revolution saw this particular form of intra-class conflict reach its zenith, and to understand why, we need to examine the central government’s labour policy in the two years following the Great Leap Famine (1961–1963).

2 Famine Recovery: The Origins of Conflicts over Temporary Labour

In 1958, the PRC government launched the Great Leap Forward, aiming to industrialize China with unprecedented speed. The subsequent two years saw a massive expansion of the urban population and the workforce in the state-owned and collective industries. Despite the establishment of a nationwide household registration system, between 1957 and 1960 the population of China’s cities and towns increased by over 30 million, and industrial enterprises continued to recruit labour power from the countryside to fulfil the ambitious targets of the Great Leap.¹⁴ This trend meant that a smaller number of agrarian

12 For more details see Wemheuer, *A Social History of Maoist China*, 132–134, 270–272.

13 Elizabeth Perry, *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Social Protest and State Power in China* (Armonk: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 170–295.

14 Lu Yu, *Xin Zhongguo renkou wushi nian*, 633.

producers had to feed a much larger urban population, even as government mismanagement and adverse weather conditions began to put the harvests under pressure.

As the Great Leap Famine began to bite in 1959, the countryside bore the brunt of the pain. State control of grain supplies under the “unified purchase and sale” (*tonggou tongxiao*) system meant that the authorities could continue to appropriate as much grain as they saw fit, even under starvation conditions. The central government chose to use this power to protect urban grain consumers at the expense of rural farmers. Remarkably, net grain procurement as a proportion of the harvest actually increased after 1956, rising from 14.9 per cent to 28 per cent in 1959, followed by a decrease to a still elevated 21.5 per cent in 1960, at the peak of the rural famine.¹⁵ This supposedly surplus grain was used to feed the expanding urban population and rural labour power outside of agriculture, and some of it was also exported.

Even this increased procurement could only protect the cities for so long. In the winter of 1960, urban grain stocks began to run low, including in key cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. Unwilling to countenance the prospect of a rural famine reaching the major urban centres, the government had little choice but to reverse many of the central policies of the Great Leap. In order to reduce the pressure on the supply system, programmes were launched to reduce the number of people entitled to welfare; that is, the urban population in general and the industrial workforce in particular.¹⁶

3 Reduction of the Urban Population and Workforce

The architects of this “readjustment” of the national economy were the senior party officials, Chen Yun and Li Xiannian. Both men argued for a reduction of the urban workforce and for the import of grain in order to restore the balance between urban consumers and net grain producers in the countryside. Chen in particular believed that the uncontrolled growth of the urban population had been the major reason, not only for the enormously destructive Great Leap Famine, but also for smaller disruptions to the grain supply in 1953, 1954 and

15 With regard to production and procurement, see “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo nongye bu jihuasi”, ed., *Zhongguo nongcun jingji tongji daquan 1949–1986* (Beijing: Nongye chubanshe, 1989), 410–411.

16 For more details, see Felix Wemheuer, *Famine Politics in Maoist China and the Soviet Union* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 142–147.

1957.¹⁷ Fewer consumers entitled to urban ration cards would mean reduced pressure on the state to extract grain from the countryside to feed the cities. Not only would this rebalancing increase the number of agricultural workers, but crucially it would also reduce the overall amount of grain needed for the country as a whole, since much smaller rations were provided to rural residents than those with an urban household registration were entitled to. Along with population transfers, Chen also argued for the restoration of plots of land for private household use within the structure of the People's Communes. In many places, these had been abolished during the collectivist fervour of the Great Leap, and Chen believed that reintroducing them would allow those who were sent back from the cities to be self-supporting.¹⁸

Taking into account the volume of agricultural production and the number of urban consumers of trade grain, Chen estimated in 1962 that 20 million people needed to be sent back to the countryside from the cities and towns (*chengzhen*). Recent migrants who had come to urban areas during the Great Leap became the main target of the "downsizing" policy. In total, 26 million people were moved to the countryside between late 1960 and 1963.¹⁹ Table 8.1 outlines the reduction in the workforce of the state-owned enterprises (also known as "ownership by the whole people"): 8.7 million in 1961 and a further 8.6 million in 1962. By contrast, the number of workers in collectively-owned enterprises, where entitlements were more restricted, actually increased slightly during those years. Attempts to assess the exact effect of Chen and Li's recovery plan on the urban population are complicated by the fact that statistics from the period almost invariably include within the category of urban residents, segments of the suburban population that were actually engaged in agricultural production. Taking this statistical anomaly into account, it seems probable that non-agrarian urban residents never constituted more than 20 per cent of the Chinese population during the Mao era, although within this low percentage, the reforms do appear to have had a significant effect. The non-agrarian urban population's proportion of the national total decreased during the 1960s, from 14 per cent in 1964 to 12.9 per cent in 1968; a figure it did not exceed until after Mao's death in 1976.²⁰ The government effectively capped the population of

17 "Shangyebu dangdai Zhongguo liangshi gongzuo bianjibu", ed., *Dangdai Zhongguo liangshi gongzuo shiliao*, vol. 1 (Baoding: Hebei sheng gongxiashe Baoding yinshuachang yinshua, 1989), 314.

18 Chen Yun, "Dongyuan chengshi renkou xiexiang", in *JGYL*, vol. 14, 374.

19 Lu Yu, *Xin Zhongguo renkou wushi nian*, 594.

20 Yuan Yongxi, ed., *Zhongguo renkou zonglun* (Beijing: Zhongguo caizhengjingji chubanshe, 1991), 277.

the towns and cities, limiting the number of people who were entitled to food rations, welfare and non-agrarian jobs. The leadership of the CCP had learnt important lessons from the famine.

These measures alone, however, were still not sufficient to stabilize the food supply system in the post-famine years. Reform had to be coupled with immediate relief via grain imports. As Chen Yun argued: "If we import grain, we can take less from the peasants, stabilize their attitude towards production, and raise the enthusiasm of the peasants for production. If we take two or three years to develop agricultural production, the problems of the internal market can be solved".²¹ Between 1961 and 1965, China imported on average five million tons of grain each year; net imports stood at around 4.18 million tons per annum.²² Rather than being sent to famine-hit rural areas, this grain was used to supply Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Liaoning. All four areas were part of the urban supply system administered directly by the central government, and the imports therefore constituted a form of indirect famine relief, reducing the burden on peasants to meet grain quotas and allowing more grain to remain in the villages. By opting for this method of relief, the government avoided imported grain passing through the hands of rural officials, thereby reducing the risk of fraud and misappropriation. From 1962, quotas for grain procurement had stabilized enough to bring rural communities out of famine. Strict enforcement of the household registration system helped maintain the balance between agricultural production and urban consumption.

Although the austerity policies and downsizing of the urban population were necessary, they nevertheless had a deleterious effect on morale in the cities. Little is known about how ordinary people reacted to the programme of downsizing, or about differences in responses between rural and urban China. It seems safe to say, however, that many would have agreed with the words of one worker in Shaanxi: "The capitalists call it going bankrupt, we call it stopping production. The capitalists call it firing, we call it being sent down. The capitalists call it unemployment, we call it [workforce] reduction. In any case, we have no jobs and it is still the same as in capitalist countries".²³ Work units throughout China were given quotas for reducing their workforce. Some urban residents tried to avoid being sent back to the countryside by petitioning the local government. Most petitioners argued that they were sick, pregnant or

21 Quoted in Jin Chongji, ed., *Zhou Enlai zhuan*, vol. 4 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1998), 1565.

22 Luo Pinghan, *Da qian xi: 1961–1963 nian de chengzhen renkou jing jian* (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 2003), 118.

23 Quoted in Luo Pinghan, *Da qian xi*, 223.

TABLE 8.1 Total number of employees in state-owned and collectively-owned enterprises, 1960–1965 (all figures in millions)

Year	Total workforce	Ownership by the people		Collective ownership	
		Workforce	Year-on-year increase	Workforce	Year-on-year increase
		1960	59.69	50.44	4.83
1961	51.71	41.74	-8.70	10.00	0.75
1962	43.21	33.09	-8.65	10.12	0.12
1963	43.72	32.93	-0.16	10.79	0.67
1964	46.01	34.65	1.72	11.36	0.57
1965	49.65	37.38	2.73	12.27	0.91

SOURCE: ZHONGGONG ZHONGYANG SHIJICHU YANJIU LILUNZU (ED.), *DANGQIAN WOGUO GONGREN JIEJI ZHUANGKUANG DIAOCHA ZILIAO HUIBIAN* (BEIJING, 1983) VOL. 2, 105–106

had to provide care for dependent family members, while others threatened to commit suicide if they were not allowed to remain in the cities.²⁴ The fact that targets for staff reductions were generally met suggests that these strategies tended to be ineffective. The central government's ability to enforce a large-scale population transfer hard on the heels of the famine crisis reflects the remarkable capacity of the early PRC state.

Little research has been carried out into how the arrival of returnees from the cities affected the villagers who had stayed behind. In contrast to the “sent-down youth” of the Cultural Revolution, many people who were hit by the downsizing of 1962 and 1963 were recent migrants who had left the countryside only a few years earlier and had remained familiar with agricultural production. They were not strangers in their home villages. Nevertheless, it remains an open question as to whether the returnees were welcomed as additional labour power or seen as competitors for scarce food. What is certain, however, is that the countryside finally recovered under the influence of the CCP's new

24 For more details, see Jeremy Brown, *City versus Countryside in Mao's China: Negotiating the Divide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 86–99.

policies. To achieve this recovery, the government sacrificed its push for rapid industrialization, which prior to 1961 had been primarily driven by imports of foreign technology financed by exports of grain. The state also raised the price it paid for grain to incentivize production, but in order to keep the peace in urban areas, the sale price remained stable. The losses from what was effectively a massive subsidy programme would be a burden on the state's budget for the next two decades.²⁵

4 Reforms in the Labour Market: Enforcing Dualism

In addition to population transfers, another major element of the central government's recovery programme was a change in the recruitment of urban labour. Between 1962 and 1965, the CCP established the already-mentioned dual system in the labour market, as well as an equivalent system in education. The reasoning behind this move was simple. Many factories required new workers in order to meet their post-famine production targets. However, the central government was reluctant to increase the number of people on the state's payroll; a move that had backfired so spectacularly during the Great Leap. Between 1960 and 1963, the workforce in state-owned enterprises had decreased from 59 to 43 million, releasing some of the pressure on the urban welfare system. Some of these losses had been absorbed by the collective enterprises, where the workforce had increased from 9 to 11 million, but the overall number of workers had still dropped, and more labour had to be found from somewhere.

It was soon realized that one way to control government spending while enlarging the workforce was to allow an increase in the number of temporary workers. Short-term work had existed alongside lifetime employment since 1949. A decision by the Labour Department in 1959 had distinguished between three forms of urban work: long-term employment, temporary contract work undertaken by urban workers, and a system of "peasant-workers" recruited from the countryside for short-term work in factories.²⁶ Now, the government dramatically expanded the number of workers in the latter two categories. "Peasant-workers" were an especially useful resource, since although their

25 Terry Sicular, "Grain Pricing: A Key Link in Chinese Economic Policy", *Modern China*, 14, no. 4 (1988): 461–463.

26 Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan and zhongyang dang'anguan, ed., *1958–1965 Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jingji dang'an ziliao xuanbian. Laodong jueye he shouru fenpei juan* (Beijing: Zhongguo caizheng jungji chubanshe, 2011), 5.

wages were higher than the average rural income, they remained poorly paid compared with regular urban workers.

It was clear from the outset that peasant-workers were not to be allowed to become part of the permanent urban workforce. A 1965 report by the Labour Department about the situation in Sichuan Province expressed concern that if wages for young peasant-workers were set too high, they would cause tension in the villages after their return. The report also recommended that production brigades should be able to claim compensation for work lost as a consequence of members taking temporary jobs outside agriculture.²⁷ Both these conclusions rested on the assumption that a peasant-worker was and would remain part of his or her rural community, with no prospect of earning admission to the urban world. Although temporary workers were a minority, they were nevertheless a significant part of the urban workforce in the 1960s. By the end of 1965, China had over 33 million permanent workers and 3.18 million urban contract workers; an increase of 540,000 over the previous year. Another two million people were employed as peasant-workers. A contemporary report by the State Statistics Bureau praised the dual labour market for allowing urban work units to replace many permanent workers with temporary staff.²⁸

In expanding the dual labour market, the government never planned to abolish the “iron rice bowl”, but it did intend for a significant number of workers to be temporarily employed and denied access to the welfare state. From 1964, President Liu Shaoqi was an important advocate for the dual system in the labour market and in education. In a speech on the topic, Liu argued that while the iron rice bowl was the gold standard, it introduced problems by making it difficult to “withdraw” workers; that is, to fire them. For seasonal tasks, temporary employment was a more desirable route. As Liu put it, “If there is work, they come. If there is not, they can go home”.²⁹ Liu argued against future increases in the permanent workforce, and he even suggested that entire sectors might become the exclusive preserve of temporary workers. Discussing the mining industry, Liu noted that life underground could lead to severe health problems, and he proposed that workers should be recruited only to work in the mines for a few years before being mandatorily discharged. While he was careful to frame his argument in terms of workers’ interests, “mandatory discharge” would have had the convenient side effect of turning a whole industry into short-term contract work. Liu’s speech was rooted above all not

27 Ibid., 400.

28 Ibid., 459.

29 Liu Shaoqi, “Guanyu liang zhong laodong zhidu he liang zhong jiaoyu zhidu”, *YGYL*, 19 (1991): 174.

in the socialist logic of worker entitlements, but in the government's desire to reduce costs.

In sum, the years between 1962 and 1966 saw a deepening of the urban-rural divide, resulting from a deliberate reduction in the number of people entitled to access the urban welfare state and stricter enforcement of the *hukou* registration system. A side effect of these policies was to limit social mobility for the rural population. Within the cities, the gap between the permanent and temporary workforce also widened. Nevertheless, the party leadership remained united behind the new measures, and it is notable that Mao never questioned the *hukou* system in his lifetime, or the various programmes to reduce the urban population.

5 The Worker Rebellion during the Cultural Revolution

Before examining the rebellion of temporary workers in greater detail, it may be useful to set out, in brief, the events of the first months of the Cultural Revolution, when labour unrest was at its peak.

Shanghai was at the centre of labour unrest during the early Cultural Revolution, but the movement as a whole began in June 1966 in Beijing. Its earliest manifestation – the student Red Guards, who emerged in middle schools and universities that month – was dominated by the children of high-ranking cadres. These young people focused their attacks on teachers and members of the old cultural and intellectual elites. Mao gave his blessing to this movement, but from August 1966 the agenda and targets began to change, as other students, and eventually workers, entered the fray. Some scholars describe this period as the “People’s Cultural Revolution”, which lasted until a conservative backlash began in earnest in January 1967.³⁰

A few weeks into the movement, on August 18 1966, the CCP Central Committee issued a decision on the direction of the Cultural Revolution, marking a shift from the purge of cultural elites to an attack on “capitalist roaders in power inside the Communist Party”. The decision emphasized the right to form mass organizations.³¹ One of the first leading figures to come under pressure was President Liu Shaoqi, who was finally purged that autumn. The

30 For example, see Liu Guokai, “Lun renmin wenge (yi) – wei wenge sishi zhounian er zuo”, *Epoch Times*, 12 December 2005, <http://www.epochtimes.com/gb/5/12/30/n1171757.html> [3 December 2015].

31 “Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party concerning the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” (8 August 1966), <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/1966/PR1966-33g.htm> [19 June 2017].

major accusation against Liu was that he had suppressed the student movement in the summer by sending work teams to the universities to curb the Red Guard's activities. Many students who had been labelled as "rightists" or "counterrevolutionaries" by the work teams or school authorities during that period fought for rehabilitation. Under the slogan "rebellion is justified", all manner of grievances against local party apparatuses began to be aired. Revolutionary groups took the interpretation of Mao Zedong Thought, the core of CCP ideology, into their own hands. Mass organizations published unauthorized transcripts of speeches and quotations by Mao and other central leaders in their newspapers.

As time went on, conservative mass organizations, also called the "protecting-the-emperor faction", were formed to defend local party committees against the rebels. Local cadres mobilized CCP and Communist Youth League members, labour activists and loyal workers. Some elite "old" Red Guards from the early days of the Cultural Revolution had grown disillusioned, as they watched the movement turn against their parents from August onwards, and they therefore supported the conservatives. The move to restore order was met, in October, by a new campaign against "the reactionary bourgeois line", meaning the suppression of the rebel movement by officials. Widespread revolt broke out against cadres all over the country. As dissent concerning local authorities grew, the Central Committee finally allowed workers to join the Cultural Revolution, as long as they did so outside of work hours. As a result, the movement spread to the whole urban population.

During the "People's Cultural Revolution", the government's ability to control the fledgling rebel movement was tested. Young people who had been sent down to the countryside under the centrally mandated "Up to the Mountains, Down to the Villages" programme demanded to be allowed to return to the cities. Many of those who had suffered in the campaigns of the pre-1966 period sought rehabilitation, and disadvantaged groups "hijacked" the rebellion to promote their own economic and political interests.³² In Shanghai in particular, temporary workers were a major force in the Cultural Revolution, calling for secure, permanent posts in the state-owned enterprises. The first attacks on the local authorities in Shanghai were student led, but in November 1966, workers began to press for their own right to form city-wide rebel organizations. Their request was refused, and on November 10, around 1,000 workers led by Wang Hongwen's Shanghai Revolutionary Rebel Worker Headquarters commandeered a train and set out for Beijing to petition the central

32 Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins*, 97–104.

government. They were halted at Anting on the outskirts of Shanghai, and their refusal to disembark resulted in all traffic on the Beijing line being halted for over 31 hours. As the Anting Incident unfolded, the mayor of Shanghai, Cao Duiqi, demanded that the workers immediately return to their units. Wang's rebels refused to back down until their demands had been met: the recognition of their mass organizations and an acknowledgement that their actions were legal. They also demanded public criticism of Cao Duiqi and the handling of the conflict by the higher authorities.³³ Zhang Chunqiao, the negotiator sent by the Cultural Revolution Leading Group from Beijing, eventually signed off on the rebels' demands with Mao's support.

The Anting Incident showed that grassroots pressure could persuade the CCP leadership to ally with rebels against local party authorities, even in the country's most important industrial city. Only a few thousand workers had joined the initial Shanghai rebellion. After the success in Anting, however, rebel workers' organizations in other cities were emboldened, and many called for official recognition. On December 12, the Central Committee declared the right of workers to participate in the Cultural Revolution and to form their own mass organizations, with the proviso that production should not be disturbed.³⁴ For the first time since 1949, the central leadership recognized independent workers' organizations that were not integrated into the state apparatus. This might have represented an opportunity for progress in workers' rights, but the change did not last for long.³⁵ It should be noted that many workers remained suspicious of the rebel forces: between November and late December, the party leadership in Shanghai was able to mobilize significant numbers of workers in a counterattack by the conservative Scarlet Guards. Another critical point to note is that the students' and workers' rebel movements drew on very different demographics. In contrast to many of their student counterparts, rebel workers often had good class status, and more than a few had been party members before 1966. From August 1966 onwards, many of the student rebels were the children of intellectuals and capitalists – victims of previous purges who had much to gain from a shake-up of the political order. By contrast, industrial workers “inside the system” were one of the most privileged groups in China.

33 Li Xun, *Geming zaofan niandai: Shanghai wenge yundong shigao*, vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2015), 333.

34 “Zhonggong Zhongyang guanyu zhua geming, cu shenchan de shitiao guiding (cao'an)”, (9 December 1966), in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database*, ed. Song Yongyi (Hong Kong: Universities Service Centre for China Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2006).

35 Li, *Geming zaofan niandai*, vol. 1, 379.

Why, then, did permanent workers participate at all? Without doubt, some had grievances against the system of one kind or another, and the Cultural Revolution offered a rare opportunity to air them. In fact, however, the main demand of the rebel permanent workers in Shanghai was for the right to participate in the Revolution at all, since this would offer them the possibility of improving their political status through performance. In Maoist China, the access to party or army membership, higher education and social status within society was linked to class status, family background and political performance. People could do little to change their official class status or family background, but could improve the party's evaluation of their performance by engaging in political activism. The extent to which rebellion was about raising one's political status was made clear after the movement, spearheaded by Wang Hongwen's Rebel Workers' Headquarters, took over power from the municipal authorities in January 1967. From this point on, activists from the heady days of the Anting Incident began to claim the label of "old rebels", meaning that they had attacked the authorities when it was dangerous to do so and the fate of the rebel groups had remained uncertain. This privileging of early participation recalled the boast of "revolutionary cadres" from the pre-1949 days, of having joined the party before its victory was assured. The Cultural Revolution offered those born too late to be revolutionaries the chance to perform their own acts of political daring. For permanent workers therefore, the main goal was participation rather than any critique of categorization or of the system of class status.

The foregoing paragraphs have captured only a snapshot of the multiple competing interests at work among the conservative and rebel factions during the "People's Cultural Revolution". For Mao and the other CCP leaders, the complex, shifting alliances of this period presented a serious problem. The leadership was left in the unenviable position of trying to propel some aspects of the movement while at the same time limiting others. Leaders remained keen to harness the energies of the masses, but at the same time they worried that widespread strikes and factional infighting could put economic development at risk.

More seriously still, from the Party Central's perspective, the attempts of rebel organizations to coordinate at the national level represented a potential challenge to the CCP's monopoly on state power. This was – as it remains to this day – a line that could not be crossed. By the end of 1966, the central government had halted the so-called "big link-up" of rebel groups, as well as the free train travel that had allowed Red Guards to easily connect with groups far from home. The slogan of the day, the double-headed "grasp revolution, promote production", gave some indication of the balance the party leadership

was attempting to strike. Temporary workers, soldiers on active duty, public security staff and labour camp inmates were banned from forming their own rebel organizations; the occupation of archives and public security offices was also outlawed. The “People’s Cultural Revolution” came to an end, and the rebel organizations shifted their focus to a goal acceptable to the leadership: “seizing power” from suspect local officials.

6 Temporary Workers and the Attack on “Economism”

With this general overview of the “People’s Cultural Revolution” in mind, we now turn more specifically to the rebellion of temporary workers. As we have seen, the expansion and downsizing of the urban workforce between 1958 and 1962 had been a major source of conflict. In the winter of 1966, temporary workers used the Cultural Revolution and the ongoing critique of Liu Shaoqi to attack the system of contract labour as an anti-socialist form of exploitation. Liu was accused of masterminding the nationwide expansion of this system from 1964 onwards, with the aim of splitting workers into two classes and depriving temporary workers of their political rights. Particularly in Shanghai, temporary workers carved out a strong position within the rebel movement, and they used this platform to demand to be made part of the permanent workforce.

By late 1966, the old municipal government of Shanghai had given in to demands including higher wages, access to welfare and public housing, and financial support for a new “big link-up” to exchange revolutionary experiences with groups elsewhere in China. By this stage, strikes had already caused parts of certain industries to collapse.³⁶ In what became national news, on 26 December 1966 in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Jiang Qing met with delegates of the All-China General Rebel Regiment of the Red Labourers, an organization representing temporary workers. Jiang – who was not only Mao’s wife but an important member of the central Cultural Revolution Leading Group – expressed her support for abolishing the system of temporary contract work and attacked the Ministry of Labour in a highly-charged speech.³⁷ On 2 January 1967, the General Rebel Regiment, the Ministry of Labour, and the official All-China Federation of Trade Unions issued a “common announcement” that during the Cultural Revolution, contract, temporary and outsourced labour

36 Ibid., 649–657.

37 Jiang Qing and Chen Boda, “Jiang Qing Chen Boda yu quanguo hongse laodongzhe zao-fan zongtuan daibiao de tanhua”, December 26 (1966), in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database*, ed. Song (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2006).

should be abolished. Soon, temporary workers started to rebel against local authorities across broad swathes of China.

