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CHANGES IN HUNGARIAN SOCIETY SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Rudolf Andorka

I. Introduction

High-quality social statistical data have been available for Hungary since the establishment of the Hungarian Statistical Service (HSS) circa 1867. Since 1963, when sociology was reinstated in Hungary, in-depth studies on Hungarian society have been published extensively. Both social statistical and sociological studies continue to present data on the rapid changes that have been occurring in Hungarian society since the change of regime in 1990. In this paper, I intend to summarize some key findings of these studies.¹

In 1989 and 1990, Hungary underwent revolutionary change with the rapid and profound transformation of economic, social, and political structures and institutions. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that all that characterized Hungarian society before 1990 is forgotten or viewed as no longer relevant to the understanding of present and future developments in Hungary. On the contrary, the social characteristics of the socialist period, from 1945 to 1990 — both the negative and positive — will deeply influence Hungary in the next decades, just as the social conditions of the pre-1945 system influenced the society of the socialist period.

In interpreting the changes in Hungarian society since 1945, I shall use the theory of modernization. The best theory for understanding what is currently happening in Eastern Central Europe is Edward Tiryakian's "Modernization: exhumetur in pace."² By modernization, I refer to a complex of economic, social, and political development processes that lead to (1) an

efficient market economy providing a high level of consumption, (2) a democratic political system, and (3) modern mentalities.

II. Hungarian History in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Attempts at Modernization

The economic, social, and political history of Hungary in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be seen as a series of failed attempts to catch up with the more advanced Western European societies. The “reform period” of the first half of the nineteenth century ended in failure as a consequence of Hungary’s defeat in its war for independence in 1849. The takeoff period of industrialization under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, beginning with the “constitutional compromise” with the Hapsburg government, ended with the First World War. Finally, the conservative regime of the interwar period resulted in catastrophe at the end of the Second World War. The failure of these three attempts at modernization resulted in deep economic and social crises.

The socialist period (1947–1990) was Hungary’s fourth attempt to modernize itself and to catch up economically and socially with Western Europe. This attempt came under the leadership of the Soviet model of the Communist Party, which was characterized by a totalitarian (or “authoritarian”) political system, Marxist-Leninist ideology, and state ownership of the vast majority of productive assets. In certain respects, modernization was achieved. The country was industrialized and urbanized, the educational level of the population increased, the standard of living was raised, and housing was improved. However, this attempt to catch up proved to be another failure. It became clear that by following the Soviet model, the distance between Western Europe and Hungary not only did not diminish, it increased.

The fourth attempt failed because an efficient modern economy cannot function when the state owns the overwhelming majority of productive assets. The privatization of productive assets, however, cannot be implemented in a totalitarian or authoritarian political system.³ Nor can modern mentalities develop in such a system. Once these facts were recognized by the majority of the population and by an important part of the

political elite, the socialist system collapsed. In 1990, the goal of the society, government, and all political parties represented in the Parliament was modernization, or “catching up” with Western Europe, both economically and politically.

The transition to a market economy (based on private ownership of productive assets) and to a democratic political system proved to be more difficult than was initially imagined. At present, the outcome of this transition cannot be accurately predicted. In order to forecast how Hungarian society might develop by 2005, we have to separate the developments during the socialist period that can provide a basis for further modernization from the elements that must be considered as failures. We have to analyze the nature of the rapid social changes that occurred from 1990 to 1993 in order to distinguish those which lead to Western European conditions and those which hinder this process.

III. Social Structure and Conditions

The following analysis will concentrate on seven dimensions of social conditions: social strata; social mobility; income, standard of living, and housing; education; health; lifestyle, culture, and social contacts; and, finally, deviant behavior, anomie, and alienation

A. Social Strata

In terms of the social status categories based on occupational characteristics utilized by the standard Western sociological literature to describe industrial societies⁴, it is apparent that the social structure of socialist Hungary was rather similar to that of Western capitalist societies. (The categories, called “classes” in the above-mentioned Western model, were usually termed “strata” in Hungarian sociology.) The two most visible differences were (1) the lower percentage in Hungary of self-employed artisans and merchants, i.e., the “petite bourgeoisie,” among active earners and (2) the fact that only very few of the active earners in agriculture in Hungary were self-employed peasants. The majority were agricultural employees (along with cooperative peasants, who were classified in the same category).

Between 1980 and 1990, a move toward a capitalist system could be observed as the percentage of self-employed artisans and merchants increased dramatically and that of self-employed peasants began to grow. Employment in agriculture declined at a more rapid rate than in earlier years.

The hierarchy of these social strata was also rather similar to the hierarchy observed in Western capitalist societies. Measured by the average per capita household income, managers and professionals were at the top of the hierarchy, clerical and skilled workers were in the middle, and nonskilled workers and peasants were at the bottom. And the per capita household income of higher-level managers was far above the income level of lower-level managers and professionals. The income gap between these social strata was less than the gap in the majority of Western capitalist countries, but not much less than that in Western countries with the smallest income gap — Sweden and Finland.⁵ It ought to be noted that all other indicators of social differentiation, such as housing conditions or ownership of consumer durables (particularly personal cars), demonstrate greater differences between social strata than per capita income. Thus, Hungarian society was far from equal.

From the Hungarian Household Panel Surveys in 1992, 1993, and 1994, we have data on the per capita income of members of different social strata since the transition.⁶ These data demonstrate that the income differentiation by social strata increased after 1990 and continues to do so. The rank order of the social strata, however, has remained relatively unchanged, and it presents the usual picture of advanced capitalist societies.

According to Djilas's theory of the "new class" ruling the socialist societies,⁷ these standard social categories do not adequately describe the social structure of societies based on a "command" economy and on a totalitarian-authoritarian political system. Recently, E. O. Wright⁸ formulated a more elaborate theory of structure based on Marxist concepts: in capitalist society the most important unequally distributed productive assets are the means of production, the capital assets. The mechanism of exploitation is the market, and the ruling class is the capitalist class. In the statist society, which might be identified with the Central and Eastern European socialist societies, the principal asset is organizational power, the mechanism of exploitation is

planned appropriation, and the ruling class is composed of bureaucrats and managers. In the future global society, the most important asset will be knowledge and skill, the mechanism of exploitation will be the negotiated redistribution of surplus, and the ruling class will be the class of experts, i.e., professionals. In terms of this theory, the state bureaucrats and managers were at the top of the social structure in Hungary in the socialist period. Konrád and Szelényi, in their book written in the mid-1970s, concluded that in Hungary, intellectuals are on the road to class power.⁹ In other words, professionals will become the ruling class in Hungary, either replacing the state bureaucrats and managers or merging with them into one class.

There is no doubt that during the socialist period, Hungarian society was ruled by a powerful elite of bureaucrats and managers who held much more concentrated power than did the political elite of democratic societies. Two important problems hinder the empirical analysis of this power elite, the first being that the definition of the power elite is far from clear. The famous *nomenklatura* lists published after the transition included only about 1,000 high-level positions. The actual power of different positions (e.g., managers of state enterprises and presidents of cooperatives) changed over time. Second, by any definition, the power elite was very small, with no more than 10,000 people holding substantial power. In a sample survey, the number of interviewed persons belonging to this power elite is too small to draw reliable conclusions about their social characteristics as a group.

It is also doubtful that the social stratum nearest the power elite, in terms of income and living conditions, was the professional stratum. Empirical studies in the 1980s clearly demonstrated that bureaucrats and managers were becoming more and more "professionalized." More of them earned a third degree, their lifestyle and ambitions also became more similar to those of the professionals, and they were recruited predominantly from the professional stratum. This professionalization of the power elite was mainly the consequence of a generational change in the elite. Members of the power elite who entered it in the 1950s are now retired. The younger entrants increasingly were professionals. In the latter half of the 1980s, this process of professionalization was clearly more advanced in the state

bureaucracy and among the managers than among the party bureaucrats.¹⁰

Szelényi later stated that the plan of the intellectuals to become the ruling class in the socialist society through the implementation of market-oriented economic reforms failed because of the resistance of the bureaucracy.¹¹ This tendency to professionalize the bureaucracy provides one of the explanations of the peaceful transition in Hungary. “Professional” members of the bureaucracy stuck much less to their bureaucratic power than did the “pure” bureaucrats, as the former hoped to maintain a privileged social position in the market-oriented and democratic system. As Hankiss noted before the regime change, if the “professional” bureaucrats are offered the possibility of becoming capitalists, they are less resistant to the loss of their powerful position in the government.¹²