Central government leaders now began to worry about the immense cost of making all contract workers permanent employees – the very problem that had led to the expansion of contract work in the first place. Barely a few weeks had passed before the General Rebel Regiment fell victim to a Central Committee order that nationwide mass organizations be dissolved. Then, on 17 February, the Central Committee and the State Council declared that the “common announcement” abolishing contract labour had no legal basis.³⁸ The two bodies stated that temporary labour could be acceptable in some cases, and that full resolution of the problem should be deferred until a later stage of the movement. The decision emphasized the political rights of temporary workers to participate in the Cultural Revolution, and those who had been labelled as “counterrevolutionary” by their work units simply for joining a rebel organization were permitted to demand rehabilitation. However, infiltrators from among the “four elements” (landlords, rich peasants, and counterrevolutionary and “rotten elements”) should be purged. Temporary workers were not to form their own rebel groups, although they could join the mass organizations of their work units. Participation was contingent on them returning to work in line with their existing contracts.

This dampening of the demands of temporary workers was in line with the wider campaign against “economism”, backed by both the central government and the new rebel authorities in Shanghai. In an “urgent notice” issued on 9 January 1967, the Shanghai Rebel Workers’ Headquarters listed the restoration of production and the fight against economism as top priorities. Rebellion in the cause of higher wages or other material demands was attacked as risking the ruin of the economy and as an expression of the “reactionary bourgeois line” advocated by “capitalist roaders”.³⁹ Concessions given by the old party leadership to the workers were derided as a ruse to sabotage the Cultural Revolution. Some scholars have argued that Zhang Chunqiao and other radical leaders who assisted in the takeover in Shanghai were simply using temporary workers for their own political ends and were always set to betray their interests once the new government had been formed. Others have pointed to a silencing of social and economic demands as a result of the campaign against “economism”.⁴⁰ In January 1968, the Central Committee and the State Council

38 “Zhonggong zhongyang and guowuyuan, ‘Guanyu linshigong, hetonggong, waibaogong de tonggao’”, (17 February 1967), in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database*, ed. Song Yongyi (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2006).

39 Li, *Geming zaofan niandai*, vol. 1, 668–669.

40 Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins*, 140–141.

reaffirmed their stance that the “common announcement” of the previous winter was invalid and that temporary labour should continue to be used.⁴¹

With this conservative reaction in full swing, prospects for an end to the large-scale use of temporary labour seemed bleak. However, as we shall now see, there was in fact a surprising denouement to the tale, as many temporary workers did become part of the permanent workforce in the early 1970s.

7 The Working Class and the Expansion of the “Iron Rice Bowl”

Throughout the late Mao period, the official media continued to celebrate workers as “masters of the country”. Less visible, but no less important, was the social transformation and expansion of the working class that took place in this period. In 1967, radical leaders had reacted to the push for improved pay and conditions by accusing “revisionist cadres” of corrupting workers with economic demands (in the reform era, the roles would be reversed, with Jiang Qing and the rest of the Gang of Four blamed for wastefully expanding the “iron rice bowl” to temporary workers).⁴² This hostility to workers’ demands began to change in 1971, when the State Council issued a decision banning work units from using temporary labour for year-round production tasks. The council also ruled that there should be no more than two and a half million temporary workers engaged, even on short-term or seasonal tasks. As a result of this decision, over eight million temporary workers were able to acquire permanent worker status (as against a total of over nine million in 1971).⁴³ The change in policy had a sharply gendered impact, because (as noted earlier), in many cases temporary workers were female relatives of existing permanent workers.

The temporary worker rebels of the early Cultural Revolution had initially seen their demands rejected by the government, but those demands were now belatedly fulfilled. By 1971, no rebel mass organizations existed to pressure the government to improve workers’ conditions, but it appears that the old argument – that hiring workers without political and social rights went against the principles of socialism – was eventually persuasive. By that time,

41 Dangdai Zhongguo congshu bianji weiyuanhui, ed., *Dangdai Zhongguo de laodongli guanli* (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1990), 16.

42 Ibid.

43 “Guowuyuan guanyu gaige linshigong, lunhuangong zhidu de tongzhi (gaiyao)”, (30 November 1971), in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution Database*, ed. Song (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2006).

the government had no reason to fear any large-scale labour unrest, because party leadership had already been re-established on the shop floor. A direct link between the rebellion of the temporary workers in late 1966 and the government's change in policy in 1971 is difficult to prove, because no references to the early Cultural Revolution are made in relevant documents. What we can say, however, is that with only five years between the rebellion and the reforms, the temporary workers of the "People's Cultural Revolution" must at least have been in the leadership's minds.

After 1971, the great divide between people inside and outside the system of the "iron rice bowl" remained, but the number of workers in precarious temporary employment was significantly lower in urban China. It is more difficult to assess the impact of the Cultural Revolution on workers who were already in permanent, "iron rice bowl" positions at the outset. While the social prestige of workers was high throughout the last decade of the Mao era, wages were stagnant, rising once – and then only slightly – in 1971. Bonuses, an important part of the pre-1966 salary package, were decried as a "material stimulus" redolent of capitalist economics, and attacked by the rebels as part of Liu Shaoqi's "revisionist line". At the same time, wage cuts and penalties for poor labour performance were abolished; a decision that lowered the pressure on workers, but also made it difficult to enforce discipline in some factories. Young workers who had entered the workforce after 1958 found it more and more difficult to secure promotions and wage increases, resulting in a widening gap between the young and the old. These income restrictions hardly pushed workers to the brink of starvation, but they did make covering daily expenses beyond rations more of a challenge. Workers in the lower ranks, especially those with several children or elderly dependents, had to count every penny to provide for their living expenses.

The stagnation of wages went hand in hand with another, more striking trend: a massive expansion of the urban workforce. In 1966, state-owned enterprises employed 39.3 million people, but by 1976 the figure had risen to 68.6 million. The workforce in the collectively-owned sector expanded from 12.6 to 18.1 million in the same period.⁴⁴

Unsurprisingly, this expansion placed the state's supply systems under renewed strain. In 1972, a year after the decision to include temporary workers in the permanent workforce, the State Council issued a report identifying problems with the grain supply and calling for a limit on the increase of the urban

44 Zhonggong zhongyang shujichu yanjiu lilunzu, ed., *Dangqian woguo gongren jieji zhuangkuang diaocha ziliao huibian*, 106–107.

TABLE 8.2 Total number of employees in state-owned and collectively-owned enterprises, 1966–1976 (all figures in millions)

Year	Total workforce	Ownership by the people		Collective ownership	
		Workforce	Year-on-year increase	Workforce	Year-on-year increase
		1966	51.98	39.34	1.96
1967	53.05	40.06	0.72	12.99	0.35
1968	55.04	41.70	1.64	13.34	0.35
1969	57.14	43.35	1.65	13.79	0.45
1970	62.16	47.92	4.57	14.24	0.45
1971	67.87	53.18	5.26	14.69	0.45
1972	71.34	56.10	2.92	15.24	0.55
1973	73.37	57.58	1.48	15.79	0.55
1974	76.51	60.07	2.49	16.44	0.65
1975	81.98	64.26	4.19	17.72	1.28
1976	86.73	68.60	4.34	18.13	0.41

SOURCE: ZHONGGONG ZHONGYANG SHIJICHU YANJIU LILUNZU, ED., *DANGQIAN WOGUO GONGREN JIEJI ZHUANGKUANG DIAOCHA ZILIAO HUIBIAN* (BEIJING, 1983) VOL. 2, 105–106

population and workforce. In response, the government acted to slow the urban expansion. The urban population entitled to grain rations had increased by almost ten million in 1971–1972, a figure that fell to below five million over the subsequent two years.⁴⁵ This smaller increase still represented a burden on the urban supply system and the peasantry, but stable agricultural production meant that it remained a manageable one, in contrast to the failings of the famine years. The rise in the urban population during this period was also partly mitigated by the continued absence from the cities of millions of urban middle-school graduates, who had been “sent down” to the countryside from 1968 onwards to be educated by “poor and lower middle peasants”. Many of

45 Zhao Fasheng, *Dangdai Zhongguo de liangshi gongzuo* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1988), 160.

these young people were not permitted to return home for several years, and some never returned to the cities at all.

One striking aspect of the late-Cultural Revolution expansion of the urban workforce was the change in demographics that accompanied it. Available data suggests that the gender and social origin profiles of urban workers underwent a radical shift in this period. The number of female workers and staff in the state-owned enterprises more than doubled; from 7.8 million in 1965 to over 20 million in 1977. Of these 20 million, 8.5 million worked in industry, 2.7 million in the trade, food and service sectors, and 3.3 million in science, education and health.⁴⁶

A survey circulated internally among the official labour unions in 1983 captures some of the major demographic shifts in the workforce during the Cultural Revolution. From a sample of 11 work units in key industrial cities, a picture emerges of a workforce that was larger, younger, more educated and populated with greater numbers of party members than was the case before 1966. The work units surveyed had a combined staff of over 183,000, of whom only three per cent had joined before 1949, compared with 37.8 per cent (69,395 people) during the Cultural Revolution.⁴⁷ The breakdown of the newer workers' backgrounds is particularly interesting. Of those recruited between 1966 and 1976, some 1,213 were existing workers, 3,070 were young people leaving vocational training programmes, 4,981 were peasants, 8,403 were demobilized soldiers and a full 18,039 were "sent down youths" – young people who had been allowed to return from the countryside.⁴⁸

It is noteworthy that "sent down youths" represented a plurality of the new workers. Permission to return to the cities, particularly to a job in a state-owned factory, was a highly desirable outcome for those who had been sent down, and it evidently remained an obtainable one. Demobilized soldiers, the second largest group, were likely to have been given their assignments in most cases more as a reward for service than because of any specific qualifications or education. The omission of "bad elements" – such as landlords and capitalists – from the data makes it difficult to determine how these less favoured groups fared. One other obvious point evident in the data is a significant increase in the average new workers' level of education during the Cultural Revolution, compared with the years 1956–1965. The number of new workers who were

46 Guojia tongjiju shehui tongjisi, ed., *Zhongguo laodong gongzi tongji ziliao* (Beijing: Guojia tongji chubanshe, 1987), 32.

47 Zhonggong zhongyang shujichu yanjiu lilunzu, ed., *Dangqian woguo gongren jieji*, vol. 2, 1.

48 *Ibid.*, 26–28. This sample is based on 149,995 workers.

illiterate or who had only primary-school education dropped rapidly, while the proportion who had enrolled in junior high school more than tripled and the intake of workers with senior high-school degrees increased almost fivefold.⁴⁹ For the workers in these 11 sample work units, at least, the reform era narrative of a collapse in the education system during the Cultural Revolution simply does not fit.

By the time the 1983 survey had been compiled, 16.9 per cent of all 149,995 workers for whom data was available were party members, of which the largest group – about 44 per cent – had joined their work units between 1966 and 1976.⁵⁰ Given that less than four per cent of the population at large were CCP members, 16.9 per cent represented a high degree of penetration. There are two possible interpretations of the figure: either workers had a higher “political consciousness” than the general population, or alternatively the CCP had recruited too indiscriminately among this demographic, destroying the elitist “vanguard” status that had long been one of its chief strengths.

Across the 11 sample work units, 23 per cent of the total workforce of 183,611 people were women. The figures show that during the Cultural Revolution, the number of women in the factories more than doubled; from 7,644 in 1965 to 16,944 in 1976. However, a gendered division of labour is still clearly visible in the data. Light industry and the services sector were dominated by women, while heavy industry, shipping and mining were almost exclusively a male preserve. To take the extreme cases, the Shanghai No. 17 Cotton Mill had the highest proportion of female workers at 64 per cent, whereas the Guangzhou Ocean Shipping Company at the other end of the scale had a 99.8 per cent male workforce. The Changchun First Automobile Factory, however, employed 26 per cent women; an unusually high number for that industry.⁵¹ Data from the Anshan Iron and Steel Company, a well-known national entity, suggests that the division of labour inside the factories changed during the course of the Cultural Revolution, with women moving into formerly male jobs. After 1966, the first women joined its primary steel and chemical production lines. In 1976, some 26 per cent of new workers were female.⁵²

Curiously, the data also shows that – not only during, but also before and after the Cultural Revolution – work units with a high percentage of women tended to have fewer party members than those dominated by men. For example, the Shanghai No. 17 Cotton Mill, Shanghai No. 1 Department Store and Nanjing Radio

49 Ibid., 42–25. This sample is based on 149,995 workers.

50 Ibid., vol. 2, 6.

51 Ibid., 18–19.

52 Zhonggong zhongyang shujichu yanjiu lilunzu, ed., *Dangqian woguo gongren jieji*, vol. 1, 4.

Factory all had very low numbers of party members, compared with heavily male units such as the Guangzhou Ocean Shipping Company, the Zhengzhou Railway Branch Bureau and the Datong Coal Mining Company. This may be a sign that on average, the CCP considered female workers less qualified and less politically reliable as party members, or that a lack of support with childcare and other domestic labour (still considered very much a female preserve) presented a barrier to entry into political life. It is also possible that industrial workers simply enjoyed greater prestige than those in the light industry or services sectors, and that this status difference played out in the party's nomination process. The data from the 1983 survey suggests that some progress was made towards gender equality in the state sector during the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, to quote Mao's much-overused phrase, even with these improved figures, women hardly "held up half the sky".

8 Conclusion

The Mao era saw striking changes in PRC labour relations. Permanent employment, into which the new peasant workers were recruited in the 1970s, was by far the most desirable form of work. It was also growing rapidly. The workforce in the state-owned enterprises increased from 10 million in 1950 to 68.6 million in 1976, while in the collectively-owned enterprises, the rise was even more rapid; from 1.3 million in 1955 to 18.1 million in 1976. In total, about 75 million people were recruited into the socialist urban workforce during the Mao era. For most, access to the iron rice bowl would have meant a great improvement in their standard of living, especially compared with life "outside the system" or "before liberation". From their perspective, social mobility was a genuine reality.

How, then, are we to assess the *hukou* household registration system and the other classificatory mechanisms through which the CCP sought to channel and direct social mobility to certain groups? It seems inappropriate simply to dismiss the *hukou* as a form of medieval "estate", as some have done. Certainly, people unlucky enough to be classified among the "four elements" (landlords, rich peasants, and counterrevolutionary and rotten elements) were treated as outcasts, with few opportunities to improve their situation. However, they accounted for less than ten per cent of the population. For the rest, mobility may not have come easily, but it was achievable – even if a person's prospects were ultimately dependent on the goodwill of the party-state.

The regulation of the centre of social mobility, urban-rural migration and access to jobs or political institutions produced many disturbing outcomes, but

there was some logic to the CCP's methods, however unsavoury they undoubtedly were. On occasions when the government relaxed controls on rural-urban migration, the number of workers in the cities tended to grow at unsustainable rates, as was the case during the Great Leap and in the early 1970s. The centre was then forced to tighten control again and to "adjust" access to the cities to preserve limited resources. It seems to me that struggles around the rural-urban divide, and inclusion or exclusion based on class status – another major feature of early PRC economic life – were an almost unavoidable consequence of the way the CCP tried to manage resources. In establishing the party-state as a gatekeeper, it ensured that these conflicts would become politicized.

It is ironic that the party leadership under Mao, which so thoroughly crushed the rebellion of temporary workers in 1966, eventually fulfilled most of the demands of this rebel movement in the late Cultural Revolution. However, this victory for labour was short lived. From the mid-1980s, the new leadership under Deng Xiaoping began to call not simply for a rollback of the temporary workers' 1970s gains, but for the wholesale destruction of the "iron rice bowl" to improve "economic efficiency" and to subject workers to market relations.⁵³ It took until 1998, when the central government dismantled the old state-owned industries through the closure of small units and corporatization of larger ones, for the Dengist vision to be realized. When it was, social unrest took place against privatization, layoffs and the commodification of labour. Nevertheless, in the end, it was workers who ended up on the losing side. Capitalist labour relations were – eventually – enforced.

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53 For more detail see: Joel Andreas, *Disenfranchised: The Rise and Fall of Industrial Citizenship in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

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The Showras in the Iranian Revolution

Labour Relations and the State in the Iranian Oil Industry, 1979–82

Peyman Jafari

“We snatched freedom, and we won’t lose it soon”, an Iranian oil worker exclaimed six weeks after the Pahlavi monarchy was overthrown in February 1979.¹ Although oil workers had not participated in the initial stages of the revolutionary mobilization, their strikes had paralyzed the state and injected a sense of strength and viability into the revolutionary movement. After the fall of the monarchy, the strike committees in the oil industry and some other industrial sectors developed into *showras* (councils) – workplace committees through which workers made collective decisions and gained, or attempted to gain, control over production and the management of their workplace. Therefore, the showras became an important part of the political power struggle that emerged in 1979, and reflected the radical reimagining of social and political possibilities among significant sections of the urban workforce. Workers’ initial perception that they had “snatched freedom” did not last long, however, as the showras were gradually side-lined, repressed and finally banned as independent organizations.

Despite their importance during revolutionary upheavals, the history of grassroots organizations such as the showras has remained in the shadows. As a recent study of these organizations notices, “in all kinds of historical situations and during various political and economic crises and in different political systems, workers have taken control of their workplaces. Yet this story of workers’ self-administration is rarely told”.² In the case of Iran, there is only one monograph³ and a few articles published on the

1 Kargar, 25 Farvardin 1358/14 April 1979.

2 Dario Azzellini, “Introduction”, in *An Alternative Labor History: Worker Control and Workplace Democracy*, ed. Dario Azzellini (London: Zed Books, 2015), 1. For other studies on workers’ control, see Donny Gluckstein, *The Western Soviets Workers’ Councils Versus Parliament, 1915–1920* (London: Bookmarks, 1985); Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini, ed., *Ours to Master and to Own: Workers’ Control from the Commune to the Present* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2011).

3 Asef Bayat, *Workers and Revolution in Iran: A Third World Experience of Workers’ Control* (London: Zed, 1987).

showras.⁴ The lack of accessible sources has been an obvious obstacle, but state-centric approaches have rendered the showras invisible as well. Moreover, the revolutionary events leading to the fall of the monarchy in February 1979 and the Iran-Iraq War that started in September 1980 and ended eight years later have overshadowed the period in between, when the showras emerged. Finally, after the war ended, the ideological shifts following the fall of the Soviet Union further diminished the interest in the showras.⁵

The topic of this volume – labour relations and revolutions – offers an excellent opportunity to revisit the history of the showras, as they directly challenged and attempted to transform the established conditions and rules regulating labour during the Iranian Revolution. Making extensive use of newspapers, official documents, oil workers' leaflets and reports, memoirs and oral history, this chapter examines the experiences of showras in the Iranian oil industry during the period from 1979 to 1982.⁶ This industry is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, it is largely absent in previous literature about the showras in Iran. Second, given the strategic position of the oil industry in the country's economy, the showras in this sector played an essential role and had an impact beyond the local level, shaping political developments and national debates about labour relations.

Based on the international history of workers' councils, I discern five crucial features that define them. First, workers' councils are a form of collective organization based on direct democracy, which is expressed in debates and decision-making in assemblies, and in the election of delegates who are accountable and can be recalled. Second, the councils involve workers' self-activity, expressed in the different forms of collective action through which they try to realize their demands. Third, workers' councils allow workers to exert some form of control over the production process (of services or products) and the administration of the workplace. Fourth, the councils can (but do not always) coordinate their activities within and beyond a specific economic sector or industry. Fifth, workers' councils have to relate to state power in one way

4 Shahrzad Azad, "Workers' and Peasant's Councils in Iran", *Monthly Review*, no. October 1980 (1980); Chris Goodey, "Workers' Councils in Iranian Factories", *MERIP Reports*, no. June 1980 (1980); Saeed Rahnama, "Work Councils in Iran - the Illusion of Worker Control", *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 13, no. 1 (1992).

5 For an excellent discussion of the impact of the Iran-Iraq War on state-society relations, see Kaveh Ehsani, "War and Resentment: Critical Reflections on the Legacies of the Iran-Iraq War", *Middle East Critique* 26, no. 1 (2017).

6 The current chapter is partly based on an extensive chapter on the oil workers' showras in my doctoral dissertation, Peyman Jafari, "Oil, Labour and Revolution: A Social History of Labour in the Iranian Oil Industry, 1973–1983" (Leiden University, 2018).

or another. Some not only challenge the economic power of capitalism in the workplace, but also project their power beyond it, by challenging the existing state and providing an alternative. These aspects, which collectively challenge capitalist labour relations at the workplace, sectoral and national levels, will be discussed in this chapter in order to evaluate the attainments, limitations and potential of the oil workers' showras.

The first part of the chapter provides an overview of the Iranian Revolution and the emergence of the showras. The second analyses the nature of labour relations on the eve of the revolution. The third part looks at the different ideological articulations of the showras. This is particularly important in the Iranian case, as workers' control is often associated with socialist, communist and anarchist ideas, while in Iran, Islam provided an additional important source of inspiration. The fourth part discusses the development of the conflict between the showras and the post-revolutionary state, identifying three phases. The subsequent final parts analyse the development of the showras' activities during these three phases.

1 From Revolution to Showras

The Iranian Revolution marked the return of oil workers to the national political stage after three decades of relative absence. Oil workers had played a pivotal political role in 1946–1953, when they had stood at the heart of a popular movement that demanded the nationalization of Iranian oil, which was controlled by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. That labour militancy receded, however, when Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq was ousted in 1953 through a coup d'état orchestrated by the American and British secret services.⁷ During the following 25 years, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah, consolidated his power by building a strong army, a modern secret service (the SAVAK), an enlarged bureaucracy and a patronage network around the court; and in the process became heavily dependent on American military and political support. He also embarked on an ambitious project of modernization within the framework of the White Revolution, which was launched in 1963, and spurred a rapid and uneven process of capitalist development leading to massive social, political and economic contradictions. Moreover, this development also “combined”, pulling together traditional and modern features into

⁷ Ervand Abrahamian, *The Coup: 1953, the Cia, and the Roots of Modern U.S.-Iranian Relations* (New York: The New Press, 2013).

new hybrid formations.⁸ A more elaborate discussion of these contradictions, and how they undermined the stability of the monarchy while making significant sections of the society receptive to revolutionary ideologies, falls beyond the scope of this chapter.⁹ There is no space here to discuss the complex causes and the dynamics of the revolution either, but instead this section provides an overview of the different stages of the revolution in order to contextualize the emergence of the showras.¹⁰

The revolutionary mobilization that led to the fall of the Shah in February 1979 unfolded in five stages, each marked by a particular combination of actions.¹¹ The first stage, between June and December 1977, was marked by non-violent mobilization of nationalist and liberal politicians, leftist authors and students, and lawyers and other professionals, who mainly wrote open letters and organized petitions. In October 1977, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini's son became a rallying point for the religious opposition, when ceremonies were organized in various cities. The second stage started in January 1978, after the daily paper *Ettela'at* published an article defaming Ayatollah Khomeini. In response, seminary students in Qom organized protests and were joined by *bazaaris* (shop owners and merchants in the bazaar) who shut down their shops, exerting enough pressure on the ayatollahs to end the students' classes. The clashes with the police left five people dead, and broadened "the revolutionary coalition from the intelligentsia to include a large segment of the ulama and the bazaar".¹² Commemorating the "martyrs" of Qom 40 days later in accordance with Shia tradition started a cycle of protests every 40 days, as every

8 This reading is inspired by Leon Trotsky's analytical framework of "uneven and combined development". See S. Ashman, "Capitalism, Uneven and Combined Development and the Transhistoric", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2009); Kamran Matin, *Recasting Iranian Modernity: International Relations and Social Change* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013).

9 For a more extensive discussion of this period, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982).

10 For the causes and dynamics of the Iranian Revolution, see Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution, Studies in Political Economy* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Mansoor Moaddel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994); Charles Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Foucault in Iran Islamic Revolution after the Enlightenment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

11 For a detailed discussion of these stages, see Ahmad Ashraf and Ali Banuazizi, "The State, Classes and Modes of Mobilization in the Iranian Revolution", *State, Culture, and Society* 1, no. 3 (1985): 3–40.

12 *Ibid.*, 7.

commemoration-protest ended with casualties. This cycle had receded by June 1978, as many participants became wary of the military violence.

August to September 1978 marked the third stage of the revolution, as the protest movement was revived when Islamist activists used the religious occasions during Ramadan – the month of fasting that started on 5 August 1978 – to stage a series of protests. In August, several cinemas were set on fire, most notoriously in Abadan where at least 410 people were killed.¹³ Although agents of the Shah were blamed for this tragedy at the time, evidence points to the involvement of fanatic Islamist activists. Meanwhile, the regime had started to follow a confused strategy, alternating between repression and concession, and showing signs of panic as the political crisis deepened. While in late August 1978, the Shah had appointed Jafar Sharif-Emami to head a government of “national reconciliation”, the military opened fire on demonstrators who had gathered in Zhaleh Square in Tehran on 8 September (“Black Friday”), killing 79 people.¹⁴

Demonstrations continued, albeit with less intensity, but the locus of the protests shifted from the streets into the workplaces, and a mass strike – most importantly in the oil industry – became the hallmark of the fourth stage from September to December 1978. The fifth stage of dual power emerged in January and February 1979. As I have argued elsewhere, the strikes in the oil industry were an important launch pad for the emergence of three institutions that underpinned an alternative pole of authority parallel to the monarchy: the Committee for the Coordination of Strikes in the Oil industry, led by Mehdi Bazargan; the Council of the Islamic Revolution (CIR), which represented Khomeini’s revolutionary authority; and the neighbourhood committees that were responsible for local fuel distribution and security, and were later transformed into *komitehs* that were loyal to Khomeini.¹⁵

The revolutionary situation continued in the three years following the February 1979 insurrection. The new state was consolidating its power, but was confronted with the mobilization of dissident political organizations, subaltern groups of women, ethnic minorities (most importantly the Kurds) and workers. In this period, workers’ protests continued, although with greatly reduced intensity after the Iran-Iraq War started in September 1980, and the showras became a serious obstacle to the consolidation of the new state. This

13 Most reliable reports put the number of casualties somewhere between 410 and 450.

14 Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*, 73.

15 Peyman Jafari, “Fluid History: Oil Workers and the Iranian Revolution”, in *Working for Oil: Comparative Social Histories of Labor in the Global Oil Industry*, ed. T. Atabaki, E. Bini and K. Ehsani (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

contestation ended in early 1982, when forces loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini monopolized state power, banned the remaining leftist organizations and repressed grassroots organizations, including the showras.

The workers' showras resulted from the confluence of two processes. First, following the February 1979 insurrection, the economy entered a period of crisis due to the strikes, political insecurity and a lack of raw materials; many enterprises shut their doors, and in many cases the owners fled the country. Others were purged by their workers or by revolutionary organizations. Second, the capitalist relations of production were challenged by radical ideologies, ranging from Marxist to Islamist.

As Asef Bayat has argued, in workplaces where the management had left or was severely weakened, there was a practical trigger for the creation of showras, often through the transformation of the existing strike or "inquiry committees", established to identify and purge members of the SAVAK, the Shah's secret service. In workplaces where the management had remained, showras emerged from a more combative attitude, derived from the revolutionary transformation of workers' consciousness. This revolutionary consciousness had two essential elements. First, the revolution had created a sense of ownership among workers regarding their workplace and society. This sense of ownership was not only expressed in terms of class, I should add, but was also articulated in terms of nation; particularly in the oil industry, which was regarded as a national asset. Second, many workers equated the old factory regime with the authoritarianism of the monarchy, and hence saw democratization of the workplace as an alternative.¹⁶

In the absence of genuine labour unions, the showras articulated oil workers' socioeconomic demands, particularly regarding wages and housing conditions, and campaigned to realize them. They were, however, much more than labour unions, due to their function as "workplace organisations that aimed to extend the control of labour over the organisation of production, limit the authority of management, and democratize the work environment".¹⁷ Their "elected executive committee represented all the employees of a factory (blue – and white-collar) and/or an industrial group, irrespective of trade, skill or gender. Their major concern was to achieve workers' control".¹⁸

16 Bayat, *Workers and Revolution in Iran*, 109–112.

17 Asef Bayat, "Labor and Democracy in Post-Revolutionary Iran", in *Post-Revolutionary Iran*, ed. Hooshang Amirahmadi and Manoucher Parvin (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 43.

18 Bayat, *Workers and Revolution in Iran*, 100.

2 Pre-revolutionary Labour Relations

Labour relations before the revolution were heavily shaped by the uneven and combined development in Iran, creating a situation in which traditional and modern labour relations existed at the same time, but were also drawn together into new combinations. The manufacturing sector was strongly bifurcated. Nearly 97 per cent of the manufacturing establishments were small sized, each employing fewer than 10 workers, and in total about 44 per cent of all the workers in manufacturing. While the remaining 3 per cent of the establishments were medium sized (10 to 49 workers) or larger (50 or more), they employed about 56 per cent of the manufacturing workers.¹⁹ Labour relations in the small establishments were mainly shaped by what Bayat has called “semi-craft management”, referring to “the decentralized mode of production in small-scale, technically backward and organizationally simple units of production in which the worker-capitalist relations assume the appearance of the patron-client relation of the classic craft system”.²⁰ In most of the medium-sized establishments, which were often labour intensive, the “traditional management” prevailed. “In such units, direct control was dominant; there was no structural hierarchical mediating element between labour and capital ... The supervisors, the boss’s hands, exerted an effective and extended control over the disciplinary process of the workshop, in terms of hiring, firing, wage increases, promotion, overtime, punishments and penalties”.²¹ In the large establishments, the principles of “modern rational management” were partially used to regulate labour relations through “methods of organization and production, which, while raising the productivity of labour, at the same time sought the co-operation of the workforce [...], in the words of Burawoy, ‘obscuring and securing surplus-value.’”²²

The oil industry, directly employing about 70,000 white-collar and blue-collar workers on the eve of the revolution,²³ was one of the sectors where modern rational management was applied the most systematically, but only partially, to regulate labour relations. Using Richard Hyman’s notion of industrial relations as a synonym, labour relations are defined here as the “processes

19 Farhad Nomani and Sohrab Behdad, *Class and Labor in Iran: Did the Revolution Matter?* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 91.

20 Bayat, *Workers and Revolution in Iran*, 53.

21 *Ibid.*, 55.

22 *Ibid.*, 56.

23 A similar number were employed through subcontractors active mainly in construction and distribution.

of control over work relations".²⁴ On the one hand, "work relations" are controlled by state policies regulating the capital-labour relations. As in many countries, the labour law in Iran played an important role in regulating these relations. The oil workers' struggles in the 1940s had contributed significantly to the societal pressures that had forced the government to introduce the labour law in 1946. On the other hand, labour relations are of course also regulated at the workplace or the industrial level, through what Michael Burawoy calls the "factory regime", referring to "the set of institutions that organize, transform, or repress struggles over relations in production and relations of production at the level of the enterprise".²⁵

As I have explained more elaborately elsewhere, the factory regime in the Iranian oil industry before the revolution was a combination of what Burawoy calls "hegemonic" and "bureaucratic despotic" forms.²⁶ In the former, the state and factory apparatuses are separated, but the state intervenes through laws and regulations to shape and constrain the action of the factory apparatus (for example, collective bargaining, trade unions and grievance settlements), which is geared towards the creation of consent. The "bureaucratic despotic" factory regime, based on repressive mechanisms of control, is characterized by the fusion of the factory and state apparatuses, and bureaucratic state intervention in the factory regime and the economy.²⁷

The specific mechanisms of controlling the labour processes in the oil industry, which can be discussed here only very briefly, clarify why the labour relations there could be conceived of as hybrid. The first mechanism was the modern rational management discussed above. Most importantly, this created an internal market, a structural hierarchy within the workforce and an aligned system of rewards and punishments, which aimed to increase productivity while creating consent among the oil workers. The remuneration system was organized according to a well-defined job classification system that also regulated promotions. Hiring and firing were subject to bureaucratic rules, and there was an advanced system of educational and training

24 Richard Hyman, *Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 12.

25 Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago, IL, London: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 110.

26 Jafari, "Oil, Labour and Revolution", 151–171.

27 Burawoy also identifies "market despotic" and "collective self-management" factory regimes. This is a simplified version of Burawoy's typology, limited to the main forms of factory regimes. See Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production: Factory Regimes under Capitalism and Socialism* (London: Verso, 1985), 12–13, 25–26, 85–121.

institutions. The most important aspect, however, was an extreme hierarchy within the workforce that created a huge differentiation, and also conflicts, between white-collar and blue-collar employees, reflected in their wages and social, cultural, housing and health amenities. A similar differentiation existed between those directly employed by the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and those employed by subcontractors. A system of collective bargaining and trade unions had also been established in the oil industry, expressing the Shah's will to create a corporatist system, but these were highly controlled by the state, which brings us to the "bureaucratic despotic" features of its labour relations.

The factory regime in the oil industry was not fully autonomous from the state, and had many authoritarian features. The oil workers' candidates for the trade unions and for the collective bargaining that took place every two years were vetted by the SAVAK. Agents of the secret service had also established a network of surveillance within the oil industry, creating fear among workers, who could face arrest, dismissal or transfer if they were reported as dissidents. The last factor contributing to the managerial control mechanism was the official ideology disseminated by managers and the NIOC's educational system and official publications, which promoted the ideas of meritocracy, competition and individual progress in the oil industry. However, there were also many internal contradictions here, as the idea of meritocracy and progress was contradicted by the political system of privilege for the supporters of the Shah. In 1975, for instance, the Shah introduced a one-party system, and obliged all civil servants – including the white-collar workers in the oil industry – to join the Rastakhiz Party. While some workers perceived this measure as repressive, others joined the party, only to discover that they were not allowed to play a meaningful role.

3 Ideological Articulations

The Iranian Revolution represented a major challenge to established labour relations in the oil industry – and elsewhere, of course. The showras became the most important institutions through which this challenge was organized in practice – as will be discussed in the final part – and articulated ideologically. Although the showras emerged more or less spontaneously, the influence of communist ideologies played an important function. The role of communist organizations in the creation of the showras was initially limited, in the sense that they had no preconceived plan to build the showras after the insurrection, but in many workplaces their members and sympathisers played

a key role in founding and especially in sustaining them.²⁸ Once the showras had been established, nearly all of the communist organizations supported them enthusiastically, however, without having a clear understanding of their potential, and without proposing a concrete strategy for them. Instead, the strategy was formulated only in very general terms as “communism”. Having mainly debated issues around guerrilla warfare, imperialism, dependent development and other matters, it was rare to find any discussion about the historical and international experiences of workers’ control in communist publications before the emergence of the showras. These organizations were therefore not well prepared and equipped to contribute to the debates that emerged.

The pro-Moscow Tudeh Party was the least enthusiastic about the showras. A major factor in Iranian politics in the 1940s and early 1950s, it was harshly repressed after the US and UK orchestrated coup d’état that toppled Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1953. The Tudeh Party lost much of its appeal to the younger generations, who thought it had failed to build resistance against the 1953 coup, and in the following two decades they grew impatient with its reformist approach to the Shah; an approach that in their view reflected the “revisionism” of the Soviet Union. After the insurrection, the party prioritized not the showras, but instead the creation of a national labour union. It opposed most of the strikes and accused other groups who did support them of ultra-leftism.²⁹ The Tudeh Party argued – correctly – that labour unions and showras were two different things, and that both should be established, rather than substituting one for the other. In practice, however, this meant a strategy that favoured the unions.³⁰ When the showras became a fact, the party tried to direct them into labour union activities rather than activities related to workers’ control.

A wide range of communist organizations opposed the Tudeh Party’s “opportunist” orientation, the largest of which was the Marxist-Leninist People’s Fada’i Guerrilla Organisation (PFGO). Inspired by the Chinese and Cuban

28 Shahrzad Azad (a pseudonym of Valentine Moghadam) attributed a larger role to leftist organizations, arguing: “Left forces, in particular the Marxist-Leninist OIPFG and the progressive Islamic Mojahedin, played a major role in the formation and defence of these councils. In several factories in Teheran, the Daneshjooyan-e-Pishgam (‘vanguard students’ – associations of students throughout Iran that support the OIPFG) supported workers’ strikes, assisted in their efforts to elect representatives to the councils, and cooperated in formulating the workers’ political and economic demands.” Azad, “Workers’ and Peasants’ Councils in Iran”, 17.

29 *Nameh-ye Mardom*, 19 Khordad 1358/9 June 1979.

30 *Nameh-ye Mardom*, 3 Mordad 1358/25 July 1979.

revolution, it advocated and conducted a guerrilla struggle against the Shah, but turned sharply towards the workers' movement after the insurrection, launching the journal *Kar* (labour) as its main publication. The editorial in its first issue, on 10 March 1979, stated:

It is our duty to take another step toward the advancement of the workers' movement with the publication of a special workers' journal ... Workers' collective struggles are organized through labour unions around economic demands ... but in order to be finally free, the working class has no other choice than to take political power, abolish private property of the means of production and destroy capitalism.

Thus, the PFGO promoted the creation of independent trade unions, but also called for workers' interference in management and ultimately the taking of political power through the showras and other grassroots organizations. *Kar*, for instance, argued: "If the showras act correctly and organize those who are capable and knowledgeable, and actively interfere with political affairs, they can develop into people's organizations for running the politics of the country".³¹ Similar views were espoused by the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI), another guerrilla organization that had emerged before the revolution and that combined Islamic and Marxist ideas. This orientation was quickly derailed by the repression of the new regime and by the many splits within the PFGO and other communist organizations.³² Nevertheless, it is important to note that despite having a weak presence in the workplace during the revolution, the various leftist organizations grew during the oil strikes and in the months following the insurrection, and their presence in the showras became significant during 1979.

There were different approaches to the showras among the Islamic forces within them. Many Muslim members of the showras were influenced by Shariati's Islamic liberation theology, which advocated the revolutionary transformation towards an Islamic classless society (*jame'e-ye bitabaqeh-ye towhidi*), and they were inspired by his reference to the concept of showras as an Islamic principle.³³ Reflecting these radical views, the statutes of the Islamic showras

31 *Kar*, 13 Ordibehesht 1358/15 March 1979.

32 A detailed history of the Tudeh Party, the PFGO and its splits, and other communist organizations can be found in Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

33 Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 197.

proposed in June 1979 by the Society of the Islamic Workers' Showras – which was established to coordinate the activities of the showras – defined their task as the supervision and control of all the financial, personnel and cultural activities of factories.³⁴

Another version of Islamism was represented by the *maktabi* (doctrine) ideology of those who supported Khomeini's line.³⁵ This ideology supported the showras, finding justification in two verses of the Quran that refer to the need to arrive at decisions through consultation. Supporters of *maktabi* ideology opposed capitalism and "liberal" managers, but were zealously pro-Khomeini and supported his Islamic state, as well as the Islamic Republic Party (IRP), which was established on 20 March 1979. The contradictions of the *maktabi* ideology reflected the contradictions of Khomeini's political Islam as a form of populism that opposed capitalism, favoured Islamic justice (*adl-e islami*), voiced support for the *mostazafin* (downtrodden) and mobilized them; however, without challenging private property.³⁶ Khomeini and the IRP tried to restrict the autonomy of the showras, Islamize them and subsume them within an authoritarian Islamic corporatist arrangement.

Not all of the Islamic ideologies were supportive or ambivalent towards the showras. Representing liberal Islam, Mehdi Bazargan's provisional government opposed the showras, as they disrupted the capital-labour relations of the free market. The conservative clerics who were aligned with the *bazaaris* were even more vehemently opposed. They became more vocal after 1982 and formed the right wing of the IRP. The existence of diverging ideological orientations within the showras inevitably led to conflicts. These conflicts in fact became a central point around which the post-revolutionary state-building project developed. In the following, I distinguish three phases in the development of the showras and their conflicts with the state.

34 *Amalkard-e Dosaleh-ye Kanun-e Showra-ha-ye Islami-ye Kargarān Va Komiteh-ye Kargari* [Performance of the Society of the Islamic Workers' Showras and the Workers Committee in the Last Two Years] (n.p.: Kanun-e Showra-ha-ye Islami-ye Kargarān, 1359/1982), 4.

35 For a similar distinction, see Siavash Saffari, *Two Pro-Mostazafin Discourses in the 1979 Iranian Revolution* (Berlin: Springer Science+Business Media, 2017). With regard to political factions in this period in the Islamic Republic of Iran, see Mehdi Moslem, *Factional Politics in Post-Khomeini Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 60–61.

36 With regard to the interpretation of Khomeini's political Islam (Islamism) as populism, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993); Peyman Jafari, "Rupture and Revolt in Iran", *International Socialism Journal*, no. 124 (2009).

4 The State and the Showras

The state apparatus that emerged after the fall of the monarchy consisted of competing institutions with different ideological orientations that vied for political authority. Ayatollah Khomeini and his supporters exerted power through the Council of the Islamic Revolution (CIR), which functioned as the main legislative body until July 1980, a few weeks after the first parliament assembled. The neighbourhood *komitehs* and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) provided armed support to Khomeini and the CIR.

In theory, executive power lay with the provisional government of Prime Minister Bazargan that was appointed by Khomeini on 1 February 1979, although its authority was regularly undermined by the political interventions of the *komitehs*, the IRGC and powerful clerics. Another centre of executive power was established after a presidential system was enshrined in the new constitution adopted in December 1979. Two months later, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr was elected president and remained in this post until he was ousted in June 1981 after a conflict with Khomeini. Within this field of competing centres of power, ultimate power resided with Khomeini in his position as the Supreme Leader, as envisioned in his doctrine of the *velayat-e faqih*, Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist. From the moment of their inception in the first months of 1979, the showras were confronted with this fragmented state apparatus. Their conflict developed in three distinctive phases in the subsequent three years.

The first phase in which the showras tried to create self-management and workers' control over production started immediately after the February 1978 insurrection, and continued until August 1978. Expressing what many workers expected, the oil workers' representatives believed "that the day after the revolution under the leadership of Imam Khomeini we will officially take over the control over the factories".³⁷ However, when the showras did try to take control, both the provisional government and Khomeini and the IRP opposed them. The former tried to restore the pre-revolutionary labour relations based on technocratic managerial control by appointing new "liberal" managers in the establishments where the management had left and retaining them in the oil industry, while the latter encouraged the creation of Islamic Labour Associations (*Anjoman-ha-ye Islami-ye Kar*) to oppose the left, and supported the Islamic showras' opposition to the provisional government.

As the showras in the oil industry and elsewhere proliferated, the provisional government struggled to keep them in check. In early March 1979, it

37 *Kayhan*, 10 Bahman/30 January 1979.

published a document that defined the nature and tasks of the showras as being separate from executive bodies such as the factory management. Referring to an Islamic principle, their task was defined as the “promotion of virtue and prevention of vice” (*amr-e be ma’ruf, nahi az monkar*). More concretely, they were to gather the workers’ wishes and grievances, categorize them and pass them on to the officials, and enhance the unity between workers and the executive branches.³⁸ The CIR went much further, introducing a law against “counter-revolutionary crimes” on 4 July 1979. Article 9 of this law directly targeted individuals who “disrupt the business in the country’s workshops and factories or encourage workers to stop working or closing the workshop or factory”, and specified a sentence of two to nine years for these “crimes”.³⁹ It was not until June 1980 that the authorities formulated regulations to give legal status to the showras; however, at this stage, what determined the practical functioning of the showras was not the laws and regulations, but the balance of power in the class struggle. In this respect, the interventions of the IRGC, the *komitehs* and the Islamic Labour Associations as tools for repression were much more significant.

The first phase ended in August 1979, when the new state conducted its first major assault against the opposition in Kurdistan. This marked the beginning of the crackdown on oppositional forces, including the showras. At the same time, the intra-state conflict continued and intensified at the highest managerial level of the oil industry. In late September 1979, Hassan Nazih, the chair of the NIOC and a close ally of Bazargan, was ousted after he had enraged pro-Khomeini supporters by criticizing the entanglement of religion and politics.⁴⁰ He was replaced by Ali Akbar Mo’infar, another close ally of Bazargan, who also became the first minister of oil a month later. The second phase started in September 1979, and was marked by the defensive posture of the showras as they came under heavy attacks from both Mo’infar and the pro-Khomeini forces. Following the occupation of the American Embassy in November 1979 by radical pro-Khomeini students, the provisional government resigned and the balance of political power shifted dramatically to the *maktabis*, who supported the existence of the showras while attempting to turn them into corporatist organizations, forcing out communists and PMOI sympathisers. The *maktabis* also clashed with the first elected president of the Islamic Republic, Bani-Sadr, who wanted to put technocratic managers at the head of factories. Thus, the *maktabis* in and outside the showras were fighting on two fronts;

38 *Ettela’at*, 19 Esfand 1357/10 March 1979.

39 This law can be viewed online at <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/98141> [13 November 2019].

40 *Keyhan*, 3 Mehr 1358/25 September 1979 and 7 Mehr 1358/29 September 1979.

against the “liberal” president on the one side, and the communists and PMOI sympathisers on the other.

The third phase started with the Iran-Iraq War on 22 September 1980. The war was a decisive turning point, as it destroyed many oil facilities and forced thousands of oil workers to move out of the oil-producing region that bordered Iraq. Moreover, the war served as a distraction from the social conflicts, encouraged nationalism and allowed the state to crack down on the opposition in the name of national unity. The repression increased dramatically after June 1981, when President Bani-Sadr was ousted. The weakened showras in the oil industry were banned in early 1982.

Having discussed the overall development of the conflict between the showras and the state in the period from 1979 to 1982, we can now look at how they organized and tried to transform the labour relations in this period.

5 Fighting for Control: February to August 1979

As one journalist aptly observed in early March 1979, the emergence of grassroots organizations in the oil industry posed a serious challenge to the state-building process after the collapse of the monarchy: “After winning the battle on the streets of Tehran and ousting first the Shah and then [his last] Prime Minister Bakhtiar, Ayatollah Khomeini’s new Islamic regime faces crucial weeks as it tries to strengthen its grip on the government. Nowhere will the battle for control be more difficult and vital than in the oil fields where National Iranian Oil Co. is gearing up to resume exports”.⁴¹ A month later, *Time Magazine* reported:

In dusty, steamy Abadan ... an air of normality appears to have returned. But life is anything but normal inside the world’s largest refinery. ... Members of the workers’ council argue interminably. Said one welder after a particularly boisterous session: “Nobody can make any decisions. All anybody does is talk”. Convinced that they were the dominant force in ousting the Shah, the oil workers feel that they are being neglected by the revolutionary government. They are insisting on 50% to 100% wage

⁴¹ Roger Vielvoye, “New Nioc Chief Faces Explosive Situation”, *Oil & Gas Journal*, no. 5 (1979): 93. Shapour Bakhtiar was a longstanding member of the National Front, who was appointed prime minister by the Shah as a conciliatory move. This move failed, however, after he was condemned by other leaders of the National Front and was rejected by Khomeini.

increases and are threatening to walk out if they do not get them. Members of the workers' council have been demanding sweeping changes in management.⁴²

The establishment of oil workers' showras posed a challenge not only to Khomeini's Islamist populism and Bazargan's Islamic liberalism, but also to the technocratic-managerialist order that Nazih wanted to restore in the oil industry. In Abadan, the strike committee in the refinery had taken effective control over the production before the February 1979 insurrection. The workers had organized the "Committee of the Guards of the Oil Industry" to protect the refinery, and had introduced a five day, 40-hour working week.⁴³

After the insurrection, the strike committees in the Abadan Refinery invited all the workers to participate in general assemblies in order to elect the representatives of the showras. Higher wages, better and cheaper housing, retirement benefits, participation in management and the purge of senior *ancien régime* employees were the most important demands made by the Abadan oil workers.⁴⁴ This experience was replicated in the oil fields and in other refineries (Tehran, Shiraz, Tabriz, Kermanshah and Isfahan). At the same time, the workers in the Razi petrochemical complex near Abadan established their own showra. The showras of the Abadan Refinery and the Razi petrochemical complex represented both blue-collar and white-collar workers, and in both locations there was a central showra, consisting of representatives of those from the different departments.