Three and a half years after the regime transition, the top of the Hungarian social structure is still in full turmoil. In a paper written after the transition, Konrád and Szelényi distinguish three groups contending for the top position in the hierarchy — the bourgeoisie, the bureaucrats, and the professionals — and hypothesize that some combination of these will rule Hungary.¹³

In addition to the above-mentioned occupational differentiations in the Hungarian social structure, there is an ethnically based differentiation: the Roma, or Gypsy, population. Because of the difficulties of assessing the Gypsy population by using sociological surveys (even defining “Gypsy” is problematic), very few studies have been done.¹⁴ Therefore, even a simple population count of the Gypsy ethnic group is based only on an estimate of five hundred thousand, which represents approximately 5 percent of the population. However, while the Gypsy population is growing, the rest of the population is declining. Gypsies are overrepresented in the least educated, most underprivileged stratum.

B. Social Mobility

Hungary has exceptionally rich data sources on social mobility from the censuses of 1930 and 1949 and from the social mobility surveys of 1962–64, 1973, 1983, and 1992.¹⁵ The data of the 1973

survey were included in the great international comparative survey.¹⁶ These are the main conclusions from those analyses:

- Global social mobility (the percentage of socially mobile persons) increased after 1945, mainly because of the great social structural changes caused by rapid industrialization. The decline of the agricultural population resulted in an intensive outflow from the peasant stratum into other strata; thus, the growth of the working class came primarily from the peasantry. The majority of the increase in the non-manual stratum originated from the working class and the peasantry.
- Contrary to official ideology, Hungarian society was no more open than Western capitalist societies in terms of social mobility. Although the openness of society increased after 1945, no “socialist” pattern of mobility emerged. Social mobility was, in socialist Hungary, as unequal as in capitalist societies.
- The openness of society declined slightly in the 1970s and 1980s, as the inheritance of privileged and underprivileged social positions began to increase. The first analysis of social mobility data was the survey of 1992, which does not indicate important changes in the openness of society for that period. On one hand, the growth of small and medium self-employed artisans, merchants, and entrepreneurs opened a new channel of mobility. On the other hand, economic depression slowed down changes in the socioeconomic structure, which is the driving force of structural mobility.¹⁷

Since the transition period, one special aspect of social mobility — the change in the elite strata — has become a matter of immense public interest. It has often been claimed that the elite of the socialist period was not replaced by a new elite; consequently, there was no real change of regime in Hungary.

In order to analyze this problem, the elite must first be defined. As already mentioned, a relatively small power elite ruled Hungary during the socialist period. After the regime transition, the elite seemed to widen to include the most successful private entrepreneurs and the managers of large (partly foreign) private enterprises. In other words, an economic elite joined the cultural elite (i.e., the leading intellectuals) at the top of the pyramid. The elite also became less homogeneous, and

the political, economic, and cultural elite became more independent of one another than during the socialist period.

The top of the political elite (i.e., the members of government, the leaders of similar state administration institutions, and the leaders of the political parties) have been almost completely replaced (with the obvious exception of the Socialist Party leaders). The new political elite originated almost exclusively from the professional stratum, especially from the top scientific and literary intelligentsia. At the middle levels of state administration, i.e., among the undersecretaries and department heads in the ministries, many more people from the socialist state administration can be found who define themselves, as in Western democratic societies, as politically neutral administrators loyal to the given government.

The economic elite consists of two groups: (a) the managers of state-owned enterprises, who are often the same managers from the socialist period, and (b) the private entrepreneurs and managers of private enterprises, who come partly from the small private sector that developed during the socialist period and partly from the professional stratum. A large number of the former political elite of the socialist period entered this new economic elite by converting their expert knowledge and political connections into financial assets, following the pattern of the capitalist societies of "reconversion of different types of capital."¹⁸

The cultural elite—leading scientists, authors, artists, journalists, and media—remained almost unchanged after the transition. One reason is the fact that the cultural elite preserved at least some independence from the political elite throughout the socialist period. Another is that a long time is needed to acquire cultural capital, i.e., the knowledge and the skills needed to be members of the cultural elite.¹⁹

Thus, the replacement of the elite following the transition is proceeding in the usual way—through structural and institutional changes. It ought to be remembered that the communist power elite was unable to bring about a complete replacement of the Hungarian elite in the 1950s. Therefore, the commonly held belief that a change of regime has not taken place is not justified.