In Abadan, the showras had become so powerful that the entire board of directors resigned on 18 April in protest at their interference in the management of the plant, and only returned two days later after Nazih's intervention.⁴⁵ Describing the situation in Abadan, an *Associated Press* journalist reported that Iran's oil industry was in the hands of "radical workers who demanded a major role in deciding who gets their products and at what price. Marxists are actively recruiting among them, although they remain a minority".⁴⁶ Up until late April 1979, the showra exerted considerable control over production and administration in the Abadan Refinery, and introduced a 40-hour working week, but its role gradually changed into participation after the provisional

42 Bruce Van Voorst, "Another Crude Awakening in Iran after the Revolution, Oil Workers Gush Discontent", *Time* 113, no. 23 (1979): 43.

43 *Kar (Minority)*, Bahman 1367/January-February 1989.

44 *The New York Times*, 6 March 1979.

45 *Ettela'at*, 30 Farvardin 1359/19 April 1979 and 1 Ordibehesht 1359/21 April 1979.

46 *Associated Press*, 25 February 1979.

government appointed a new management. Nevertheless, interference with the management's affairs continued and created tensions.⁴⁷

In some of the refineries, the showras took over almost total control of production and administration. This happened, for instance, in the Pars Oil Company (refinery) near Karaj, which was Iran's first and only private refinery at the time.⁴⁸ After the insurrection, its 503 employees established a showra of seven people and seven sub-committees, and drafted a list of demands: nationalization of the refinery by NIOC, the dismissal of foreign employees, pay increases, a housing allowance, lowering of the mortgage interest rate to 2 per cent and a meeting place for the showra. Confronted with an unwavering director, the showra organized a general meeting in May and called for the nationalization of the Pars Oil Company. When this move did not produce the desired result, the showra changed track. In a general meeting on 20 June 1979, it decided to sell the products itself and use the income to pay wages and salaries. The Pars Oil Company showra held a meeting with the production managers to coordinate the takeover, and established a "committee for the provisional administration of the refinery", consisting of the showra members and two technicians. After the general meeting of the showra ratified this decision, it took over the refinery on 24 June, hanging banners on the main gate and inside the refinery reading, "National Oil Company of Iran: Karaj Refinery". In a following step, the showra stopped the sale of products, stockpiling them in the depots, and sent two of its members to negotiate a merger with the NIOC. The provisional government finally stepped in on 13 August 1979, authorising the Ministry of Industry and Mines to appoint a director for the company and rolling back workers' control.⁴⁹

In the Tehran (Rey) refinery, pipelines and depots (Tehran Refinery in short), communist workers were gradually manoeuvred out of the common syndicate that had been established during the strikes in late 1978. It became dominated by those who were either supporters of the IRP, or took a neutral or conciliatory stance towards it. In response, leftist workers started to establish showras in different departments of the refinery.⁵⁰ Three main showras were established at general assemblies that elected their members. The Showra of Maintenance Employees represented workers in the turnery, transport, precision tools, electrics, general and pump repair departments, together with the barrel-making factory and a number of others. The Showra of Shift Employees represented

47 *Kar (Minority)*, Bahman 1367/January-February 1989.

48 *Kayhan*, 3 Dey 1339/24 December 1960.

49 See <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/104980> [13 November 2019].

50 *Kar (Minority)*, Bahman 1367/January-February 1989.

the shift workers in the control rooms, lubricant and bitumen factories, the electricity, water and steam powerhouses, the loading stations, etc. The United Showra emerged through the unification of the showras of the engineers, the administration, and the safety and security services. At a general assembly in the Tehran Refinery, these three showras nominated their own candidates, who were elected into the Showra of the (Tehran) Refinery Employees.⁵¹

A further step was taken towards greater coordination among the showras in late February or early March 1979, when the white-collar workers in the NIOC headquarters in Tehran initiated the establishment of the General Showra of the Oil Industry Employees (*Showra-ye Sarasari-ye Karkonan-e San'at-e Naft*), bringing together representatives from the showras in the oil, gas and petrochemical industries all over Iran. It was agreed to elect one representative for every 1,000 employees, bringing the membership of the General Showra of the Oil Industry Employees in theory up to 65 to 70.⁵² In practice, however, it started its activities with 47 elected members.⁵³ On 17 March 1979, the General Showra of the Oil Industry Employees created a number of subcommittees dealing with: 1) projects; 2) contact with the NIOC chair Nazih; 3) technical affairs; 4) personnel and accounting; 5) gathering advice from employees; 6) wages and salaries; 7) social affairs of the employees; 8) cultural activities; 9) fuel distribution; and 10) communication with the production units.⁵⁴ Most of those on the showra were members or sympathisers of leftist organizations, but despite these organizations' ideological differences, the members cooperated relatively well. Until the autumn of 1979, the General Showra of the Oil Industry Employees was involved in the recruitment and dismissal of employees, their wage and job classification, and the election of department heads by general assemblies. Workers had taken over a number of positions, including the head of the security guard, the head of the administration and the head of the transport department.⁵⁵

Another important showra in the oil industry was the General Showra of the Ahwaz Oil Employees, which had 60 representatives from the various showras

51 Yadollah Khosrowshahi, "Tashkilat-e Mostaghel-e Kargari Va Zarf-e Tashakolpaziri-ye Kargaran-e Iran Dar Moghe'iyat-e Konuni [Independent Worker Organizations and the Possibility to Organize Workers in Contemporary Iran]", *Kargar-e Tab'idi*, no. 36 (January 1997): 17.

52 *Kar (Minority)*, Bahman 1367/January-February 1989.

53 *Peygham-e Emruz*, 22 Ordibehesht 1357/12 May 1979.

54 *Peygham-e Emruz*, 23 Ordibehesht 1357/13 May 1979.

55 Khosrowshahi, *Tashkilat-e Mostaghel-e Kargari Va Zarf-e Tashakolpaziri-ye Kargaran-e Iran Dar Moghe'iyat-e Konuni [Independent Worker Organizations and the Possibility to Organize Workers in Contemporary Iran]*, 17.

in the oil fields, the production units, the maintenance departments and the administrative offices in and around Ahwaz. In the first months of its activity, it managed to force the authorities to reduce the inequalities between blue-collar and white-collar workers. The blue-collar workers, for instance, were given air-conditioning, which – unlike their white-collar colleagues – most were unable to afford by themselves. The Ahwaz showra also gave support to workers in the drilling companies, who were demanding the nationalization of their companies.⁵⁶

6 Fighting against Repression: September 1979 to September 1980

When the balance of power dramatically shifted to the pro-Khomeini forces between August and November 1978, the showras retained their collective decision-making function but lost much of their effective control over production and management. They nevertheless continued to intervene in the management's activities. The "frontier of control" within the oil industry thus shifted, mainly under the influence of the national political conflicts discussed earlier.⁵⁷ After the attacks on the grassroots organization had intensified in August 1979, and Nazih was ousted as chair of the NIOC in September, the repression of the showras increased, and they faced a state that had become controlled to a greater extent by the pro-Khomeini forces. This second phase of the showras' activities lasted until the Iran-Iraq War started in September 1980.

In this phase, the activities of the showras in the oil industry became completely defensive, as they faced repression and attempted to maintain some level of control by interfering in matters of management over a number of specific issues. First, the showras resisted the provisional government's decision in late September 1978 to cancel Thursdays being considered as part of the weekend. The management of the Abadan Refinery issued its own decree to announce this new policy, but the representatives of the refinery workers immediately published a statement opposing the new schedule for working hours, "because it was introduced without consultation with the workers' representatives", and announced that they would continue working in accordance with the previous schedule. The workers in the Aghajari oil field also refused to work on Thursdays, and a group of "militant oil workers in Ahwaz" issued

56 Interview with Kobra Qasemi, 8 August 2017, Amsterdam.

57 Carter Goodrich, *The Frontier of Control* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920).

a statement calling on their colleagues to similarly boycott the new schedule.⁵⁸ On 30 September, workers at the Shiraz Refinery went on strike after a week of go-slow protests.⁵⁹ According to Mansour Sadri, head of the NIOC's statistical staff at the time, high absenteeism by blue-collar workers and lower-ranking white-collar staff became prevalent during this period.⁶⁰ Thanks to their protests, the oil workers scored a major victory in December 1979, when a 40-hour working week and time off based on the weekend including Thursday and Friday was agreed by the CIR and announced by Minister of Oil, Ali Akbar Mo'infar.⁶¹

A few weeks earlier, another victory had been achieved by radical oil workers who had demanded the cancellation of oil exports to the US. In its session of 12 November 1979, the CIR decided to cut off these exports.⁶² Although the occupation of the American Embassy was the main trigger, Mo'infar explained that this measure had been taken at the request of "a large number of our compatriots, especially the noble workers of the oil industry". The Islamic Labour Showra of the oil workers of Kharg Island then issued the following statement:

We are all your soldiers, Khomeini; we await your order, Khomeini. Immediately after the midnight news broadcast by the radio and having been informed of the orders of the great idol-breaker and the brave and diligent Imam of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Imam Khomeini ... we stopped the oil flow to the tanker, Northern Line, which was loading at quay number 14 of Kharg Island to be transported to the US.⁶³

The Abadan Refinery was one of the main sites of continuing showra activity, including collective decision-making. In February 1980, the showra of the northern Abadan Refinery workers issued a statement demanding that any

58 *Peykar*, 16 Mehr 1358/8 October 1979. *Khabar-e Kargar*, Dey 1358/December 1979–January 1980.

59 *Peykar*, 23 Mehr 1358/15 October 1979.

60 US Embassy in Tehran to Secretary of State, Washington DC, 29 October 1979; Document Number 1979TEHRAN11423; Electronic Telegrams, 1979; Central Foreign Policy Files; General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

61 *Kar*, 28 Azar 1358/19 December 1979.

62 This came after pro-Khomeini students occupied the American embassy in Tehran on 4 November 1979. Many workers, including in the oil industry, saw the ensuing radicalized political atmosphere as an opportunity to step up their activities and demands. For Khomeini and his supporters, this anti-imperialist move created an opportunity to sideline the liberals and the left.

63 "Iran Cuts off Oil Exports to USA", in BBC Summary of World Broadcast (14 November 1979).

change in the grades of employees should only be made after it had been informed and consulted. It also issued a statement condemning any workers who met with the management without the showra's consent.⁶⁴

On 15 April 1980, the Islamic Showra of the Abadan Oil Employees organized a general assembly that was attended by a few thousand workers. At the end of the gathering, the general assembly adopted a resolution, which started with the words, "In the name of the God of the *mostazafin* [downtrodden]" and stated the following demands:

- 1) condemnation of all measures undermining the showras;
- 2) the unconditional release of four arrested oil workers;
- 3) a televised debate between Minister of Oil Mo'infar and representatives of the oil workers' showra;
- 4) dismissal of Mo'infar;
- 5) legal pursuit of those violating Article 36 [the right of the accused to be heard in a competent court] and 37 [the principle of innocence until proven otherwise];
- 6) lifting the ban on *Payam* [the journal of the Abadan oil workers];
- 7) attention paid to oil workers' social and economic conditions;
- 8) an invitation to President Bani-Sadr to visit the Abadan Refinery for negotiations.

The declaration ended with the statement that the showra of the Abadan Refinery took no responsibility if the demands were ignored.⁶⁵ Yet another example is provided by the Islamic Showra of the Distribution Employees of the Oil Industry, representing about 12,000 workers. This was one of the strongest showras in which religious forces were dominant.⁶⁶ On 15 December 1979, it held a general assembly to elect its representatives.⁶⁷ After it had decided to purge ten managers on 6 July 1980, Mo'infar retaliated by demanding the suspension of ten of its members, but the conflict quickly escalated as the showra issued a statement, demanding in turn the dismissal of Mo'infar.⁶⁸

64 *Kar-e Jonub*, 30 Esfand 1358/20 March 1980.

65 *Kargar* (SK), 3 Ordibehesht 1359/23 April 1980.

66 The influence of religious workers in the showra is acknowledged in leftist literature by references such as "the showra was labelled Islamic due to the illusions of workers about Khomeini".

67 *Khabar-e Kargar*, Dey 1358/December 1979-January 1980. Bahram Burbur, Nasser Manuchehri, Ali Asghar Heydari Moqadam, Ali Tarfaq, Kiyumars Najmabadi and Shamsaldin Raqami were elected to the central showra. A number of others, among them one woman, were elected as representatives in the regional showras.

68 *Kar (Minority)*, Bahman 1367/January-February 1989.

The Tehran Refinery showras regularly interfered in the running of the refinery and participated in the weekly management meetings, which inevitably created tensions. A turning point was reached after the showra members, who were concerned with the income gap between the management and ordinary workers, approached the financial department and demanded to see the salary list; a request that was met. In response, officials promptly arrested a number of the showra's members in the summer of 1980 to draw a line in the sand. In the Isfahan Refinery, the majority of the workers attended the general assembly on 26 November 1979, where the following demands were made:

- 1) the refinery director Mir-'Azimi will be discharged and replaced by Aghasi 'Alaqband and Haj Hashem Alhosseini;
- 2) the heads of accounting, administration and the fire brigade will be sacked;
- 3) all contracts of the refinery will be continued until the end of the month but no payments should be made till the showra has made a final decision;
- 4) from 27 November, all employees of the refinery must use the refinery transport service and the use of refinery cars is no longer allowed.

Worried about the power of the showra, Ayatollah Ali Qodusi, the national prosecutor, sent a representative to the Isfahan Refinery to condemn the actions. When Mo'infar attempted to visit the refinery to deal with the problems, a number of workers spread the rumour that he would be physically attacked, forcing the minister to stay away.⁶⁹

Although the showras had lost much of their direct control, the examples above demonstrate that they were still intervening in the management of companies. The American Embassy staff asked its top ranking contacts the question: "How are decisions made at NIOC?" They were surprised by how many did not know:

NIOC is compartmentalized to the point that few offices are aware of what is going on down the hall. Ghobad Fakhimi, director for distribution and pipelines, and formerly a close associate of Nazih, suggested that decision-making was something of a negative veto process. Either a policy is adopted by consensus, or an issue remains unresolved. It can be carried over indefinitely, or until the blocking faction became convinced or fatigued.⁷⁰

69 *Khabar-e Kargar*, Dey 1358/December 1979-January 1980.

70 US Embassy in Tehran to Secretary of State, Washington D.C., 29 October 1979; Document Number 1979TEHRAN11423; Electronic Telegrams, 1979; Central Foreign Policy Files;

Purging (*paksazi*) the oil industry of managers and employees who had supported the Shah or had worked for the SAVAK was perhaps the most important issue in which oil workers' showras interfered in the operations of the management. Although this had been on the agenda of oil workers since the insurrection, its importance increased during the second phase of the showras' activities. There were multiple reasons for the nearly obsessive emphasis on the need to purge the oil industry. First, the element of revenge played a significant role, as many showra members had first-hand experience of obstruction and repression by some of the managers during the oil strikes, and by SAVAK members before the revolution. Second, there was a symbolic meaning attached to the purges: revolutionary change in the workplace was closely associated with the change in management. The need to be rigorous in this respect was moreover fed by the fear of a coup. This fear was triggered by the 1953 coup and the counter-revolution in Chile in 1973, both of which were part of oil workers' political memory. Third, as the showras lost control in other aspects, the attempt to remove high-ranking managers became the main mechanism to assert their own power within the industry and send a message to the new political establishment.

One of the grievances the showras had harboured against Nazih during the period from February to September 1979 was his reluctance to move ahead with the purges, as he was trying to retain experienced managers based on the argument that they were needed in order to sustain productivity. In response, the showras and the Islamic labour associations increasingly acted on their own, pushing NIOC to take action or threatening to exclude those accused of links with the former regime from the workplace. In October 1979, the Showra of the Employees of the Oil Industry in Ahwaz published a list of 70 employees who they accused of having collaborated with the SAVAK and foreign companies, and of having undermined the oil workers' strikes. Frustrated by the government's lack of action, the showra sent the accused a letter stating the nature of the allegations and the consequences (dismissal for 43 of them, retirement for 17 and suspension for three months for the remaining 10). In response to this form of action, the CIR installed a committee of five men on 15 December 1979 to deal with the purges, and Mo'infar called on employees to forward any accusations to this committee.⁷¹ However, the oil workers in turn complained that the committee was acquitting suspects, and had even allowed some of those who had been sacked under Nazih to return.⁷²

General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

71 *Khabar-e Kargar*, Dey 1358/December 1979-January 1980.

72 *Mojahed*, 29 Khordad 1359/19 June 1980.

Therefore, the showras continued to act independently, and purged a number of high-ranking employees. On 16 December 1979, the central showra in the Abadan Refinery issued a statement announcing the dismissal of 25 employees accused of collaboration with the SAVAK, and ordered the showra of the refinery's security guards to revoke their employee cards. The showra of the communication workers was similarly ordered to cut off their telephone lines, and the showra of the accounting employees to stop their wages until the central showra determined the amount of the allowance they would be paid.⁷³

By early 1980, barely a week would pass without one of the oil workers' showras issuing a statement demanding that one or other manager should be purged.⁷⁴ By 30 June 1980, the "purge committee" had given its verdict on 485 of the 700 investigated employees, who were either sent into retirement or sacked.⁷⁵ In early August 1980, the oil workers' showras of Tabriz, Shiraz and Tehran issued a list of demands in relation to the purges, which included that the purge committee had to justify the dismissal of employees.⁷⁶ These interventions illustrate the amount of control a showra could still exert in the administrative activities of a refinery.

While these examples mainly concern the defensive actions taken by the showras, they were also able to develop an offensive approach to the issue of nationalization, making use of the political opportunity that emerged in November 1979. The demand for nationalization was mainly raised by the 4,370 Iranian workers in foreign drilling companies. The strike committee of drilling workers that had emerged during the oil strikes in late 1978 opposed radical protests, but many of the workers – mostly those with leftist sympathies – wanted to establish a showra.⁷⁷ The *komitehs*, which had been formed in some oil fields by Islamist oil workers and local activists, constituted a more serious obstacle to independent action, as they were cooperating with the state officials. After months of protests by oil workers, the *komitehs* in the drilling companies were dissolved and replaced by showras, which took over the firms after the foreign management had left and then formulated a number of demands: fighting unemployment, the actual nationalization of all drilling companies and their subcontractors, and the establishment of a national drilling company. On 18 July 1979, the showras of the workers in the different drilling companies united in a common organization, the Association of the Showras of Drilling

73 Document 267890206, IRDC archives, Tehran.

74 *Ettela'at*, 11 Farvardin 1358/31 March 1980.

75 *Ettela'at*, 9 Tir 1359/30 June 1980.

76 *Enqelab-e Islami*, 20 Mordad 1359/11 August 1979.

77 *Kar*, 18 Mordad 1358/9 August 1979.

Companies and Services (*Kanun-e Showraha-ye Haffari va Khadamat-e Janebi*), and started coordinating their protests.⁷⁸ These protests were not only driven by nationalist sentiments, but also by the fear of unemployment, as the foreign companies were planning to move their equipment out of Iran.

Encouraged by the occupation of the American Embassy on 4 November 1979, the Association of the Showras of Drilling Companies and Services issued a statement calling for the NIOC to directly employ the drilling staff and to pay their wages during unemployment. They further asked for the drilling companies to be prevented from moving their equipment out of Iran – which, the statement claimed “resulted from our [the workers] blood but has fallen into the hands of imperialist capitalists” – and the “immediate establishment of the national Iranian drilling company”. Taking the matter into their own hands, the showras of the SedIran and SedCo drilling companies issued a statement on 8 November 1979, announcing the confiscation of these firms.⁷⁹ Another month of protests continued before the government conceded and nationalized the drilling companies; establishing the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) on 22 December 1979, and marking the final step in bringing the oil industry under total Iranian ownership.

In addition to the foreign drilling companies, the Fluor Company – which was involved in the construction and maintenance of the refineries in Tehran, Shiraz, Tabriz and Isfahan – was also targeted for nationalization by its 3,000 workers, who had organized a showra.⁸⁰ Having protested since February, this showra also seized on the opportunity provided by the anti-imperialist wave following the occupation of the American Embassy, and organized protests to demand nationalization. These actions were supported by the showra of the Isfahan refinery, and intensified after Fluor announced the dismissal of 700 employees on 11 December 1979. When Fluor tried to transfer some of its property to the Bandar Abbas port, in order to ship it to the US, it was confiscated by a group of workers. However, the government stepped in, sacked two members of the showra and asked for official permission from the Islamic court in Isfahan for the transfer to proceed.⁸¹

7 Losing the Fight: October 1980 to January 1982

The third and final period in the activity of the showras in the oil industry started with the Iran-Iraq War in September 1980 and ended with the outlawing of

78 *Peykar*, 1 Mordad 1358/23 July 1979.

79 *Ettela'at*, 22 Aban 1358/13 November 1979.

80 *Ettela'at*, 22 Azar 1358/13 December 1979.

81 *Khabar-e Kargar*, Dey 1358/December 1979–January 1980.

the organizations in early 1982. Before the start of the war, the showras had been entrenched in a battle with the government and the management of the NIOC over wages and working conditions, and more importantly, about the nature and extent of their power. Despite the political divisions among the showra members, especially between the leftist workers and the *maktabis*, there was a great deal of common ground among them. In many instances, the *maktabi* and other religious members of the showras had demanded workers' participation in the management of production and administration, and had resisted pressure; first from the provisional government of Bazargan in 1979 and subsequently from President Bani-Sadr in 1980. The war not only fundamentally shifted the balance of power between the showras and the state in favour of the latter, transforming their conflict into a battle for survival, but also shifted the balance between the leftist and the *maktabi* members of the showras in favour of the later. The war dramatically increased the proclivity of *maktabis* to equate independent action with "counter-revolution", and made many workers receptive to nationalist and religious calls to fully support the state.

By the start of the war, the oil workers' showras had lost much of their power in terms of their ability to interfere in management affairs. This loss was initially not total, however, as the following example illustrates. After the start of the war, the management of the Tehran Refinery ordered that petrol was to be refined at a lower quality than its usual octane number of 88, in order to reduce the production time. The showra members opposed this measure, however, arguing that it would be harmful to car engines. When the management refused to accept their argument, the showra instructed workers in the laboratories not to approve petrol samples if their octane rating was lower than 88, and to record a much lower number than the actual value in order to deceive the management, thereby tricking them into raising the octane number.⁸² In many cases, moreover, the management did not feel confident enough to act without the showras' consent, and the showras continued to organize protests, such as the one on 13 April 1981 when about 600 workers in the Tehran Refinery gathered in its canteen to protest against housing problems. The protest ended with an open letter issued by the refinery's showra to the Prime Minister:

If it is the right of every individual to compare himself with his neighbour, he will feel he is living in an unjust system if he observes [big differences in] housing, health, food and clothing conditions. If it is the right of every

82 Hazhir Pelaschi, "Dar Khoruskhane Khun Tabaram Mikhanam - Goftogu Ba Ali Pichgah [Interview with Ali Pichgah]", *Manjaniq*, no. 2 (Dey 1390, December 2011–January 2012).

revolutionary worker to compare his conditions before and after the revolution, he will say that there is continuity in the administrative system if he sees no changes in his conditions. In other words, the employees of the oil industry have been the victims of wrong and anti-revolutionary policies of officials such as Nazih and Mo'infar.

The open letter reiterated that if oil workers had made an important contribution to the victory of the revolution, then they should have the right to be part of the government subsequently.⁸³

Overall, however, the start of the war rang the death knell for the showras. As illustrated above, the role of those that survived in the first year after the war became mainly limited to organizing protests and issuing statements about working and housing conditions. The decisive move against the showras in the oil industry was made on 30 January 1982, when the state disbanded the Showra of the Oil Industry Employees. About 140 of its members were arrested. Some of them were executed, and others were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and were not allowed to return to work after their release. A number of factors contributed to the eventual demise of the oil workers' showras. First, the war damaged many oil facilities, and displaced the population in the southwestern region – including many oil workers – causing the showras in the region to implode. At the same time, however, new showras emerged among oil workers who had fled the region, particularly Abadan, as they established the Showras of the War-torn Oil Industry Employees (*Showra-ha-y-e Sarasari-ye Karkonan-e Jangzadeh-ye San'at-e Naft*) in the cities where they resettled. The name of these organizations reflected the communist orientation of their leaders, rather than their actual functioning, which was focused on campaigning for their members' most urgent needs: housing and employment. They had no involvement in the management of the oil industry.

Second, the war created the opportunity for the state to dramatically increase the level of repression against the showras; arresting and later executing some of their members. In early 1981, for instance, three representatives of the Showras of the War-torn Oil Industry Employees were arrested in Tehran.⁸⁴ In Shiraz, four Hezbollahi vigilantes attacked the general meeting of the "war-torn" oil workers on 27 May 1981. The IRGC acted as the main repressive force, arresting showra members, but also the members of the leftist organizations

83 *Kar (Minority)*, 2 Ordibehesht 1360/22 April 1981.

84 Mohammad Mazra'ekar, "Etesab-e Kargaran-e Naft Dar Sal-e 57 va Zamineha-ye An. Bakhsh-e Dovvom [the Oil Workers' Strike in 1978–1979 and its Causes. Part Two]", *Kargaran-e Komonist*, no. 80 (20 March 2008).

that supported them. Whilst the IRGC operated from the outside, the Islamic Labour Associations (*Anjoman-ha-ye Islami-ye Kar*) operated as the IRP's workers' organizations inside the workplaces. In the first year after the insurrection, they opposed the "liberal" managers and leftist workers through the propagation of "Islamic values".⁸⁵ They became increasingly tools of surveillance and state propaganda, however, as they reported dissident workers to the management, organized prayers and recruited workers for the war.

Third, the state and the NIOC management purged dissident workers. On 14 July 1980, before the war had begun, CIR had already ratified a law allowing the establishment of "purge committees" (*hey'at-ha-ye paksazi*), consisting of representatives of the provincial governor, the revolutionary prosecutor, the factory management, the ministry of labour and an elected employee.⁸⁶ In the following two months, over 150 purge committees were established, sacking not only managers and state officials, but also thousands of teachers and employees. This created an opportunity for upward mobility into managerial positions for hundreds of Islamic activists.⁸⁷ The purges, which had been advocated by the oil workers' showras, were now used by the state to target dissident oil workers, especially those in the showras. As table 9.1 illustrates, the overwhelming majority of the nearly 5,000 employees purged from the oil industry by the end of 1983 had been targeted for "acts against the Islamic Republic" and "immoral behaviour".

Fourth, the state introduced a legal framework that was meant to make the showras devoid of any meaningful autonomy, "Islamize" them and incorporate them into an authoritarian corporatist framework. On 30 June 1980, the CIR approved a legal bill that defined the aims of the Islamic showras as "the creation of a spirit of cooperation and solidarity between all the employees and the management in order to improve and develop the affairs of each unit".⁸⁸ This law aimed to turn the showras – now allowed to only function under the name of Islamic Labour Showras – into consultative bodies, and gave the ministry of labour a considerable amount of control over them through its right to appoint the members of the "supervision committee" (*hey'at-e nezarat*). These committees consisted of two representatives of the regional Islamic showras, two representatives of the regional managers and a representative of the

85 Bayat, *Workers and Revolution in Iran*, 102.

86 Asef Bayat, "Workers' Control after the Revolution", *MERIP Reports*, no. 113 (March-April 1983): 20, <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/99090> [13 November 2019].

87 Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 144.

88 The text can be retrieved at <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/99004> [13 November 2019].

TABLE 9.1 Number of purges per offence, and related punishment

	Banned from all government jobs	Dismissal	Retirement	Dismissal with compensation	Other	Total
Collaboration with the SAVAK	133	4	32	19	19	207
Effective supporter of the previous regime	68	47	62	8	37	222
Membership of freemasons	73					73
Acts against the Islamic Republic	586	109	62	352	364	1473
Baha'i (persecuted religious minority)	820					820
Corruption and misbehaviour	6	19	9	12	27	73
Disobedience of laws and regulations	10	362	24	11	513	920
Immoral behaviour (including hijab)	95	300	78	122	537	1132
	1791	841	267	524	1497	4920

SOURCE: PEYK-E NAFT, ABAN 1362/OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1983

Ministry of Labour. Furthermore, membership of a showra was only open to those supporting the Islamic Republic, and all the employees of an enterprise, including workers and managers, could participate in the elections. The founding of Islamic showras in large industries such as oil and steel also had to be approved by the government. This law was not ratified by the parliament until 20 January 1985, due to the resistance from the *maktabi* members of the showras, but it merely legalized the practices that had been established since 1982.

8 Conclusion

As I have argued in this chapter, the oil workers' showras posed a serious challenge to pre-revolutionary labour relations in the Iranian oil industry, which combined "hegemonic" and "bureaucratic despotic" elements. In order to evaluate the success and failure of this challenge, it is useful to summarize here how the oil workers' showras performed in the five areas of activity that workers' councils have developed over time, as explained at the beginning of this chapter.

The showras were relatively successful in terms of creating the structures and processes through which workers could participate in discussions and decision-making in their workplace. The structures and processes, organized through elections, were relatively democratic and contributed to the development of a radical democratic ethos. This was, for example, reflected in the manner in which representatives of different ideological currents collaborated. In the second area, the showras also had some important attainments, as they managed to involve a significant number of oil workers in their struggles. These struggles managed to achieve, initially at least, higher wages, better housing conditions, easier mortgages, a 40-hour working week with a two-day weekend and an improvement in the status of contract workers. Yet many of these measures were gradually revoked, especially after the Iran-Iraq War started in September 1980. The most concrete and important achievement of the showras' struggles was the reduction of the material and social gap between white-collar and blue-collar workers, which had been a major source of grievance among the latter.

The showras failed, however, in other areas. They were least successful in creating and maintaining control over production and administration. In the initial months after the fall of the monarchy, the showras managed to exert a considerable degree of control over production and administration, but this was gradually lost. Yet this loss was not total, as they continued to interfere or participate in the appointment of the management, and its policies

regarding hiring and firing. Nevertheless, even this level of control was taken away by force during the increasing state repression and destruction following the start of the Iran-Iraq War. One reason for this was the lack of technological knowledge among oil workers, and hence their dependence on the technicians and managers to run the industry. This problem was not a fundamental obstacle, however, as many among the white-collar employees – including engineers and administrators – sympathized with the showras. The most decisive factor in the showras' failure was the state, which used force and appointed technicians and administrators who opposed workers' control.

Lack of coordination was another weak point of the showras, and in this regard, subjective factors played a larger role. The intra-factory coordination was often well-arranged, but intra-industry coordination was often lacking. The General Showra of the Oil Industry Employees had been established, but it was centred around Tehran and functioned more on paper than in reality as a well-structured body. More importantly, there is little evidence that the oil workers' showras coordinated their activities with the showras of other workers at the city or the national level. Although repression contributed to the situation, the lack of preparedness among the showras' representatives and the divisions between the leftist organizations also played an important role. For similar reasons, the showras – unlike, for example, the workers' councils during the Russian Revolution – did not attempt to extend their activities by involving subaltern groups and establishing what Marx called, "a working class government".⁸⁹ The lack of a unified strategy among the showras, together with the repressive power of the post-revolutionary state, had made such a strategy unfeasible.

As a result of this negative balance sheet, the oil workers' showras were not able to change the labour relations in their industry. They did seriously challenge the hegemonic-bureaucratic-despotic factory regime of the oil industry by challenging the authoritarian rules and structures, introducing workers' self-management and democratic decision-making processes, and partly abolishing the hierarchical divisions between white-collar and blue-collar workers. They also contributed to the redrafting of the labour law that, due to its many progressive elements, became opposed throughout the 1980s by the political factions that favoured the free market. However, the hegemonic-bureaucratic-despotic labour relations at the workplace level were re-established in the years following the revolution, within a larger framework of authoritarian, populist corporatism at the national level.

89 Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France", in *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986 [1871]), 333–334.

Thus the phenomenon that Marcel van der Linden has discussed as the “paradox of revolution” in the introduction to the current volume was repeated during the Iranian Revolution. Nevertheless, three important conclusions can be drawn from this experience. First, the showras demonstrated that workers have the potential to create democratic organizations in an authoritarian context, and to establish some level of control over the production and administration in their workplace. As in other historical cases, a revolutionary crisis allowed workers to take practical measures to realize this potential, even if only for a short time.

Second, the showras in Iran demonstrated that certain interpretations of Islam also provide ideological articulations for workers’ control, even though this articulation contained contradictions that surfaced in the showras’ relations with the state; contradictions that were not that different from the ones apparent in communism at different historical moments.⁹⁰ These contradictions led the Islamist, *maktabi* workers to support the state in its attempt to repress the non-Islamic currents, but at times this brought them into conflict with the Islamist state as well, when it tried to reduce the showras to corporatist organizations under its control. These contradictions were buried under the economic and social ruins of the Iran-Iraq War, and the call for unity became louder than the protests against the state’s assault on the showras. This throws up an interesting “what if” question that warrants more research into Islamist currents among labour activists during the Iranian Revolution: would the conflicts between these currents and the Islamist state have developed into a serious clash, if the Iran-Iraq War had not started?

The third conclusion relates to the war itself. The experience of the Iranian Revolution demonstrates the historical co-occurrence of revolution, war and state building, and underlines the importance of its impact as an explanatory factor in the shifting balance between revolution and counter-revolution.

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⁹⁰ See, for example, the chapters by Zsombor Bódy and Adrian Grama in the current volume.

- Abrahamian, Ervand, *The Coup: 1953, the Cia, and the Roots of Modern U.S.-Iranian Relations* (New York: The New Press, 2013).
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A “Negotiated Revolution”? Trade Unions and Companies in South Africa in the 1980s

Knud Andresen

Overcoming the racist and globally outlawed apartheid system in South Africa is often linked to the release of Nelson Mandela in February 1990 and the subsequent four-year transition phase that ended with the first free elections in April 1994. The occurrence at the same time as the collapse of the socialist countries suggests that the transition from apartheid to a democratic society was a result of the end of the Cold War between East and West. This is not completely wrong, as South Africa was a hotspot in the Cold War: the apartheid regime was a strategic outpost of the West, despite all the criticism of racial discrimination made by Western states. The largest liberation organization, the African National Congress (ANC), had a socialist approach and received logistical and ideological support from the Soviet Union and socialist countries. Because the South African Communist Party (SACP) was represented in the governing bodies of the ANC, the apartheid regime’s anti-communist propaganda received support.¹ Nevertheless, the transition process was not a direct reaction to the disintegration of the socialist state world, but instead to a longer process of change in South Africa itself; a process that began in the early 1980s and had a great deal to do with new strategic orientations of the South African parties in conflict, especially the ANC and white elite circles. South Africa’s political transition is considered a “negotiated revolution”,² and in the context of the current volume, this chapter examines the influence of industrial relations on strategic reorientations.

The term “revolution” for the South African transition involves systematic contradiction. Yet the political system changed fundamentally, so some

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- 1 SACP cadres played an important role in the beginning of the armed struggle in 1961, and some authors still try to answer the question of whether or not Nelson Mandela was a member of the party. Cf. Stephen Ellis, “The Genesis of the ANC’s armed struggle in South Africa 1948–1961”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37 (2011): 657–676.
 - 2 Heribert Adam, *The Negotiated Revolution: Society and Politics in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1993).

authors stick with the term.³ The transition phase was a negotiation process accompanied by civil war-like events. As a result, racial discrimination was lifted in South Africa, and a constitution based on international human rights was adopted in 1996. However, capitalist rule was not overturned and no company was socialized. Instead, the ANC in government pursued a relatively neoliberal oriented economic policy, sharply criticized by the radical left.⁴ Immense social inequality, closely linked to racial stereotypes, still characterizes South African society today. Despite the socialist rhetoric of the ANC, it was not a socialist revolution, but a transition to parliamentary democracy and the end of apartheid's institutional violations of human rights. However, at no time was it the ANC's strategic plan to achieve a revolutionary takeover by military force. The formulated goal was the abolition of legally enshrined racial disenfranchisement and discrimination, and a democratic society for all South Africans, as proclaimed in the 1955 Freedom Charter. The aim was therefore always negotiation, with the armed struggle supporting this. The mass militancy of the 1980s, which made South Africa almost ungovernable by the Boer regime, was not integrated into a long-term and revolutionary strategy. The transition can therefore also be understood as a "negotiated settlement", in which all sides made compromises.⁵ Negotiations were decisive for the political solution of the conflict. Politically, it was a revolution in the sense that the previous political institutions were abolished or democratized. However, it was not a social revolution. As argued below, industrial relations in the 1980s also contributed to this. In the theory of revolution, labour relations and revolutions are perhaps more reminiscent of strikes and social struggles in companies. These played an important role in South Africa, but a brief glimpse at the strike waves in South Africa in the 1980s easily risks overlooking the fact that the growing black and non-racist trade union movement in the factories had established everyday practices of negotiation and compromise. In 1987, the South African sociologist Eddie Webster saw the trade unions as offering an opportunity for companies and a model for a necessary transition process: "they offer management an opportunity to participate constructively in the process of negotiated

3 Christoph Marx, *Südafrika: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 2012), 290.

4 See Dale T. McKinley, *South Africa's Corporatised Liberation: A Critical Analysis of the ANC in Power* (Black Point: Nova Scotia, 2017).

5 Merle Lipton, *Liberals, Marxists, and nationalists. Competing interpretations of South African history* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1.

change”.⁶ Nevertheless, not only for the companies, but also for the resistance movement, industrial relations offered spaces of experience that should have had a positive impact on the “negotiated settlement”. Before discussing the operational situation in the 1980s, the political development in South Africa should first be roughly outlined.

1 The Rise and Fall of Apartheid

With the election victory of the Boer National Party, Apartheid became the official government programme in 1948.⁷ The population was classified according to racial criteria, and South Africa was only democratic for the white population who were entitled to vote. The black majority of the population, as well as Indian and coloured population groups, had considerably limited rights, which were gradually reduced further. The “grand apartheid” aimed for territorial division. The existing black settlement areas, already established as a type of reserve at the beginning of the twentieth century, were assigned to the various ethnic groups and were to lead to the establishment of formally independent homelands. All South Africans classified as black were assigned to an ethnic group – the largest were the Zulus, Sotho, Tswana and Xhosa – and a homeland, which deprived the vast majority in the “white” areas of all civil rights. This policy was never successful; only four of the ten homelands became formally independent from the 1970s onwards and they were not recognized internationally except by South Africa. However, it had considerable political and social disadvantages for the black majority of the population in the white areas. In the heydays of Apartheid in the 1960s and early 1970s, everyday life was marked by “petty apartheid”, under which public and private spaces were strictly segregated. A large number of laws separated the classified groups from each other; through the prohibition of marriages between ethnic groups, separate benches and sports fields in public areas, and separate canteens and better jobs only available to whites in the factories. In addition, blacks were banned from buying land in “white” areas and constantly threatened with expulsion to the homelands. This institutionalized racism led to worldwide condemnation of the apartheid regime.

6 Eddie Webster, “The Independent Black Trade Union Movement in South Africa. A Challenge to Management”, in *A Question of Survival: Conversations with key South Africans*, ed. Michel Albeldas and Alan Fischer (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1987), 21–29.

7 See in general, William Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Marx, *Südafrika*.

There had always been resistance against apartheid, and to the deprivation of rights for the black majority and the coloured groups. The African National Congress (ANC), founded in 1912, had long been influenced by Christian socialized actors, and in 1955, it and other organizations in the "Charter of Freedom" made a non-racist, democratic society their goal.⁸ After the 1960 ban of the ANC and the Pan-African Congress (PAC), the ANC took up an armed struggle, but was soon considerably weakened by arrests and flight. The ANC and the South African Trade Union Congress (SACTU), which was close to it, in the end acted mainly from exile. They created international publicity and at the same time tried to reanimate the armed struggle in South Africa. Though the ANC and the imprisoned Nelson Mandela were political reference points in South Africa, for a long time it was difficult to establish structures in the country because of the illegality this could involve. The "Black Consciousness Movement", which began in 1968 with the charismatic Steve Biko (who was murdered in 1977) as its spokesman, was somewhat sceptical about the ANC's Congress Movement. After a wave of strikes in the textile industry in Durban in early 1973, black workers began to organize in independent trade unions, and after the massacres in Soweto in 1976, the militant struggle in South Africa itself increased.⁹

The ANC remained the liberation organization that was supported by most black South Africans, but in the country, the ANC could only organize itself clandestinely. Groups that were critical of apartheid could be found in churches, in liberal white circles and lastly in the newly emerging independent trade unions. In parallel with increasing resistance – which in the mid-1980s led to the townships in particular becoming effectively ungovernable – the Boer government attempted to modernize apartheid through reforms; ultimately without success. Pieter Botha, who was elected as prime minister in 1978, relaxed the apartheid regulations for some areas of society. This included new labour legislation in 1979 and the abolition of "petty apartheid"; that is, separation in everyday life. Independent unions could now also operate in companies and organize black workers who previously had no status as employees. However, the new labour legislation required people to register with state authorities, a requirement that was only dropped some years later. Independent unions that only organized black worker and came together in the Council Unions of South African (CUSA) had fewer difficulties in the beginning than the non-racist unions, which – although mostly comprising black workers – had

8 See Sylvia Naeme, *The Congress Movement: The Unfolding of the Congress Alliance 1912–1961*, 3 vols. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2015).

9 Saul Dubow, *Apartheid 1948–1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 171–172.

openness to all as a principle, and thus contradicted the ideals of apartheid. Political activities against apartheid were always part of the activities of independent trade unions, since they were also able to create articulation spaces for anti-apartheid interests. The Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), founded in 1979, took care in the first years of its foundation not to put political goals in the foreground, but to build up grassroots democratic structures in companies and to fight for social progress. This “workerist” position began to relax somewhat after the founding of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983. In 1985, FOSATU merged with others, notably the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) – which had emerged from CUSA – forming the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). This confederation, in which the affiliated unions gained influence in companies, became one of the important forces in the UDF, which developed into South Africa’s largest legal resistance alliance. COSATU and the UDF followed the then banned ANC, and in 1987, COSATU officially accepted the Freedom Charter of 1955.¹⁰

The reform of the labour market 1979 was linked to the “total strategy” proclaimed by Botha, with the aim of both the military defeat of black resistance and of winning over moderate blacks.¹¹ Although the economic easing brought articulation and higher wages for black workers, it was also intended to promote a black middle class that was regarded as less susceptible to leftist goals. Botha adhered to the idea of “grand apartheid”, and in 1983, established a three-chamber system of parliament representing white, coloured and Indian population, but excluding the black majority. Thus, the principle of “One Man, One Vote” was intended to have been permanently prevented. However, the new constitution only increased the de-legitimation of the apartheid state, increasingly also among whites. After Botha announced claimed reforms in a speech in August 1985, but then stuck to his previous policy, the apartheid regime seemed no longer reformable, even in white circles – apart from Boer hardliners. Botha reigned increasingly through martial law – and with a state of emergency from 1985 – and maintained the goal of the military defeat of the black resistance through a covert war in Angola. Especially in parts of the secret service, but also in the Boer secret organization “Broederbond”, the view prevailed that the South African apartheid model would not survive for long and radical changes were needed. By contrast, the viewpoint that apartheid could survive by military strength remained strong among the military leadership and the domestic secret service.

10 Marx, *Südafrika*, 270–272; Dubow, *Apartheid*, 206–210.

11 Beinart, *Twentieth Century*, 246.

The ANC armed struggle was never designed to be, or near to becoming a military victory. As South African forces were defeated 1988 in Angola, the military wing of the ANC was losing its bases there. In fact, the ANC never saw an end to apartheid through armed struggle. The mass unrest in the 1980s was important to make some areas nearly ungovernable for the Boer regime and to mobilize the "street", but had no strategic goals in terms of revolution.¹² Talks had begun from 1985, partly between ANC representatives and Boer intellectuals and business elites, but also between government representatives and the imprisoned Nelson Mandela and the exiled leadership of the ANC.¹³ These mostly secret talks helped to prepare for a phase of transition, since on the one hand they reduced Boer fears about a communist ANC, and on the other, increased the willingness in influential circles of the white population to divide power. However, it was only the replacement of the sick President Botha by Frederik De Klerk in the summer of 1989 that cleared the way for the release of Mandela and the re-admission of the ANC and other organizations.

2 Labour Relations and the Decline of Apartheid in the 1980s

These rough outlines of political development still say little about the practices and developments in labour relations. The reform of labour legislation in 1979 was not only a consequence of growing black resistance, but also of reform demands from the economic elite. With regard to the South African situation, it has to be considered that the industrial economic elite was strongly influenced by South Africans of English origin, who kept a certain distance from the Boer National Party and its government. Beinart emphasizes that "Capitalists ... lived with apartheid rather than advocated it".¹⁴ The most prominent example is Harry Oppenheimer (1908–2000), CEO of the Anglo-American Corporation, South Africa's largest investment trust and mining and diamond group. In the 1950s, Oppenheimer was a temporary member of parliament and later a financier of the white liberal opponents of apartheid. Liberal economic circles long followed the so-called "Oppenheimer thesis", which suggested that apartheid would become superfluous with increasing prosperity.¹⁵ This liberal

12 See Lipton, *Liberals*, 81–87.

13 See, mostly based on interviews: Allister Sparks, *Tomorrow is another country: The inside story of South Africa's negotiated settlement* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers SA, 2003).