C. Income, Standard of Living, and Housing

Since 1945, the standard of living in Hungary has risen from a very low level. The index of per capita real income, using the 1950 standard as 100, reached 383 in 1989, according to the official statistical yearbooks. Other indicators confirm this improvement: the percentage of dwellings with piped water increased from 17 percent in 1949 to 83 percent in 1990, the number of personal cars per 100 households increased from 1 in 1960 to about 43 in 1991, and the number of television sets per 100 households increased from 3 in 1960 to approximately 118 in 1991.

Since the second half of the 1970s, however, the improvement in the standard of living slowed, then almost stagnated. The real wage index attained its highest value in 1978, then declined by 12 percent from 1978 to 1989. At the same time, the real per capita income slowly increased by 13 percent in 12 years. This increase can be explained by two factors: (a) the real value of total social benefits increased, primarily because of the increase in the number of pensioners, and (b) the supplementary income from the secondary economy increased dramatically.

It is not easy to estimate the contribution of income from the secondary economy to the general standard of living. According to the household income survey of 1987, 21 percent of household income originated from private and secondary economic activities. According to a survey in 1988, 81 percent of adult males and 70 percent of adult females participated in some income-supplementing activity. According to the time budget survey of 1986–87, the average daily time males age 15–69 spent in secondary economic activities was 132 minutes; that of females of the same age was 64 minutes. This time amounts to more than half of the average time spent in the main job in the “socialist sector.” One might conclude that growing participation in secondary activity was an important factor mitigating a decline in the standard of living.²⁰

After the transition, average income declined. The Gross Domestic Product in 1993 was 21 percent lower than in 1989; the index of per capita real income stood at 89 percent of the 1989 value; and the real wage index stood at 75 percent of the 1989 level. It ought to be added that in 1994, according to the preliminary data, the GDP had already increased by 2 percent.

Along with the decline in average real income, income inequalities increased from 1962 to 1987. It ought to be noted, however, that income distribution was far from equal during the socialist period and was more or less at the level of inequality of Western capitalist societies such as Finland.²¹ Nevertheless, income inequalities in 1993 were still not great. Simply put, income inequalities in Hungary during the 1970s and 1980s were similar to those of the Scandinavian countries, while in the 1990s they are at the level of those of the United Kingdom or France.²² The increase in income inequalities is both a consequence and a precondition of the transition to a market economy based on private property.

The decline in average income and the growth of inequality obviously resulted in growing poverty. Poverty is defined here in absolute terms as that part of the population having a per capita household income lower than the subsistence minimum. Subsistence minima have been calculated by the Central Statistical Office since 1982. The per capita monthly subsistence minimum was 1,990 forints in 1982 and 14,000 forints in December 1994.

In the 1980s approximately 10 percent of the population lived below the subsistence minimum. That level increased to 15 percent in 1991, to 20 percent in 1992, to 25 percent in 1993, and to about 32 percent in 1994. The risk of poverty is especially high among the less-educated, nonskilled workers and peasants; residents of small villages and of Eastern Hungary; the unemployed, including housewives and other dependents; and pensioners, including widows and the disabled. Among the poor, two groups should be mentioned in particular: children and Gypsies. All of the above groups (except the unemployed, since before 1990 there was essentially no open unemployment) were at risk of poverty before the regime change; however, their disadvantaged position increased not only in absolute terms, but also in a relative sense. It might be concluded that they all, but particularly the children and even more so the Gypsies, are the great losers in the transition.

D. Education

Education, cultural knowledge, and skills are increasingly considered the most important factors in the development of the economy and society in advanced countries. This is even more true for Hungary, as the country is relatively poor in natural resources and capital assets.