14 Beinart, *Twentieth Century*, 252.

15 With regard to Oppenheimer, see David Pallister, Sarah Stewart and Ian Lepper, *South Africa Inc: The Oppenheimer Empire* (Sandton: Simon & Schuster, 1987); regarding

thesis proved unsuccessful, as social and legal discrimination could hardly be offset by a very slow rise in wages for black workers from the mid-1970s. At the time, criticism of apartheid and the regime's rigid policies was nevertheless growing in economic circles. In an internal position paper in 1977, the Midland Chamber of Industries stated "For far too long the political philosophy of the government has been based on a paralysing fear of the future under a government with Blacks in it and the need now is urgent for education on the ideological and business sides to bring about the changes which are essential".¹⁶ It was also in the interests of companies to promote a black middle class and moderate forces, in order to prevent radicalization through social improvements and to cushion full democratization through the protection of white privileges. In 1977, the "Urban Foundation" was launched, financed mainly by Harry Oppenheimer and other wealthy industrialists. The aim was to improve the living conditions and training for the black population in urban areas, but within the framework of legal requirements. For most industries, there were also strong economic motives for reform pressure. Black employees were subject to a training ban, and various apartheid laws – supported by the white, racist unions – prescribed the so-called "job reservation": a ban on black people working in the same wage group as white people. These regulations exacerbated the constant shortage of skilled workers in South Africa, and as industry grew, so did the proportion of black employees.¹⁷ From the companies' point of view, the growth in industrial employment and the increasing international isolation of South Africa therefore needed to be compensated for by skilled black workers. Many companies, including Volkswagen and the Swedish SKF, had already started imparting specialist knowledge to black employees in internal training courses around 1970. In 1974, a British automotive journalist wrote about Volkswagen of South Africa and the German CEO Rudolf Leiding: "He and the South African directors share a conviction that Volkswagen of South Africa can only progress by giving Bantu and Coloured workers the training to equip them for more skilled jobs and greater responsibility".¹⁸ The contradiction with

'Oppenheimer-thesis' see Norman Bromberger, "Economic Growth and Political Change in South Africa", in *South Africa: Economic Growth and Political Change. With Comparative Studies of Chile, Sri Lanka and Malaysia*, ed. Adrian Leftwich (London: Allison and Busby, 1974), 61–123.

- 16 Midland Chamber of Industries to All Members, (*Discrimination on a racial basis*), 2 September 1977, in: Landsarkivet Göteborg, CO267 Svenska Kullager Fabriken, F19 A: 1.
- 17 Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass, *Class, race, and inequality in South Africa* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2005), 99–111.
- 18 "Inside Volkswagen. Supplement der Zeitschrift Car", March 1974, in: *Unternehmensarchiv Volkswagen*, 69/616/2.

the apartheid government was not necessarily fundamental on the part of the companies, but was also due to the government's sometimes volatile policies. Back in 1973, the then president of the government, Vorster, had publicly announced that blacks could also perform skilled labour, and in 1975, the South African army lifted the ban on blacks standing hierarchically above whites.¹⁹ These signs of change, sometimes formulated only as hints, were understood by companies and often driven forward. This included, in particular, the expansion of company training programmes, which also qualified black workers for higher wage groups.

Apartheid proved economically dysfunctional for many industrial companies, as the deprivation of the majority of the population also made it more difficult for a black consumer class to emerge. This aspect was certainly more significant than political empathy with regard to explaining the slow change of attitude in South African industry. This applied to both domestic and foreign companies, although foreign companies were also being put under public pressure from anti-apartheid movements in their country of origin. In particular, many subsidiaries of multinational companies shaped industrial production, such as the automotive and metal industries. About 50 per cent of industrial production was provided by foreign companies, with South African subsidiaries that were legally subject to South African corporate law and with management who mostly came from South Africa itself.²⁰

The South African labour law reform of 1979, together with efforts to improve working conditions, also raised expectations among black workers, who began to create their own interest groups with a new trade union movement. One of the centres of industrial production was in the city of Uitenhage, near Port Elisabeth. Many car manufacturers had located there, including Ford, General Motors and Volkswagen, as well as suppliers such as Continental and Hella, and other metal industries including the Swedish ball-bearing manufacturer SKF. In 1976, SKF was one of the first companies to hold talks with an independent union. In July 1977, some legal tricks enabled one union, the United Automobile Rubber & Allied Workers of South Africa (UAW), to engage in wage negotiations with the management. At Ford, a strike in 1979 ended successfully for the workers, as the management accepted the unions as negotiating partners and even assumed responsibility for the loss of earnings during the strike. In June 1980, the region was hit by a new wave of strikes for higher

19 Merle Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid. South Africa, 1910–1984* (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Ltd, 1985), 60.

20 For the motor industry, see David Duncan, *We are Motor Men. The Making of the South African Motor Industry* (Caithness: Whittles Publishing, 1997), 63–78.

wages. While production continued at Ford, employees at Volkswagen went on strike for several weeks, work stopped at other plants, and around 70 per cent of the black and coloured employees in the region went on strike. Higher wages were supposed to lead to a decent standard of living; therefore a 90 per cent increase to 2 rand per hour was demanded. This sum was not introduced immediately, but in stages.²¹ The Johannesburg public relations agency, Errol Fyfe, was engaged by several companies²² and summarized its impressions of the strike in July 1980. Even if employers were not always happy about it, the black, non-racist unions were anchored in the workforce and therefore it was more reasonable to accept the militant unions as negotiating partners: "If employers accept that unions are essential to channel conflicts, their chief concern should be the extent to which unions enjoy workers support. All other considerations are secondary."²³ The PR agency's analysis did not necessarily reflect management sentiment, but is evidence of management voices seeking solutions beyond apartheid. After the wave of strikes in Uitenhage in 1980, the independent trade unions became more and more accepted by the companies as partners in discussions and negotiations. After lengthy disputes and delaying tactics until around 1984, the majority of industrial companies eventually had internal agreements with independent trade unions. In particular, the rapidly growing union membership of black workers increased the ability to strike.²⁴

The process of recognition was controversial in the independent trade unions themselves, as the South African trade union movement has traditionally been highly fragmented. In addition to the purely white and racist unions, the largest association in the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) – which had been equivocal in its rejection of apartheid and support for black workers – had excluded the last black unions in 1969, and a few years later, black workers reorganized into "parallel unions" under white or coloured leadership.²⁵ Disappointments about the behaviour of the TUCSA, which

21 Gottfried Wellmer, "Die nicht-rassistische Gewerkschaftsbewegung Südafrikas 1973–1981", in *Metallgewerkschaften in Südafrika*, ed. Eugen Loderer (Köln: Bund-Verlag, 1983), 59–114, 102–104.

22 For example BMW, see Annika Biss, *Die Internationalisierung der Bayerischen Motoren Werke AG. Vom reinen Exportgeschäft zur Gründung eigener Tochtergesellschaften im Ausland 1945–1981* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 732.

23 "Summing up. A look at important news events in South Africa produced for members of the Institute of Directors (Southern African Division), July 1980", in: Landsarkivet Göteborg, CO267 Svenska Kullager Fabriken F19 A:4.

24 Duncan, *Motor Men*, 97–98.

25 Wellmer, *Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, 61.

belonged to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), and the growing self-confidence of black workers, led to organizational efforts for black and independent trade unions. It was not forbidden to organize at that time, but black workers could not become members of a union that was recognized by a company, and was therefore a negotiating partner, since they had no official employee status until the 1979 reform. Starting from local foundations in the industrial centres around Durban, Port Elisabeth, Pretoria and Johannesburg – as well as in Cape Town – smaller trade union groups emerged that sought to network.²⁶ The independent trade unions grew from 90,000 to over 320,000 members between 1979 and 1983, and the non-racist trade union movement united to form COSATU in December 1985, with some 400,000 members. In addition, the CUSA and the Azanian Congress of Trade Unions (AZACTU) existed as purely black organizations, influenced by the Black Consciousness Movement and close to the PAC. These three confederations had around 520,000 members in the mid-1980s, and continued to focus on industrial centres and companies. They were represented in over 3,000 workplaces, and 450 companies had signed recognition contracts. The operational basis was formed by around 12,000 shop stewards.²⁷ Most of the unions were also represented in the Industrial Councils at the time, and the resulting negotiation routines contributed to mutual acceptance. The membership only amounted to around 10 per cent of all the black workers, and branches such as agriculture and domestic service – in which almost half of the five million black employees worked – remained largely unorganized. However, the independent trade unions showed themselves “as a disciplined and highly effective vanguard of resistance”.²⁸ In addition, industrial production was a leading, economically important industry with a workforce of qualified and skilled employees. This leading function also applied to the trade unions, although the trade union movement was likewise divided by the racist segregation of the labour market.

The rise of the independent trade union movement was offset by the white trade unions' loss of importance. The all-white South African Confederation of Labour Associations (SACLA), a strong guarantor of white privileges and supporter of racist politics since the 1950s, lost its influence in the early 1980s. TUCSA had been inconsistent towards black workers and more liberal in its basic orientation. After 1979 and the reform of the labour-market, TUCSA continued to protect white interests, and the confederation lost its influence almost everywhere. In particular, the coloured and black members turned away

26 Beinart, *Twentieth Century*, 239–242.

27 Webster, *Black Trade Union*, 23–24.

28 Beinart, *Twentieth Century*, 250.

from TUCSA.²⁹ In 1982, the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) also excluded two TUCSA unions, as they continued to hold racist positions.³⁰ The independent trade unions were on the other hand strongly supported by international organizations such as the IMF and ICFTU. In particular, the willingness of the independent trade unions to strike and their strategy of enforcing improvements through company agreements rather than through higher chambers brought them approval. Their willingness to fight also increased their popularity among the members. In 1979 there were 101 strikes, the number increased tenfold to over a thousand in 1987 and 1988.³¹ Although they could not reach all of those suffering from social and racial discrimination, industrial unions in particular were of great importance for the development of labour relations. Workers' approval of non-racist trade unions also came from a grassroots democratic orientation. Before the strike at Volkswagen in 1980, for example, the families of VW were asked about their wage demand, rather than just being based on statistical calculations.³² In particular, however, a system of shop stewards as the democratic controlling body of trade union leaders was established and expanded. In the eyes of management, the militancy of the trade unions also lay in the fact that the results of negotiations were discussed and coordinated with their members. The shop stewards were increasingly recognized as the backbone of the trade unions by the companies, with some of them exempted from their work by internal regulations.

Conflicts between the independent trade unions arose primarily over questions of registration (meaning state recognition), which was necessary in order to be represented in the industry's own industry committees. This political debate in the non-racist trade unions declined somewhat after 1981. The majority of the unions in FOSATU decided to register, especially as the government in return accepted its statutory commitment to be non-racist and thus to go against the basic principles of apartheid.³³ Some other unions refused to register, because their focus was on general political objectives in trade union work. A certain pattern had thus been established in South African industrial relations. The government repressed trade unions and political organization, but

29 Sonia Bendix, *Industrial relations in South Africa*, 9 (Lansdown: Juta and Co, 2007), 77–80.

30 Herman Rebhan and Werner Thönnessen, "Der IMB und die Metallgewerkschaften in Südafrika 1951 bis 1982", in: *Metallgewerkschaften*, ed. Loderer, 115–171, 168–170.

31 Bendix, *Industrial relations*, 78.

32 Wellmer, *Gewerkschaftsbewegung*, 103.

33 Beinart, *Twentieth Century*, 248–255; Fred Sauls, "Reform oder Kontrolle? Die Befreiung der neuen südafrikanischen Arbeiterbewegung", in *Metallgewerkschaften*, ed. Loderer, 173–182, 180–181.

increasingly accepted the establishment of relations between management and non-racist unions. The unions used the scope for social improvements through a relationship of strikes and negotiations, without giving up their goal of abolishing apartheid. The reference point of South African labour legislation, which employers had used for a long time, became increasingly fragile due to the dilatory behaviour of government agencies, and more room for manoeuvre opened up in individual companies. This could be observed, for example, in the acceptance of strikes for the purpose of political demonstrations. Surveys of industrial companies in the Johannesburg area in 1985 showed that with regard to one-day political strikes – for example on 1 May or the anniversary of the Soweto uprising – over 90 per cent of management did not penalize participation.³⁴ Due to the political situation, the management accepted when trade unions organized symbolic actions to protest against apartheid. Foreign companies in particular were under public pressure in their country of origin and tried to react to this in their operational processes. For example, on 1 January 1986, the Swedish SKF company introduced a support fund for relatives of arrested black workers. This measure was also taken because white workers continued to receive wages for the period of their compulsory military service, which was publicly criticized in Sweden.³⁵ In the summer of 1988, Volkswagen's human resources management department complained to trade union representatives that there had been many political actions and unscheduled meetings of employees during working hours. They asked to discuss reducing the number of incidents.³⁶

Nevertheless, it was not only in the plants that the climate changed, as business associations also started to publicly call for an end to apartheid. In September 1985, some 91 CEOs of South African companies published a newspaper advert under the heading "There is a better way", calling on the government to abolish racial discrimination, negotiate with recognized black leaders about power sharing and introduce full citizenship for all in South Africa. The campaign was eventually supported by over 1,000 CEOs and senior managers.³⁷ The political goal was to prevent further bloodshed, and negotiations with the

34 Webster, *Black Trade Union*, 25.

35 Brochure "Verksamheten i Sydafrika", Göteborg 1986, in Landsarkivet Göteborg, CO267 Svenska Kullager Fabriken F19 A: 10.

36 Memo from W. B. Robinson, Human Resource Manager, to Messrs: Gonomo, Hardt, Johnson, Lillah, Magidimesi, 12.7.1988, in: Historical Paper, University of the Witwatersrand, AH2960 B1.4.

37 D. A. Buchana and A. V. Pienaar to State President P. W. Botha, 12 February 1986, in: Landsarkivet Göteborg, CO267 Svenska Kullager Fabriken F19 A: 10.

representatives of the majority of the population were indispensable for this. On the other side were some conservative business leaders, who agreed with Botha's martial law in 1985 to keep the situation calm. The advert in September 1985 was also a reaction by younger and liberal CEOs,³⁸ who realized that trade unions had become an important force in the plants. In September 1985, there was also a meeting between some business leaders and ANC representatives in Lusaka, in which the former were told that a mixed economy would be possible under an ANC government. Oliver Tambo, then president of the ANC, declared in a speech at the end of the year that business leaders could be an "additional leverage" to overcome apartheid, even if they just wanted to protect their profits.³⁹ In the second half of the 1980s, when the Soviet Union and the socialist countries began to change, anti-communism as a core political argument against apartheid became less convincing. With hints from the ANC leadership in exile, it also became clear that an ANC government would not mean nationalization and a planned economy.

However, the black trade unions had great reservations about the companies. For example, Cyril Ramaphosa, chair of the NUM, declared in 1987 that despite their claims about reform, the companies were "part of the government, therefore they are part and parcel of the oppression that the majority of people are experiencing in this country".⁴⁰ Ramaphosa still emphasized the socialist perspective at the time – the working class should take over the means of production. However, the ANC no longer pursued this goal, with all its attendant consequences, but indicated in talks at the end of the 1980s that the interests of industry were already being accepted. After 1990, COSATU publicized a "relatively moderate social democratic programme of 'growth through redistribution', that prioritized higher government spending on training, welfare, and infrastructure" instead of the nationalization of industries. Ramaphosa became chief negotiator with the ANC in the transition phase.⁴¹

The politicization of management in the 1980s did not mean that companies became political supporters of the ANC; rather, they sought connections with the Inkatha Freedom Party and its leader, Buthelezi. Inkatha, which was mainly formed from Zulu in Natal, rejected apartheid, but belonged to moderate black political forces and remained an opponent of the ANC. However, the companies also tried to assist the respective communities of their employees

38 Anthony Sampson, *Weißes Geld und schwarzer Widerstand: Apartheid und Big Business* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt TB-V, 1987), 18.

39 Sampson, *Geld*, 228.

40 Cyril Ramaphosa, *Interview*, in *Question*, ed. Albeldas and Fischer, 284–294, 290.

41 Beinart, *Twentieth Century*, 275.

through extended social programmes. In addition, during the period of martial law, some companies still offered facilities for meetings, which were already forbidden in public spaces at that time. A further step was taken in 1988 with the 14 points developed by the German trade union IG Metall for German subsidiaries. In this, the companies undertook to forego any benefits from apartheid, as well as regularly reporting to non-racist trade unions on company development and a comprehensive schedule for consultation by the stakeholders.⁴² The automobile companies, for example, signed working agreements on this basis in the course of 1989.⁴³ In fact, this step meant that management committed to introducing more or less German co-determination, and this was part of the declining influence of the apartheid regime on labour relations. German companies were also under public pressure, however, as their importance for the South African economy increased after the US Congress decided in 1986 to disinvest US companies in South Africa – despite a veto by President Ronald Reagan. Accordingly, companies always promoted their supposedly positive influence on South Africa's development. The 1986 disinvestment decision by the United States was nevertheless not tantamount to a deterioration in industrial relations at companies such as Ford or General Motors. The managers there, who came from South Africa anyway, usually took over the companies and continued the previous industrial relations policy. Since South Africa's economic isolation was an essential demand of the global anti-apartheid movement, this also led to extensive sanctions by the European Community and the Scandinavian countries in 1986. The pressure for companies operating in South Africa to adopt a critical approach against apartheid was immense, and thus needed to be taken into account.

3 Conclusion

South African industrial relations were characterized by racial segregation and discrimination. Due to large deposits of raw materials, however, the South African economy experienced an economic boom after the war, which had the potential to bring social advancement, at least for skilled workers. "Economic

42 Michael Kittner, "Arbeitsbeziehungen in Südafrika und die Forderung nach Mindeststandards in deutschen Tochterunternehmen", *Gewerkschaftliche Monatshefte* 39 (1988): 490–500, 498.

43 Minimum Standard of Labour Relation, Volkswagen of South Africa / National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, 8 September 1989, in Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand, AH2960 B1.4.

Growth and technological change were motors of social change in the towns as well as in the countryside”, which were developments described by Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass.⁴⁴ The exclusion of black workers became an economic problem in the 1970s, as racial segregation became an obstacle to the development of industrial productive forces.⁴⁵ Accordingly, demands for reforms were made by larger companies, as well as foreign-owned ones and associations. With the parallel rise of non-racist trade unions and black resistance, a strong negotiating position emerged, which increasingly shaped industrial relations in the 1980s through their membership base and anti-apartheid policies. The non-racist trade unions were also an important part of the resistance movement against apartheid, and they made political articulation spaces and negotiation routines possible. The apartheid regime became weaker and weaker regarding industrial relations, but it remained a threat for militants. Members of the trade unions were in danger of being imprisoned or killed. John Gonomo and other shop stewards at Volkswagen in Uitenhage were arrested in August 1985 and the workers went on strike. The human resources officer from Volkswagen supported the intervention and helped to get the shop stewards released from police custody.⁴⁶

The goal for the companies of forming a black middle class that would turn against revolutionary aspirations was not achieved. This should also be understood as not only a classic anti-insurgency programme, as the apartheid government also pursued it. The opposition politician Mthato Motlana pointed out in 1984 that companies could contribute to the formation of a black middle class, and from history, it is known that “all great revolutions were carried by the middle class”.⁴⁷ Historically, revolutions and changes are not expected to come from the most oppressed circles, but from social groups that rise socially yet remain excluded from power. This also applied to the black workers and their union leaders. In the negotiations during the transition phase, which were accompanied by bloodshed and unrest, the experiences also proved to be helpful in building trust among all the parties involved.⁴⁸ The “negotiated revolution” was a surprising success, conducted by the political leadership on both

44 Seekings and Nattrass, *Class*, 99.

45 Marx, *Südafrika*, 257.

46 “Probleme in Südafrika”, in: Autogramm Nr. 9, 3.9.1985, 15. Jg. (vw-company-newspaper).

47 German Embassy Pretoria to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24.4.1984, in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, Bestand Pret.

48 Cyril Ramaphosa from the National Union of Miners and Rolf Meyer from the National Party rapidly formed a close working relationship that was important in some times of crisis during the process, Sparks, *Tomorrow*, p. ix-x.

sides. However, it was also based on trade union experience and the willingness on the part of white management to compromise and change their racist attitude. The South African example also confirms the thesis that reforms cannot sustain a genuinely criminal regime in the end, as politically strong groups emerge that can no longer be excluded from participation in power.

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“I Will Not Let the Experience Be Taken Away from Me”

Forms of Workers' Self-Organization in the 1989–1990 Revolutionary Transition in the GDR

Renate Hürtgen

One could suppose that especially within the field of the history of labour and labour movements, the interaction between revolutions and changes in labour relations would be a focus for research. There have certainly been important times when the study of revolutions has flourished, often connected with the study of mass movements as part of a historiography with a left-wing political orientation. At the same time, socio-historical research on labour movements has also paid a great deal of attention to processes that took place inside factories. However, these two historiographical developments have remained somewhat separated from each other. Descriptions of the history of revolutions mostly discuss their topics as political events; dealing with political procedures and different phases of revolution, and examining the ideas of the protagonists.¹ Taking a look at the 1917 Russian revolution allows us to recognize this tendency, as discussions concerning labour relations during times of revolution have been made subordinate to discussions about political events.² Of course, a Marxist historiography would “know” that it is not the thinkers and party or trade union leaders themselves who made the

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- 1 A good example is the discussion about the role of the factory councils in the Russian Revolution of 1917. These councils, founded after the February Revolution, are assumed to have opened up anti-capitalist perspectives within this form of labour representation. Such evaluations, however, are only based on programmes, statutes or statements from the revolutionary councils, in which the protagonists explicitly formulate their intentions and goals. To determine the character of the workers' councils either in Russia or other countries, it would be necessary to distinguish between the self-identification of the revolutionaries and their real practice, and to comprehend them as part of the revolutionary upheaval of old labour relations. Such analysis has not been carried out to date.
 - 2 For a criticism of this approach, see Renate Hürtgen, “Lesarten des roten Oktober”, <http://marx200.org/blog/perspektiven-auf-den-roten-oktober> [19 May 2018].

revolutions, yet they have nonetheless always remained the focus of interest.³ Even if attention is paid to the demonstrating or striking revolutionary masses, they often appear as a mere abstraction, or are remembered as political participants, leaders of strikes or members of a revolutionary council. They are hardly ever described in their own living and working environment, where the whole contradictory character of their thoughts and actions first manifests itself.⁴

In a totally different way, while focusing on the everyday life of workers, their culture and their lifestyle, many sociological and cultural history approaches to labour history detach the research agenda from the question of the relationship between labour relations and revolution.⁵ Their field of interest is not limited to the revolutionary consciousness of workers, to the political parties they belong to and to their attitude in the class struggle; attention is paid to the precise relations between the main protagonists within the company. However, in this approach, the importance of class struggle and of power disappear simultaneously. Labour relations are not described as relations of rule, but are replaced by “persistent” reciprocal power relations.⁶ My analysis of the factory processes of the 1989 democratic revolution in the GDR that follows should be read as a passionate plea to unite these two directions of labour history: not to consider the changes in political power separately from the fights against the ruling labour regime, and to put the changes in factory power relations, their causes, and the nature and goals of the protagonists into the overall context of social development. In other words, the aim should be to observe the developments in factories, the learning processes that workers themselves went through, and their particular experiences and behaviour, without losing sight of the overall social context of power, class struggle and exploitation.

3 This approach reduces the revolutionary changes of labour relations to legal contexts. Contrast this with the tendency apparent in some articles from the conference “Gewerkschaften in revolutionären Zeiten – Europa 1917 bis 1923” on 11–12 October 2018, held in Berlin by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

4 Minutes of Russian meetings that recorded the exact work of these boards were recently published in German for the first time. Anita Friedetzky and Rainer Thomann, *Aufstieg und Fall der Arbeitermacht in Russland* (Berlin: Die Buchmacherei, 2017), 509–634. This is mandatory reading for anyone examining the role of councils in the Russian revolution.

5 Cf. Peter Hübner, Christoph Kleßmann and Klaus Tenfelde, ed., *Arbeiter im Staatssozialismus. Ideologischer Anspruch und soziale Wirklichkeit* (Cologne, Weimar and Vienna: Böhlau, 2005).

6 Cf. Peter Hübner, *Arbeiter und Technik in der DDR 1971 bis 1989. Zwischen Fordismus und digitaler Revolution* (Bonn: Böhlau, 2014).

1 The Factory Movements of 1989: An Unknown Side of the Revolution

The memory of the democratic revolution in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) is a prime example of concentrating on political results and ignoring what happened in companies, in particular the grassroots democratic processes.⁷ The prevailing official interpretation reduces the revolution to the fall of the Honecker regime, the mass demonstrations and, first of all, to the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989. The majority of the population – sometimes against their better knowledge – accepts this. As a result, 9 November is celebrated as the peak and the end of the revolution, which then brought about the unification of Germany. Although thousands of GDR citizens witnessed the boom of autonomous employees' initiatives on a scale never seen before, their experience has been given limited space in the narrative of 1989–1990. A large section of researchers investigating civil rights activists and opposition to the GDR regime have found the main topic for their analyses in the attack on the Ministry of State Security; the events in the factories of the GDR seem of little interest, even today. The same can be said about the flood of publications concerning the history of the revolution in the GDR written by both East and West German historians, who since 1990 have preferred to deal with the old and the new elite, as well as the collapse of social structures, the role of the party, the state security apparatus and other institutions of power.

When grassroots actions are examined, this usually remains limited to the mass demonstrations in the streets and squares.⁸ That does not mean developments at the factory level that contributed to the fall of the GDR have remained completely unstudied. In fact, economic and business historians have been very interested in the structural and personal changes in company management, and therefore have also dealt with events in the factories during the revolution. This strand of literature, however, does not regard labour relations as relations of rule, and the perspective is very different from that of the workers who were destroying the prevailing structures. Consequently, this research did not and does not offer much towards an understanding of the

7 Bernd Gehrke and Renate Hürtgen, ed. *Der betriebliche Aufbruch im Herbst 1989. Die unbekannteste Seite der DDR-Revolution* (Berlin: Bildungswerk Berlin der Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2001²). This book presents texts by eye witnesses and more than 120 original documents about the transition in the factories. These form the main sources of information for the current chapter. A second resource for original documents is <http://www.ddr89.de/> [5 June 2019].

8 Jürgen Kädtler and Gisela Kottwitz, *Betriebsräte zwischen Wende und Ende in der DDR* (Berlin: Zentralinstitut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung der Freien Universität Berlin, 1990).

role of workers and employees in the events of 1989.⁹ Some economic historians from the former GDR have justifiably criticized the historically unique process of the destruction of the East German economy. However, their focus has been on the needs and concerns of the former managers of factories and industrial complexes, who saw themselves as being suppressed by the Western elite. Since they consider the factory as a place of power only in the West, and therefore not in the GDR, no revolutionary meaning is attached to the initiatives of the workforce, which in the autumn of 1989 turned against the factory leadership, directors of industrial complexes and trade union executives in the GDR.¹⁰

Although for very different reasons, many leftists from the West – together with some German researchers of trade unions – have shared this somewhat distrustful view of the grassroots movements in the factories in the fall of the Berlin Wall. The former overlooked the anti-capitalist tendencies among the GDR workforce and did not examine the demands for radical change that went beyond immediate reforms. For the Western leftists who came into contact with the East German factory committees in the autumn of 1989, the GDR workers somehow resembled strangers, who were not expected to be revolutionary at all. The election results of March 1990 seemed to confirm this attitude. An evaluation of the GDR revolution as a revolution for “free time and consumption” that was widespread in early literature, contributed to losing sight of the sphere of production.¹¹ No relevant revisions have been made to this evaluation. The trade unions in the West also mostly failed to consider the spontaneous movements in the factories in the GDR. They first showed interest in grassroots participation in the summer of 1990, when partners were needed for the first staff committees and factory council elections, as well as for trade union units to be set up.¹² Not all the trade union representatives tried to find “unencumbered” people at the grassroots level; only those who did not

9 André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan: Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2004). Cf. Karin Lohr, “Management und Belegschaft im wirtschaftlichen Wandel – Brüche und Kontinuitäten”, in *Krisen, Kader, Kombinate. Kontinuität und Wandel in ostdeutschen Betrieben*, ed. Martin Heidenreich (Berlin: Sigma, 1992), 159–172.

10 Jörg Roesler and Dagmar Semmelmann, *Vom Kombinat zur Aktiengesellschaft. Ostdeutsche Energiewirtschaft im Umbruch in den 1980er und 1990er Jahren* (Bonn: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2005).

11 Kädtler and Kottwitz, *Betriebsräte*.

12 Rainer Weinert and Franz-Otto Gilles, *Der Zusammenbruch des Freien Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes (FDGB). Zunehmender Entscheidungsdruck, institutionalisierte Handlungsschwächung und Zerfall der hierarchischen Organisationsstruktur* (Wiesbaden: vs Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1999).

want to return to recruiting from the old GDR leadership and functionary team (FDGB).

These attitudes rapidly reaffirmed the teleological notion that any demands for the direct participation of labourers in management made during the revolution of 1989 had been destined to fail from the start.¹³ This “teleologic realism” not only took hold among those dealing with the revolutionary upheavals in labour relations at the beginning of the 1990s, but very soon became extended to all attempts to take a slightly more social perspective on the future of the GDR, which were decried as utopian.¹⁴

As a result of this combination of different perspectives, the role of the workforce ended up as a marginal issue in study of the 1989 revolution. However, this seems to have been changing to some extent in recent times. Contemporary historians have rediscovered oppositional tendencies in the Eastern Germany of the early 1990s, and have started to show an interest in the resistance of workers against the Trust agency (*Treuhandanstalt*) and government policy.¹⁵ Trade unions have also started to look more critically at their history of unification and their less glamorous role in the construction of the new labour relations in East Germany.¹⁶ The foundational meeting of the “Initiative of the East German Staff Committees, Factory Councils and Shop Stewards” against the mass dismissals of the Trust agency in Berlin in 1992 is one of the points of interest.¹⁷ The current chapter aims to contribute to this turn by examining events in the factories of the GDR between September 1989 and February 1990, especially with regard to the process of factories' transition. It also looks at the main protagonists who allowed the old power structure in the factories to collapse, and at the demands for new forms of labour relations that emerged in the process. The questions raised here include

13 Manfred Scharrer, *Der Aufbau einer freien Gewerkschaft in der DDR 1989/90. ÖTV und FDGB-Gewerkschaften im deutschen Einigungsprozess* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2011), preface, 47–50.

14 Martin Jander, *Formierung und Krise der DDR-Opposition: Die “Initiative für unabhängige Gewerkschaften” – Dissidenten zwischen Demokratie und Romantik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996).

15 The Trust agency was established by the GDR government. Originally it should save workers' rights to the factories but after the elections in March it was used to privatize the East German enterprises.

16 Detlev Brunner, Michaela Kuhnhenne and Hartmut Simon, ed., *Gewerkschaften im deutschen Einheitsprozess: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen in Zeiten der Transformation* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018).

17 <https://geschichtevonuntenostwest.wordpress.com/soziale-kaempfe-in-ostdeutschland-nach-1990/dokumentation-der-initiative-ostdeutscher-und-berliner-betriebsraete/> [19 May 2018].

who these workers were and what motivated their activities. The chapter also looks at interactions between the revolutionary events on the “street” and those in the factories, at the ideas that were current among the grassroots activists and at the question of why this phase of the transformation only lasted for a few weeks. Lastly, it addresses the question of the connection between the revolution and the changes in labour relations that took place in the GDR after the *Wende* (the ‘turning point’, meaning the period between the Peaceful Revolution in autumn 1989 and the elections for a democratic parliament in March 1990).

2 The Crisis of the Political and Factory Power Structures

The pictures showing thousands of refugees from the GDR during the late summer of 1989 circulated around the world. Reports about the mass demonstrations – not only in Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin, but also in numerous small towns – leading to the downfall of both the central and the local state party, appeared in the mass media. The dissatisfaction with the regime (that had been building up for decades) was articulated in open protest. When the Hungarian government started to pull down the border fence to Austria in May 1989, many GDR citizens tried to leave the country via this route. During the summer, they used the embassies or consulates of the Federal Republic in Hungary, Prague, Warsaw and East Berlin for their flight. In the first half of the year, nearly 50,000 people left the GDR in this way. By the end of 1989, the numbers had risen to 230,000. One reason why the refugee movement continued during the winter was that many citizens feared the border would be closed again at some point. Even at the time of the elections in March 1990, many people were still afraid that the old power structure might be re-established. On the other hand, unlike the situation in June 1953, the protestors in 1989 were aware that the Soviet Army was not expected to suppress the uprising. The developments in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev might have had a decisive influence on the protests by GDR citizens in the early spring of 1989. Ignoring the “hardliners” within their own government, and in spite of the unpredictable danger of a massive military blow against the demonstrators, the feeling grew that the risks were worth taking. Within the space of just a few weeks, the party and state structures fell apart. What looked like an implosion would never have been successful without the pressure from the mass movements, although the workers’ uprising in the autumn of 1989 was undoubtedly different from that in June 1953 in the GDR. As a rule, the workers from the local factories went onto the streets after closing time, demonstrating in their capacity as citizens. The

first demonstrations often took place in a semi-public room of a church and expanded from there into the city.

The developments of the 1970s can help us to understand the events at the factories in the GDR in 1989, in particular the situation there in the summer and autumn. Since the 1970s, the industrial landscape of the GDR was characterized by huge factory units, with more than 200 industrial complexes, some of them with over 20,000 employees. It was only at this stage that the GDR assumed the form of a "workers' society". The factory was at the centre, where overall, some eight million "employees" worked nine hours a day, from Monday to Friday. Following the unsuccessful decentralization of the economy, the power of middle management over the economy once again increased, in the process also strengthening the position of the one-party state in the spheres of production and distribution. This had complicated effects on the workforce. On the one hand, through Honecker's "Unity of Economic and Social Policy", the role of the factories became enhanced.¹⁸ On the other hand, the functions of the party – as well as of the state security apparatus – were reinforced. In fact, after the end of the 1960s, basically only the members of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) could hold positions in the factory leadership, including the post of foreman. This produced a factory management consistently loyal to the state and subject to party discipline. It deeply influenced the atmosphere in the factory, and produced a gap between the "top" and "bottom", called the "card line", analogous to the "collar line".¹⁹ The factory was among the most thoroughly controlled places in the GDR, through the factory combat groups; a paramilitary organization that had been set up following the workers' uprising in 1953, with the aid of the local SED members in the factories and through state security.²⁰

The industrial landscape of the GDR in its final decade was characterized by two contradictory developments, which in 1989 contributed significantly to the course of events. First, the misguided economic policy led to a situation of decline and disorganization. The complaints lodged with the party, the state

18 The concept of "Unity of Economic and Social Policy", which ended with the SED's eighth party congress in 1971, was related to the era of Erich Honecker as leader of the party and state president. He introduced a policy in which the consumer goods industry was meant to have a more significant role than before.

19 The "collar line" distinguished blue-collar workers from the white-collar management. In the GDR, this distinction went together with belonging to the all-defining SED. People carrying a party membership card belonged to the "top".

20 In the 1960s, the state security paid attention to the economy and the factories, and organized their labour structures according to the so-called production principle.

leadership and the FDGB show a disastrous picture of collapsed factory roofs, malfunctioning heating and broken furniture.²¹ A lack of tools together with irregularities in the supply of raw materials made it impossible to maintain continuity of the work flow. The machinery became outdated to the extent that the proportion of obsolete equipment that was still operating had risen to over 50 per cent in some sectors by 1988.²² It was not without good reason that employees claimed the ruling economic and labour regime was responsible for this misery. The maxim was to fulfil the plan at any costs, even through false figures and reports. The factory leadership, consisting of the secretary of the SED, the state commissioner and the leadership of the trade union, subordinated the factory interests to party politics, and the employees had to bear the consequences of this mismanagement.

Notwithstanding the problems described above, the GDR nevertheless became a modern industrialized country with a qualified workforce. As a result of an extensive qualification programme, particularly for women, the factories in the GDR had a higher proportion of skilled workers, technicians and engineers than comparable factories in the West.²³ The number of people without qualifications was reduced to a negligibly low number, and while the title “skilled worker” could often not compete with the traditional degrees of engineers, the self-confidence of the GDR employees grew because of their qualifications. At the same time, the gap was growing between their knowledge and capabilities on the one hand, and on the other, the opportunities to make use of them. In the GDR of the 1980s, this resulted in the common phenomenon of over-qualification in the workplace. Technicians and engineers complained that they were just “sitting around”, not being able to use their knowledge, and that they were excluded from factory decisions. One of the engineers explained in an interview that the head of the quality control department had sent her to the junkyard to check if she could find a missing spare part there: “It was then that I realized that it was all over with the GDR”, she recalled. Another employee with a mechanical engineering

21 Peter Becker and Alf Lüdtke, ed., *Akten. Eingaben. Schaufenster. Die DDR und ihre Texte: Erkundungen zu Herrschaft und Alltag* (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2015).

22 Renate Hürtgen, “Entwicklung in der Stagnation? Oder: Was ist so spannend am Betriebsalltag der 1970er und 1980er Jahre in der DDR?” in *Der Schein der Stabilität. DDR-Betriebsalltag in der Ära Honecker*, ed. Renate Hürtgen and Thomas Reichel (Berlin: Metropolis, 2001), 28.

23 Ingrid Drexel and Barbara Giessmann, ed., *Berufsgruppen im Transformationsprozess. Ostdeutschlands Ingenieure, Meister, Techniker und Ökonomen zwischen Gestern und Übermorgen* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 1997).

qualification had sat around in his office without any work assignments for years.²⁴

The gap between the increasing demands for high living and working standards, and the lack of the possibility to achieve them led to growing dissatisfaction. Skilled workers suffered a loss of dignity due to the fact they were not able to do real work, and that their knowledge and ability remained unused, while the work they did do was not even adequately rewarded.²⁵

3 Labour Relations as Power Relations

The eruption of protests in the GDR in 1989 was not only driven by the constant shortage of goods and services and the lack of freedom to travel. The flood of petitions and complaints beginning in the autumn of 1989 was soon joined by the creation of grassroots groups of employees putting forward their demands, which shows unmistakably that anger was also focussed on the prevailing power relations in the factories.²⁶

In order to recognize the character of labour relations in the final days of the GDR, we have to take a brief look at the situation of the workers' movement. After the East German mass strike and workers' protests of 17 June 1953 had been subdued, no other similar actions took place for thirty-six years.²⁷ The suppression of this workers' uprising also marked the downfall of autonomous movements. From that time onwards, strikes, the right of association and other forms of organizing in the interests of workers were forbidden in practice. The right to go on strike finally disappeared from the new constitution of the GDR in 1968, whereas it had previously remained formally recognized.²⁸ The representation of the workers' interests against the state (that is, against state companies) became the sole prerogative of state trade unions under the auspices of the FDGB. These trade unions did not fight for higher wages and

24 Renate Hürtgen, *Angestellt im VEB. Loyalitäten, Machtressourcen und soziale Lagen der Industrieangestellten in der DDR* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2009), 145–147.

25 Renate Hürtgen, "Von der Würde der Arbeiter im 'Arbeiterstaat' DDR oder Wo ist die Arbeiterbewegung geblieben?" in *Solidarität im Wandel der Zeiten. 150 Jahre Gewerkschaften*, ed. Willy Buschak (Essen: Klartext, 2016), 303–330.

26 Renate Hürtgen, *Ausreise per Antrag: Der lange Weg nach drüben. Eine Studie über Herrschaft und Alltag in der DDR-Provinz* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014).

27 Heidi Roth, *Der 17. Juni 1953 in Sachsen* (Köln: Ch. Links Verlag, 1999).

28 Renate Hürtgen, "Vom Streik zur individuellen Arbeitsverweigerung", in *Zwischen Disziplinierung und Partizipation. Vertrauensleute des FDGB im DDR-Betrieb*, ed. Renate Hürtgen (Köln, Weimar and Wien: Böhlau, 2005), 255–270.

better working conditions; their main task was to make sure that economic plans were implemented and production was increased. Those who grew up in the GDR and started working in the 1960s therefore did not know any collective demonstrations, strikes, meetings or open discussion forums without the participation of a representative of the state or a functionary of the party (SED). When the revolutionary transition in the GDR reached the first factories in the early autumn of 1989, the workers not only lacked any experience of an independent collective movement, but also the facilities and media to build up a counter-hegemonic public sphere. The attempt of the GDR workers and employees to build up an autonomous grassroots representation should be appreciated even more in light of the long years of suppressed organizing culture, and the lack of any personal experience in this regard.

The revolutionary initiatives in the factories started slightly later than the protests in the streets. The demonstrators did not generally carry banners with demands, and only in exceptional cases played a major role in the manifestations.²⁹ One such exception was the speech by Heiner Müller at the Alexanderplatz in Berlin on 4 November 1989.³⁰ Müller called for the formation of the Initiative for an Independent Trade Union Movement (IUG). The speech began with a challenge to the FDGB for not siding with the workers. At the end of the speech, he called on those present not to wait for renewal from “the top down”, but to take matters into their own hands by organizing the representation of their own interests.³¹ This spirit of grassroots initiative embraced the whole of East German society in the autumn of 1989. However, while the speakers at the Alexanderplatz on 4 November focused on the unity of all the citizens, the call for the IUG expressed an idea that seemed to have little place in the general euphoria of the transition. In fact, the call stressed that employees in the GDR would have to continue the fight for their rights after the downfall of the party state. It argued that the following years would be no “bed of roses”. Considering the desolate state of the economy, it was to be expected that the workers would bear the burden of the transition.

The speech by Heiner Müller was received without much enthusiasm by the functionaries of the FDGB, and with some surprise by most of the workers

29 Bernd Lindner, *Die demokratische Revolution in der DDR 1989/90* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2001), 79, 87, 112–113.

30 Renate Hürtgen, “Wie Heiner Müller am 4. November 1989 zu seiner Rede auf dem Berliner Alexanderplatz kam”, in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 165–166.

31 Aufruf der Initiative für unabhängige Gewerkschaften, <http://www.ddr89.de/iug/aufruf.html> [9 July 2019]. Also see the translation in the appendix.

and employees from the factories in Berlin. However, similar calls for the establishment of independent representation within the factories and trade unions were made very early, and not only in Berlin. On 16 October 1989, one appeal read:

Knowing that the Free German Trade Union League does not safeguard the interests of the majority of the employees of the GDR, and that instead of them, it acknowledges the SED as allied partner, we, the workers of VEB Geräte and Reglerwerke "Wilhelm Pieck" Teltow have decided to resign from the FDGB and to establish the Independent Factory Trade Union "Reform".³²

According to the meticulous records of the state security, similar activities and calls were made elsewhere that October, for example at the three state-owned factories (VEB) in Erfurt.³³ Only few of these calls were made at public demonstrations. Speaking in front of the Church of the Cross in Dresden on 17 October 1989, a member of the group of young workers from the Radebeul shoe and leather factory introduced among other matters the proposal that "the factory leadership will be elected".³⁴ All of these initiatives took place without the participants knowing of each other's existence, except for the few instances that reached West German radio or television. The media were still state – and therefore SED – owned and controlled at the time, which made communicating and disseminating information about grassroots actions in the factories extremely difficult. At the demonstrations, the question of factory organization remained a marginal topic. Demands for the freedom of assembly, freedom of the press and freedom to travel dominated the movement.

Of all the forms of resistance against the prevailing labour relations, the mass exits from the FDGB involved numerically the most people. The trade unions experienced a rapid decrease in their membership, as trade union members resigned individually or in groups, and formulated calls for withdrawal to the factory trade union bodies. These calls were often connected with criticisms against the FDGB: "A trade union that allows such great social injustice in this state is not our trade union. As a young man, one already fears

32 Call by the independent trade union "Reform", <http://www.ddr89.de/betriebe/GRW7.html> [9 July 2019].

33 Reports about special actions in the district of Erfurt, SAPMO BArch DY 34/13268, BV des FDGB, Abteilung Organisation.

34 "Call in Front of the Cross Church, 17 October 1989", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 349.

to become a pensioner. The pension increase is a joke”.³⁵ In October 1989, numerous “open letters” were sent to “Dear Colleague Harry Tisch” – the leader of the FDGB at the time – with requests to express his opinion about the situation in the country, and to finally start a dialogue with the members. The privileges given to functionaries of the FDGB (which became widely known in November 1989) led to a new wave of resignations, and on 2 November, Harry Tisch resigned. The national board of the FDGB refused to play any role in the transition from then on; remaining just as the leaders of the individual trade unions. The whole trade union apparatus was shocked, unable to operate without orders coming “from the top”. The changes in labour relations that took place in 1989–1990 were exclusively driven by protagonists within the factories. There was active participation by shop stewards, and in exceptional cases also by functionaries of the trade union branches and members of the SED. However, in general, key roles were played by workers and employees with no party affiliation and outside managerial positions.

4 The End of the Old Labour Relations

The transition in the GDR factories accelerated after the street protests had succeeded in destabilizing the political structure. On 5 November, only a day after the large demonstration in Berlin, the whole politburo of the SED resigned; a move that was mirrored by party and state functionaries in provincial towns.³⁶ In the meantime, a social democratic party (SDP) and various civil rights organizations were formed, among them “New Forum”, and fought for official approval.³⁷ The opening of the border on 9 November put an end to the demonstrators’ week-long fight to change the travel law. It was only the successful demonstrations in October 1989, the opening of the border on 9 November, and above all, the protection the new organizations and parties provided that encouraged the emergence of demands at the factory level. This delay was not without good cause. As described above, the factories in the GDR

35 “Notice of withdrawal”, in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 331.

36 Renate Hürtgen, “Das Wunder von Halberstadt. Die demokratische Revolution in der Provinz”, in *Herbst 1989 in der DDR-Provinz. Fallbeispiele: Pritzwalk, Halberstadt und Gotha*, ed. Hele Panke e.V. (Berlin: Helle Panke e.V. – Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Berlin, 2015), 32–49.

37 Christel Degen, *Politikvorstellung und Biografie: Die Bürgerbewegung Neues Forum auf der Suche nach der kommunikativen Demokratie* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2000).

were tightly controlled places. Those people who stood up to the factory management in public lacked the type of protection provided by the anonymity of the street. Significantly, the pioneers of the transition in the factories often included people who joined a new opposition group in October or November and then also attempted to found, for example, a "New Forum" group in their own factory. This provided them with political protection, made paper and the use of a copying machine accessible to them and enabled them to build up an alternative information structure that could be used for the factory actions.³⁸

The lack of the means of communication and of public spaces in which to organize constituted further problems for those who wanted to transfer the "spirit of the street" into the factory. Different later accounts recall how activists had made use of the bulletin boards or the blackboards in factory corridors to post a piece of paper with their own message, often to be quickly removed by the party secretary.³⁹ The "fight around the bulletin board" was symbolic of the fight for publicity within the factories during the autumn of 1989. The trade union meetings organized independently by members and union representatives were also an example of this. The new, previously totally unknown feeling of power was expressed in demands to the factory management to publicly account for the state of the factory, and to introduce *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* in the workplaces.

The crucial demands, which directly questioned the prevailing power relations, were aimed at disbanding the factory combat teams and the SED structures, as well as their so-called mass organizations. The slogans were: "Party and state security, out of the factories! Break the combat teams! Stop socialist competition!" The latter demand above all delegitimized the trade unions at the factories; the same unions that in the past had organized performance competitions in order to increase production. In some of the factories, workers or their representatives organized explicit votes to withdraw their trust from these bodies. The "explanation" sent early November 1989 by the employees of VEB Rationalisierungsmittelbau Zwickau to the factory director and the

38 "Factory groups" were founded within the New Forum and United Left. With regard to the connection between the new civil rights movement and the factory activists in 1989–1990, see Wilfried Wilkens-Friedrich, *Die Beziehungen zwischen Neuem Forum und Gewerkschaften am Beispiel Berlins. Eine Fallstudie zum Spannungsverhältnis von neuen und alten sozialen Bewegungen* (Berlin: Zentralinstitut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung der Freien Universität Berlin, 1994); Bernd Gehrke, "Demokratiebewegung und Betrieb in der 'Wende' 1989. Plädoyer für einen längst fälligen Perspektivwechsel", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 204–246.