Before the Second World War, the educational level in Hungary was characterized by a relatively small minority having a very high education and the great majority being rather undereducated. After the war, under the socialist system, priority was given to the development of education: the eight-year primary education system was introduced (replacing six-year primary schooling), and secondary and tertiary (college) student numbers rapidly increased. This rapid growth was almost stopped in the 1970s. Plans to extend obligatory primary education to ten years were never implemented. The increase of secondary and tertiary education was limited by a strong *numerus clausus* system, by which the Ministry of Education strictly determined the number of students that each school was allowed to admit. This educational policy was ostensibly motivated by considerations of manpower planning, but in reality it was probably driven by the fear of unemployment of highly educated persons, which could result in intensive political unrest. The consequences are clearly visible in education by age groups. In the 1980s, enrollment in tertiary education and the percentage of persons having tertiary education in the younger adult age groups was among the lowest in advanced societies.

After the regime transition, the new government quickly changed this policy and encouraged higher enrollment in secondary and tertiary schools. At the same time, the popularity of technical schools declined, since a significant number of the young adults who studied in these schools could not find employment because of a low demand for their skills.

E. Health

Marxist-Leninist ideology claims that in socialism, "the human being is of the highest value." If this principle were truly implemented, the health of the population ought to have increased

significantly. The health of a population can be measured by indicators of mortality and life expectancy at birth and at age thirty. Life expectancy at birth and age thirty in Hungary increased for males and females until 1965, after which life expectancy for males began to decline, female life expectancy at birth continued to increase very slowly, and female life expectancy at age thirty declined slightly. The decline in life expectancy in a society undergoing economic and social development is an unprecedented phenomenon. It is all the more remarkable because a similar, although less significant, decline in mortality rates occurred in almost every European socialist country during the 1970s and 1980s. The life expectancy of males and females at birth in Hungary during the 1980s was among the lowest found in industrialized societies.²³

The reason for these patterns is well known. Improvement up to the mid-1960s was caused by the decline in mortality by infectious diseases, first among infants and children. After 1965, there was an increase in the number of deaths of adult men and women due to coronary disease, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide. In addition, cerebrovascular disease and lung cancer among men increased, and breast and colon cancer among women increased.²⁴ Mortality from these diseases had begun to increase in the 1950s, but the trend was obscured by the decline in mortality from infectious diseases (a decline that continued until the mid-1960s when there was no room for further improvement in infectious diseases). Thus, the root of the increase in mortality goes back to the 1950s, to the "classic," or fully totalitarian, period of socialism.

From a medical point of view, it might be assumed that a common factor of coronary disease and cerebrovascular disease is hypertension. It is usually assumed, but not proven by population surveys, that hypertension is very widespread in the Hungarian population.

In searching for the deeper causes of poor health issues, we should note that the deterioration in health was greatest in the 40–59 age group and that male mortality was much higher than female mortality. Social differences also affect mortality rates. Among men aged 50 to 59, the mortality of manual laborers is 50 percent higher than that of nonmanual workers, and the mortal-

ity of unskilled agricultural workers is twice as high as that of professionals.

Some of the deeper causes of the increase in mortality might be the following:²⁵

- Unhealthy eating habits (too much fat, too few fresh vegetables and fruit), causing hypertension and heart disease.
- Excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages, causing cirrhosis of the liver.
- Excessive smoking, causing lung cancer.
- Insufficient exercise, contributing to hypertension.

Last but not least, the malfunctioning health care system might be an important factor in the poor health status of the Hungarian population. The health care system is, in principle, free of charge, but patients are expected to give “gratitude money” to the medical personnel. Gratitude money is explicitly permitted by the law, as the salaries of health care and medical personnel are fixed at low levels in the expectation that they will gain extra income from the gratitude money. This practice is not satisfactory to either medical doctors or patients. The health care provided is slow, expensive, and inadequate.²⁶

F. Lifestyle, Culture, and Social Contacts

In the second half of the 1960s, when it became clear that the socialist countries would not be able to achieve the per capita GDP of the advanced capitalist countries, Soviet sociologists introduced, or rather reinvented, the idea of “lifestyle,” implying that although the socialist societies had a lower income level, their way of life was superior to that of capitalist societies. Superior lifestyle was demonstrated by the more intensive participation by people in socialist countries in high-level cultural activities and in voluntary social associations.

Hungarian sociologists used to study lifestyle by “time budget” surveys. Both the international time budget survey of the mid-1960s²⁷ and the Hungarian national time budget surveys of the mid-1970s²⁸ and mid-1980s²⁹ showed that the primary characteristic of Hungarian life was the very long time spent working. This was a consequence of (a) the relatively long workday;

(b) the widespread participation in the secondary economy, i.e., in income-supplementing work; and (c) the long hours spent doing household chores, especially by women. The total time spent in work activities did not diminish in the period from the 1970s to the end of the 1980s. Even though the statutory workday was shortened, most Hungarians used the remaining time to work longer hours in the second economy. In 1988, 79 percent of adult men and 70 percent of adult women participated in some form of secondary economy.³⁰ As the decline of the real wage index caused a decrease in the standard of living, Hungarians had to supplement their income in order to make ends meet.

One consequence of a long workday and the accompanying exhaustion was that there was little leisure time for cultural activities. What leisure time there was was increasingly spent watching television. The number of cultural products (i.e., books, periodicals, newspapers) stagnated. In spite of heavy government subsidization of the arts, attendance of cinema, theatre, concerts, and museums declined in the 1980s.

Social contacts outside of the workplace and immediate family were rare, partly because of lack of time, and partly because most social groups and community associations either disappeared or were oppressed by the state.³¹

After the transition, only slow and contradictory changes took place in the Hungarian lifestyle. Activities in the secondary economy went from being "tolerated" to being "encouraged" by the government, with the explicit hope that those activities would grow into the private sector of the first economy. This is, however, hindered by the obligation to pay taxes from the private sector incomes. On the other hand, the need for supplemental income is increasing as a consequence of the decline of income from primary employment. Rising unemployment in the primary economy contributed to increased participation in the secondary economy. Surveys done in 1992 and 1993 indicate that participation in the traditional secondary economy is very intensive: 55 percent of households had at least a small farm (similar to the "household plots" of the socialist period); 43 percent of adults surveyed worked on such farms; 44 percent participated in mutual help without cash payment between households; and 12 percent participated in paid casual work.

The majority of households gained a supplemental income (mostly in kind) from these secondary activities.³²

Currently, the market for cultural products and services is in turmoil as the subsidies from the state have diminished greatly and as financial resources for culture have had to come through public and private foundations by way of competitive applications. The number of voluntary associations is rapidly increasing, but some of them seem to be short-lived. Some are strongly influenced by political parties.

It could be argued that the very long hours spent working and the little time left for cultural activities, social contacts, and relaxation are important contributors to the stress of everyday life. These might be at the root of the deterioration of physiological and mental health in the Hungarian population.

G. Deviance, Anomie, and Alienation

In addition to the deterioration of health and lifestyle, the growth of some types of deviant behavior were the clearest indicators that something was going wrong in Hungarian society during the socialist period. The suicide rate increased continuously from 17.7 per 100,000 people in 1954 to 45.9 in 1984. The death rate by cirrhosis of the liver—used internationally to measure alcoholism—increased from 5 per 100,000 in 1950 to 51.8 in 1989. Surveys on the mental health of the population demonstrated that 34 percent of the adult population was neurotic and 24 percent showed medium-severe or very severe symptoms of depression.³³ Drug abuse was first noticed in the mid-1970s and seemed to spread, but no reliable information is available on the number of persons using or becoming dependent on drugs.³⁴ It is noteworthy that all of these deviant behaviors are more common among the lower strata of Hungarian society.

All of the above-mentioned deviant behaviors belong to the “retreatism” type of deviance as defined by Merton.³⁵ On the other hand, criminality was not especially high and did not begin to grow until the 1980s.

Astonishing and contradictory changes occurred in the rates of deviance at the time of the regime transition. The suicide rate began to decline in 1988. This was the year when the Party leadership changed, and it seemed probable that some important

changes in the system would follow. In 1993, the suicide rate was 35.9 per 1,000 people. The official statistical data on alcohol consumption showed a decline of about 8 to 9 percent, but the rate of mortality due to cirrhosis of the liver is continuing to increase and attained a level of 70.5 in 1992. Criminality strongly increased after 1990, but seems to have leveled off.