39 "Also, die Hauptunruhen im Hauptwerk waren Wandzeitungen", News from the TV-electronics factory in Berlin, in *Der Betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 68.

management of the complex included a demand for the text to be published in the company newsletter, which at that time was still firmly controlled by the party. A group of co-workers set up a grassroots group of the “New Forum” in their factory and with great self-assurance made suggestions for production, and even made their demands complete with a precise schedule containing deadlines to be complied with. In the event of failure to comply, they threatened a warning strike.⁴⁰

However, neither the fall of Erich Honecker in October nor the resignation of his successor Egon Krenz in December 1989 could fully eliminate the old power relations, and by January 1990, the SED appeared even stronger. In many of the factories, the old managers continued their activities without interruption, and the Ministry of State Security was not disbanded, but instead turned into the Office for National Security by the Modrow government. A strike wave organized independently from the state-led trade unions swept the country between October 1989 and January 1990, in which the industrialized south of the GDR played a notable role.⁴¹ Employees partly returned to the old traditions of the workers’ movement, and partly used uncommon forms of action such as the occupation of factories, hunger strikes or road blockades. Demands for eliminating the old work regime and the existing political power structure went hand in hand.

Changes in the balance of power within the factories started to take place. The factory combat groups disintegrated, and the structures of the SED, the Free German Youth (FDJ) and the German Soviet Friendship disappeared. Their former offices remained empty or were closed. In some of the factories, the workers’ representatives even dismissed the factory directors. Cadres, party secretaries and other members of the management left their positions; sometimes silently, sometimes under protest. For the workforce of the GDR, this process gave rise to forms of self-empowerment only typical at times of revolutions. When the protagonists of the factory transition met a decade after the autumn of 1989, they referred to that time – apart from the realistic evaluation that in the end they could not accomplish all their revolutionary objectives – as the time of “walking upright”, and as a determining moment in their lives. There was unfortunately not much time left for the GDR workers for this kind of experience, as Gerd S., at the time a turner at the company Rationalisierungsbau Karl-Marx-Stadt and a founding member of the Basisforum

40 “Statement of the New Forum at the Rationalisationsbau works, in manuscript, no date (early November 1989)”, in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 358.

41 Lindner, *Die demokratische Revolution*, 92.

Rationalisierungsbau of the New Forum, remembers: "That was a short time when we had relatively a lot, yes, a lot of power. Very different from today".⁴²

The newly founded workers' organizations were surprised that the company management often accepted negotiations with them so readily. One explanation was that "this turmoil itself paralysed them in a way".⁴³ Nevertheless, there were old – as well as new – directors in a number of factories who seized the opportunities to adapt to market conditions. A joint-venture agreement released by the Modrow government provided the legal basis for negotiations with Western companies, and the first wave of staff dismissals soon started. On 22 December 1989, the director of the Elektroapparate Werke Treptow Company announced the closure of complete factory departments. An announcement at the company VEB Bergmann-Borsig highlighted the risky situation that new grassroots initiatives faced:

On 17 and 18 January there will be negotiations with Western partners about a joint venture, holding or other forms of cooperation. Chief executive D. and his deputy A. have stubbornly remained silent about their plans and intentions so far. We need to act immediately. It may happen that entire units of our factory *will be closed down or liquidated*.⁴⁴

5 Towards New Representative Structures?

Only after new groups and initiatives had been established inside and outside the factories, and "round tables" had been set up everywhere, did a lively discussion erupt about the aims and strategy for the transition. For a few weeks, thousands of citizens were involved in considering a democratically constituted GDR, in the process advancing the most varied collection of approaches.⁴⁵

42 "Minutes of the conference of the Bildungswerk Berlin of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, 27 November 1999", in *Der betrieblicher Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 52.

43 "Minutes of the conference of the Bildungswerk Berlin of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, 27 November 1999", in *Der betrieblicher Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 48.

44 "Proclamation to found a provisory factory council at the VEB Bergmann-Borsig", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 420. Bold type and anonymization in the original.

45 The draft of a new work constitution, which was presented in the last Volkskammer (people's chamber) of the GDR in February 1990, made an especially far-reaching contribution. Stiftung Haus der Demokratie und Menschenrechte, ed., "*Verfassungsentwurf des Runden Tisches, 1990*": *The result of the political self-determination in the GDR from the autumn of 1989 till the election on 18 March 1990* (2nd edition, Berlin: Haus der Demokratie, 2014).

A wider learning curve began, because “nobody had any idea about democracy, not in the factory anyway”, as Ewald S. summed up the situation in retrospect.⁴⁶ An active minority became engaged in changing the power relations in the factories, and only a segment of them became members of the new political, economic and trade union elites after the transitional period.⁴⁷

In order to ensure their legitimacy, the mostly small groups of four or five colleagues who took the initiative to accept the challenge – and in order to be authorized to act – collected signatures for their petitions or called for elections. Others established themselves simply as a “workers’ council”, “factory council”, “institution council”, “independent trade union group”, “working committee” or “basis group”, in advance of the organization of proper elections. Terms such as “provisory factory council” describe the temporary nature of these boards. In addition, the founding of “round tables” in the factories testified to the existing power vacuum. As of December 1989, such round tables existed in Berlin, where delegates of the SED and other parties, the FDGB and the church could meet members of the newly founded civil rights groups.⁴⁸

In addition to such initiatives, which were independent of the FDGB, new elections for the factory trade union organizations started at the end of November. In many cases, the chair of the union branch was removed; in some of the factories they resigned of their own volition. The initiators were often whole trade union groups and – surprisingly – the shop stewards. The latter is remarkable, because during the GDR era, shop stewards were not strongly connected with fighting for workers’ rights.⁴⁹ The activity of the shop stewards,

46 “Minutes of the conference of the Bildungswerk Berlin of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, 27 November 1999”, in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 36.

47 There is no extensive examination of who from the Eastern trade unions, and to what extent, took over any positions in the Western trade unions and if they were functionaries in the FDGB. Some biographical reports show that former functionaries were primarily involved, but less so the participants from the period of the grassroots upheaval. Cf. Detlev Brunner and Christian Hall, *Revolution, Umbruch, Neuaufbau. Erinnerungen gewerkschaftlicher Zeitzeugen der DDR* (Berlin-Brandenburg: Bebra Verlag, 2014); Larissa Klinzing, “Zwischen Anpassung und Öffnung. Gewerkschaftsstrukturen im beigetretenen Teil Deutschlands”, in *Politische Strukturen im Umbruch*, ed. Hiltrud Naßmacher et al. (Berlin, 1994), 155–180; Joerg Roesler and Dagmar Semmelmann, *Vom Kombinat zur Aktiengesellschaft: Ostdeutsche Energiewirtschaft im Umbruch in den 1980er und 1990er Jahren* (Bonn: Karl Dietz Verlag, 2005).

48 Uwe Thaysen, *Der Runde Tisch. Oder: Wo blieb das Volk? Der Weg der DDR in die Demokratie* (Opladen: vs Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1990).

49 Renate Hürtgen, “Vertrauensleute des FDGB in den siebziger und achtziger Jahren. Funktionslos im großen Funktionärsstaat DDR?” in *Vom Funktionieren der Funktionäre. Politische Interessenvertretung und gesellschaftliche Integration in Deutschland nach 1933*, ed. Till Kössler and Helke Stadtland (Essen: Klartext, 2004), 157–178.

without any orders from the FDGB or the individual trade union branch officials, should not be confused with the reform movements within the FDGB.

No research has been carried out to date that can give a more complete view of the profile of the main protagonists in the factory movement. According to my own impressions as an eyewitness, which are supported by the fragmented literature that exists, the key players were employees with technical or economic qualifications, but who did not hold management positions. The documents also show the presence of skilled manual workers among the initiators. It seems that the latter were more strongly represented in the initiatives aimed at the renewal of trade unions, whereas the participation of the former group was greater in the foundation of factory councils.

It is almost impossible to find a common structure in the movement as it took shape in different factories. In some, a newly elected factory trade union leadership, a factory council and an independent trade union group operated side by side for a few weeks.⁵⁰ However, by November 1989 it had already become clear that despite the differences in their names, many of these initiatives reflected similar demands for workers' involvement in running the factories. For example, the announcement made by a trade union called "Reform" included the demand for "the participation of trade unions in factory management".⁵¹

A more far-reaching programme for changing the form of workers' representation was put forward by the IUG,⁵² which worked out a statute at the end of December.⁵³ It left open the question of whether the independent trade union should be organized on a sectoral, company or professional basis. However, the draft statute clearly outlined the demand to remove the full-time trade union bureaucracy and to replace it with elected shop stewards. Ideas put forward by the IUG about reducing the number of full-time functionaries, direct election of workers' representatives, transparency, the right to strike and the

50 "E.g. at the company Berliner Werk für Fernsehelektronik (WF)", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 64.

51 "Call for the Independent Trade Union 'Reform' in VEB Geräte- und Reglerwerk (GRW) Teltow for the Foundation of Independent Trade Unions, 16 October 1989", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 342.

52 "Tasks and rights of works councils, basis for discussion of the content of a works constitution law, on the occasion of the 1st works council conference of the GDR, 31 January 1989", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 518.

53 "Statute draft (1990)", in "Now there are initiative people and one should invite them all to the same table", *Die Initiative für unabhängige Gewerkschaften (IUG) 1989 bis 1990, Darstellung und Dokumente*, ed. Leonore Ansorg and Renate Hürtgen (Berlin: FU Berlin, 1990), 79–83.

right of association were included in the programmes of other independent trade unions.⁵⁴ The unpopularity of the old FDGB gave a decisive impetus for these initiatives, because nobody had any trust in its renewal, and the preparations for an extraordinary FDGB congress at the end of January were similarly viewed with mistrust.

6 Beyond 1989

By the beginning of 1990, much had changed for the grassroots movements in the factories. The trend to form new advocacy groups had been replaced by attempts to build factory councils comparable with similar representative bodies in Western companies. Groups that had called themselves “independent trade unions” back in October and November 1989, changed their names to “provisory factory councils”. There were attempts to build inter-company networks out of the hundreds of grassroots initiatives in individual factories. On 31 January 1990, a national meeting of Independent Trade Union Initiatives and – on the same day – a meeting of factory councils took place, with over 80 factories represented in each of these meetings. In December 1989 there had already been a proposal to create a “Council of Employees”. None of these proposals were successful.⁵⁵ It is true that even in January 1990, state security attempted to hinder such networking. However, this is not sufficient to explain the failure to build a national movement out of the individual factory initiatives.

For an explanation, it is necessary to look at the character of the revolutionary transition in the GDR, which – as mentioned before – was neither a workers’ uprising nor something that started in the factories. The contribution of the factory movement remained focused on disrupting the party dictatorship’s monopolistic structures in the factories themselves, and through this, the destruction of the old work regime. A more ambitious programme was never on the agenda. The character of the new citizens’ movements of the autumn of 1989 also contributed to this. Factory or trade union issues were never a prime concern for the New Forum,⁵⁶ which also never had the aim of

54 “Open letter of the brigade Maintenance-Tiefbau”, in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 350–354.

55 A representative of the United Leftists (vL) summarized in 1999, that the demand for “workers’ control was not included in the agenda of the people concerned”, in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 110.

56 This is confirmed by the absence of such issues in the founding call for New Forum, <https://www.hdg.de/lemo/bestand/objekt/dokument-aufbruch-89.html> [10 July 2019].

uniting the demands of the factories and those of the "street" by means of a general strike.⁵⁷ Lastly, the popularity of the West German model was also a reason to aim for more limited forms of factory representation. From the GDR employees' point of view, West German labour relations provided a solid and extremely effective basis for the improvement of the quality of work and life.

Despite this, however, the factory grassroots initiatives did not simply prove to be replicas of the Work Constitutional Act that regulated workers' representation in West German factories. They demanded more far-reaching rights related to factory management, as can be established from the documents relating to these initiatives. They included demands for co-determination "concerning any issues of factory development", "in any structural questions" and "in any ownership question", as the programme of the factory council of Funkwerk Köpenick stated.⁵⁸ The Council of the Employees in Karl-Marx-Stadt demanded "involvement in every issue concerning cadre politics", as well as "in the production planning, the execution of production, investment, sales, furthermore the fields of research and development".⁵⁹ Other boards claimed veto rights over personnel issues and matters of corporate strategy, or gave a future factory council far-reaching rights regarding the appointment of managers.⁶⁰ Even many groups that did not describe their prerogatives in similarly far-reaching terms took it for granted that factory councils should have a say in the organization of factory production and the distribution of profits. How indignant they were when a few months later they learned what strict limits the Federal German Work Constitution Act would impose on the factory councils.

The focus on workers' participation in management functions from the outset involved the risk that trying to work in the best interests of the employees could turn into an aspiration to become part of the management. Some of the demands for participation were indeed not based on the vision of a trade unionist, conflict-oriented type of representation of the employees in the leadership of the enterprise. This was the case for instance with the "institute council" at the centre of the scientific equipment engineering company (Zentrum

57 Bernd Gehrke, "Die 'Wende'-Streiks: A first draft", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 247–270.

58 "Work programme of the company VEB Funkwerk Köpenick, factory unit Dubendorf, o. D. (January 1990)", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 432–433. See the annex.

59 "Responsibilities and structures of the 'Council of the Employees' in Karl-Marx-Stadt, 22 December 1989", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, 397, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, <http://www.ddr89.de/betriebe/RDW3.html> [10 July 2019].

60 "First Factory in the GDR on the works council's activities of VEB Schwertransport Leipzig, 29 December 1989", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 402.

für wissenschaftlichen Gerätebau, ZWG) in Berlin. The activists involved there presented themselves in a self-confident manner as partners with equal rights, who could not be left out of the decision-making in the highest echelons of management.⁶¹ East German protagonists who identified with such an interpretation of workers' participation, and who considered it their prime responsibility to foster the "well-being of the enterprise" resembled representatives of West German factory councils, and their thinking came close to the so-called *Standortdenken*; that is, the vision that the major task was to ensure the viability of the enterprise in the given location and context.

West German trade unions sidestepped these grassroots initiatives, and made every effort to extend West German practices of workers' representation to the GDR.⁶² They emphasized the elections of factory and staff committees, but not the election of shop stewards. The consequences of the uncritical replication of the West German factory council model would become clear by the early 1990s, when trade unions proved unable to fight the privatization wave that followed German unification.⁶³

Many employees very quickly began to familiarize themselves with the West German industrial relations law (*Betriebsverfassungsgesetz*). Among them were some who for months – more or less gloomily – had been trying to build up a basis for independent representation in the factories, at the latest after the elections to the East German Parliament in March 1990. The functionaries "flown in" from the West told them: "Get rid of all of the stuff you have prepared here. It will not earn you anything. Get prepared for the Industrial Relations Law".⁶⁴ Gerd S. adds that they themselves did not want to accept this for a long time, but the situation was becoming more and more precarious.

61 "The foundation of an institute council at the Centre of Scientific Instruments' Work, AdW", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 384–386.

62 Michael Fichter and Stefan Lutz, *Gewerkschaftsaufbau in den neuen Bundesländern: Eine Chronik der Ereignisse 1989–1991* (Berlin: Zentralinstitut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung der Freien Universität Berlin, 1991).

63 Ulla Plenert, ed., *Die Treuhand – der Widerstand in den Betrieben der DDR – die Gewerkschaften (1990–1994)* (Berlin: Nora, 2011).

64 "Minutes of the conference of the Bildungswerk Berlin of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, 27 November 1999", in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 57. Dieter W., at that time a member of the autonomously founded factory council at Stahl- und Walzwerk Hennigsdorf, says that the trade unions – here the IG Metall – did not ask what new forms of representations there were, or how they were organized. "Not at all. They came, took us over, and that was all, and they pushed through their structures", Detlev Brunner and Christian Hall, *Revolution, Umbruch, Neubeginn. Erinnerungen gewerkschaftlicher Zeitzeugen der DDR* (Berlin-Brandenburg: Bebra Verlag, 2014), 97.

As a matter of fact, the phenomenon described by contemporary witnesses as the “survival fight” of the companies had already begun in 1990. As there were no alternatives, the offer by the DGB trade unions to provide stable and powerful representation of interests in the factories appeared very attractive. Up to the beginning of 1991, almost all of the major enterprises had elected factory councils and staff committees, in which the trade unions were able to position “their own men”. The GDR employees went through their first real pay disputes and trade union-facilitated strikes. The numerous new ideas and grassroots impulses for the design of labour relations that had sprung up in the autumn of 1989 gave way to the preparation and facilitation of elections. The historical moment of the revolutionary transition was over, and the discussions about what the “real” representation of workers’ interests within companies should look like were replaced by the study of the Federal German Industrial Relations Law. For the time being, labour relations in East Germany acquired – with the East German workforce actively contributing to the process – their definite shape. The momentum aimed at the generation of a “somewhat more leftist trade union” that had developed back in autumn 1989 did not – as Karin K., an activist of the company transformation process, and later involved with the IG-Metall, put it – manage to inject itself into this process. Yet at the same time, Karin K. underlines that the experience of “walking upright” did live on, and continued to make a difference, which cannot be disputed:

However, I want to say something, again, about the major outcome for myself. The rock band R.E.M. has a good song with the title ‘Walk Unafraid’. Having learnt how to march fearlessly, this walking upright, to have learned this and to stick to it, this embodies the development of my political emancipation in those days, and I wish to retain it for myself.⁶⁵

7 Conclusion

There was no workers’ uprising in the GDR in the autumn of 1989; instead, a democratic grassroots revolution took place against the ruling dictatorial regime. The goals of the protagonists were somewhat like those of the political and social movements that had emerged in Western Europe after 1968. The movements that emerged in the factories resembled far more the factory

65 “Minutes of the conference of the Bildungswerk Berlin of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, 27 November 1999”, in *Der betriebliche Aufbruch*, ed. Gehrke and Hürtgen, 158.

struggles of 1968 and the following years in Western Europe than the Russian revolution of 1917, the German revolution of November 1918 or even the workers' uprising that had taken place in the GDR in 1953. In 1989 and 1990, the fight of the workers and employees in the GDR was aimed at the improvement of working and living conditions, higher wages, less overtime and the acknowledgement of qualifications, with high expectations of an economy not subordinated to central party control. Workers were concerned with the recreation of an independent labour movement, and their historic contribution was to question and destroy the labour relations that had been dominant in GDR factories. The democratic transition in the autumn of 1989 was therefore also expressed in claims for labour participation in the management of and decision-making in the factories.

The revolution of 1989 started an exciting learning process about the content and structures of autonomous factory representation, and opened up a small historic "time window", in which workers in the GDR were able to investigate their own forms of action after decades of repression. This period did not end immediately after the adoption of the Federal German regulation of labour relations. Completely ignored by the historiography – including that about the trade unions – East German employees started a struggle, unprecedented in the history of Germany, against the privatization and closing down of the GDR factories. This was accomplished mainly through the organization of the Trust agency, which entailed the elimination of more than half of all the industrial workplaces within four years. Between 1990 and 1994, East Germany saw the eruption of a wave of strikes and protests against the de-industrialization policy. Due to the lack of trade union leadership, the majority of these actions were organized and carried out autonomously by workers and factory councils. What did not happen in 1989, but did take place in 1993, was that the factory councils and staff committees united into a supra-regional alliance, and also organized protests directed against the government. As many as 200 protests, strikes, factory occupations or blockades were recorded during the period from 1990 to 1994, many of them initiated by workers without the support of trade union leadership.⁶⁶

Such labour disputes did not fit into the self-image of the Federal German trade unions, whose aim was to resign to the long-established methods in this historically unprecedented situation, and to continue their policy of establishing

66 Related research will soon be accessible on the page of the working group of the history of social movements East-West, <https://geschichtevonuntenostwest.wordpress.com/> [13 November 2019].

co-management structures. To question the prevailing Federal German labour relations, to politicize strikes and other disputes, to amend the regional economic policy or to demand more rights for the trade union representatives was not included in their agenda. This is how they became part of an accelerating neoliberal development, which was not expected to comprise a challenge to the existing labour relations.

Annex: Two Examples of Factory Documents for the Movement of 1989–1990

Colleagues,

What has the FDGB done for us during these 40 years?

Has it negotiated the reduction of working hours, our constant demand, with the factory management? Why has it failed to fight together with us for the 40-hour week?

Has it made sure that our wages will be adjusted to creeping inflation? Why have they always failed to bargain about collective pay rises?

Where are the functionaries of the FDGB when new production standards are introduced in our factory?

Are they by our side? Do they block the standards until it is guaranteed that we will be paid accordingly?

How can the FDGB allow, as an alleged advocate, that we have on average 10 days shorter holidays than our colleagues in the West?

Has the FDGB made any efforts to lower the retirement age?

Have we ever experienced that the leadership of the factory trade union refused to accept the state plan in order to protect our interests? Have we ever experienced that the trade union took any actions for us at all in opposition to the state and the party?

40 years without representation of our own interests is enough!

We cannot let ourselves be organized any more, not even by the “new people” – we must organize by ourselves. The years to come will be no cakewalk for us. The thumbscrews will be tightened. The prices will rise, but hardly the wages. When subsidies fail, that will hit us, above all. The state demands production, soon it will threaten us with dismissals. We have to push the caravan from the mud!

If we do not want to let our living standards sink considerably, we will need our own representation.

- Call for general assemblies, and demand accountability from the leadership of the factory trade unions
- Appoint speakers from among our colleagues

- Let these colleagues place your demands with the factory management
- If difficulties arise, stand by these colleagues
- Publish the results immediately as a protection against repression
- Try to contact colleagues from other factories

Go ahead with the foundation of independent trade unions!

Contact office: "Initiative for Independent Trade Unions" in Club Conrad-Blenkle-Straße 1, Berlin 1055, Tel., from 15/11, Wednesday 17.00 - 19.00 and on Monday 19.00 - 21.00.

Source: Private archive of the author

To all the co-workers of HO Industry!

Call for Unity and the Establishment of Independent Trade Unions

What was and still is the FDGB?

Has it served as the representation of employees?

It has been and it remains a federation that wants to carry on fobbing us off with travel payments and makes ridiculous demands, such as for example only two extra days of paid vacation. Do not let them fool you with benefits *not specified in the collective agreement*. We want all HO-co-workers to be in a financial position that allows them to choose their holiday destination themselves, and pay for it head held high in a travel agency. It means among other things:

- *Wage rises specified in the collective agreement with regard to the rising cost of living*
- *Modern and decent workplaces*
- *Reduction of the daily and weekly working hours as well as the retirement age*
- *Freedom from party constraints*
- *Unity of all co-workers of HO-Industry*

We want to get these demands across to the management of the industrial complex as well as other state leaders.

We must take action now, before they take action against us!

There is no need to wait for gifts. We must take our future into our own hands. That is why you should join us!

Appoint speakers at the branches and departments to draw up a programme together with us.

Advise us of the names and addresses as well as the branch address of everybody who wants to join us.

Send it to

Jens P. 1071 Berlin, Isländische Str. 13

Thomas E. 1142 Berlin, Brodower Ring 24

You can directly talk to us on the first and third Thursday every month at the address of Thomas E., from 19.30 till 21.00 in the club room (ground floor). The first dates are: 18 January and 1 February.

Do not forget: Nothing good ever happens unless you do it yourself!

Source: Private archive of the author

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