Whatever changes have taken place since 1990, the rates of deviance are very high in Hungary and are cause for serious concern. The suicide rate is the highest in the world, and the rate of alcoholism seems to be among the highest observed in the world.

Both Durkheim and Merton have suggested that anomie is at the root of deviance. Durkheim defined anomie as the weakening of the social norms of behavior, while Merton's definition is the impossibility of achieving socially accepted goals by socially permitted means. Studies also point to the importance of alienation in deviant behavior. Alienation can be characterized by feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and/or self-estrangement,³⁶ or as "the unresponsiveness of the world to the actor which subjects him to forces he neither comprehends, nor guides."³⁷

The Marxist-Leninist ideology of the socialist system was understandably strongly opposed to any study of anomie or alienation in Hungarian society. Questions concerning anomie and alienation were first asked in a survey in 1978.³⁸ Four of these questions were also included in a survey in the spring of 1990. The surveys showed that feelings of powerlessness (that it is not worthwhile to formulate life goals), meaninglessness, and normlessness (that one does not know what to believe in or how to live), and estrangement of the self (that personal life is senseless, the person is useless) were increasing dramatically and reached their peak at the end of the socialist period. If it is assumed that individuals in a modern society must set long-term goals, engage in purposeful action, have self-confidence, and follow accepted norms of behavior in order for an advanced market economy and political democracy to function smoothly, it might be concluded that the increase in anomie and alienation in Hungarian society was the greatest impediment to modernization. And if the collapse of the socialist system is seen as a consequence of the failure to fully modernize the Hungarian

economy and society, it might be concluded that the anomie and alienation crisis was the biggest cause of that collapse.

It also might be argued that the anomie and alienation crisis deepened under the totalitarian and (later) authoritarian character of the socialist system. On the one hand, the system strived to break down all traditional values and norms, but it was not able to replace them by its own allegedly socialist values and norms. On the other hand, oppression resulted in a general feeling of powerlessness and of being exposed to unpredictable, incomprehensible, and hostile powers.

Another argument is that the anomie and alienation crisis affects not only the frequency of deviance, but that it had and continues to have much more widespread influence on every aspect of the Hungarian economy, society, and political system. A highly anomic and alienated society is not able to operate an efficient modern market economy and a democratic political system. In other words, a highly anomic and alienated society is lacking the modern mentality needed for a modern economy and democratic political system, a civic culture, and the values and norms of modern societies.

Therefore, it might be concluded that the most burdensome heritage of the socialist system is not a poor economy or even an underdeveloped educational system and inadequate health care, but rather the lack of a civic culture, of a consensus of the values and norms needed for a market economy and political democracy.

As for future perspectives on modernization, we might agree with Ralf Dahrendorf³⁹ that although it was, indeed, possible to bring about a political transition to a multiparty democracy in a few months, we shall have to wait six years for the positive results of the market-oriented reforms to appear. However, it might take sixty years to develop a self-reliant civil society and civic culture.⁴⁰

Notes

1. Rudolf Andorka, Thomas Kolosi, and Gy. Vukovich, eds., *Social report* (Budapest: TÁRKI, 1992).
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and W. Zapf, *Modernisierung, Wohlfahrtsentwicklung und Transformation* (Berlin: Sigma, 1994).

3. János Kornai, *The Socialist system: The political economy of Communism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

4. Robert Erikson and John H. Goldthorpe, *The constant flux: A study of class mobility in industrial societies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

5. Rudolf Andorka, "Changes in social mobility in Hungary, 1930–1983" in M. Haller, ed., *Class Structure in Europe* (Armonk: Sharpe, 1990).

6. E. Tóth Sik and I. Gy, *Jelentés a Magyar Háztartás Panel I. hullámának eredményeiről* (Budapest: Budapesti Közgazdaságtudományi Egyetem Szociológiai Tanszék, TÁRKI, 1992) and *Egy év után. Jelentés a Magyar Háztartás Panel II. hullámának eredményeiről* (Budapest: Budapesti Közgazdaságtudományi Egyetem Szociológiai Tanszéke-TÁRKI, 1993).

7. Milovan Djilas, *The new class: an analysis of the communist system* (New York: Praeger, 1957).

8. Erik Olin Wright, *Classes* (London: Verso, 1985).

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