TITLE: Social Stratification in East Central Europe

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This report summarizes the findings of statistical analyses of class-like divisions in the societies of East-Central Europe. The analyses were based on large-scale stratification surveys conducted during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite the revolutionary political changes at the end of the 1980s, these divisions are likely to remain or intensify as fundamental aspects of social structure in these countries, and some findings illuminate post-revolutionary political events. With regard to both objective social distances between classes and class differences in subjective attitudes toward equality and social security, two divisions seem quite important: First, the division between the higher professionals and managers vis-a-vis the lower social groups; and second, the division in the working class between skilled workers vis-a-vis unskilled workers and peasants. Given the stresses of increasing inequality and social insecurity, political developments may be heavily influenced by the ways political organizations either succeed or fail in forming coalitions across these divisions.

The different social class-like divisions explored in this research may be characterized variously as divisions between "classes," "social strata," or "occupational status groups," depending on one's theoretical perspective and the groups involved. To simplify this summary of results, we refer to the divisions as "class" divisions.

The primary sources of data for this project involved micro-level data from large-scale social surveys conducted in Hungary, which offer unique opportunities to study objective

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1 This paper is the Executive Summary of a 125-page report with the same title available upon request from the National Council (202) 387-0168.
Micro-level data from Polish and Yugoslav surveys were also utilized to examine evidence of East European similarities and differences in both social distances and attitudes toward inequality. Additional tabular data for Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia were used for crossnational comparisons of social mobility. Crossnational comparisons between East European societies and societies outside Eastern Europe made use of micro-level data, specially produced tabulations, and published tables for such countries as the United States, Sweden, Austria, Canada, Finland, and others.

The analyses are divided into three related categories:
1) Measurements of objective "social distances" between classes, and the ways these distances vary across classes, kinds of social relationships, and countries; 2) Measurements of various aspects of social mobility, including trends and crossnational differences in mobility; 3) Analyses of cross-class and crossnational differences in attitudes toward inequality.

Social Distances Among Classes

Objective "social distances" among class-like groups were measured on the basis of the observed odds of intermarriage, social mobility, and friendships across classes. These distances show a high degree of isolation of intellectuals from the remainder of society, much as agricultural workers are isolated at the other end of the social spectrum. Despite contentions that social divisions between nonmanual and manual workers were largely eliminated by state socialist policies, these social distances show a clear gulf between lower nonmanual employees and workers. Objective social distances reveal equally important stratification within the working class, particularly between skilled and less skilled workers.

Crossnational comparisons showed that social distances for broad social groups were generally similar in Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia, and also broadly similar to such distances in the United States, Canada, Sweden, and Norway. The actual
probabilities of marriage, friendship, or mobility across classes were predominantly dependent upon the nature of the social relationship and upon differences across countries in class sizes.

Estimates of such probabilities were produced by log-linear and log-multiplicative models which take into account crossnational differences in class sizes, but assume universal patterns of association between similar classes. These models allow separating cross-national differences in social distances into components due to "structural" differences (differences in the sizes of classes) and "other-than-structural" differences (differences in "rigidity/fluidity," the tendency to associate/dissociate with persons of the same class, beyond that expected by chance. The greatest portion of the crossnational differences in social distances was attributable to "structural" differences.

Social Mobility Among Classes

Social mobility is the only dimension of social distance for which available data offer opportunities to study historical trends for the pre-WWII period through the end of the period of Party control. Among the East European states Hungary provides unique opportunities for studying the effects of socialist policies on historical changes in social mobility. A series of cross-sectional surveys of intergenerational social mobility (mobility between fathers' social positions and those of their children) shows substantial increases in mobility between 1930 and 1963, with smaller but continued increases through the late 1980s. However, our analyses show that a much better understanding of the relationship between Hungary's history and trends in mobility is provided by analyses which examine differences across specific birth cohorts, and how these cohorts changed over time. We also observe that the trends have been different depending on the specific forms of mobility.
The most important historical changes in Hungarian mobility involved the following: First, the wave of elimination of private businesses during 1945-1952, and the waves of agricultural collectivization during 1949-1953 and 1957-1960 produced temporal waves of forced class mobility. Second, the Stalinist industrialization drive, peaking during the early 1950s produced a large wave of increased "structural" mobility between agriculture and industry -- both across cohorts and time -- followed by decreases in mobility of this kind among cohorts entering the labor force during the late 1960s through the late 1980s. Third, the period of collectivization was accompanied by a significant increase in the fluidity between industrial and agricultural positions (even above that caused by the structural increases), and this relatively high fluidity continued through the 1980s. Finally, World War II, the policies of the coalition government of 1945-1948, and Stalinist decclassment and reverse class discrimination during 1949-1950s, greatly increased fluidity between the upper nonmanual stratum and the working class; however, such fluidity decreased somewhat following Kadar's more moderate policies of the 1960s-1980s.

We conclude that great increases in Hungarian social mobility occurred between 1930 and the early 1960s. Some aspects of mobility then decreased between the 1960s and 1980s. And, the continuous mobility increases observed in the series of data which aggregate together birth cohorts are due to the retirement and death of older birth cohorts who began their careers prior to World War II, when class boundaries were extreme in Hungarian society.

Were the historical trends in social mobility in other East European countries similar to those in Hungary? There is no evidence that the other countries of Eastern Europe were as rigid as Hungary during the 1930s, in as much as we lack pre-World War II national mobility surveys for countries other than Hungary. Furthermore, the losses of lives and emigration suffered by the pre-War inhabitants of Poland and Yugoslavia were too extensive
to permit accurate assessments of the pre-War population based on those who survived and remained.

The comparisons that can be made do not seem to show as great cross-cohort differences in social rigidity as are observed for Hungary. Nevertheless, cohort analyses of surveys conducted in eastern Europe during the late 1960s and early 1970s, show evidence of significant decreases in social rigidity between the prewar period and the 1960s; there is little or no consistent evidence of subsequent increases in rigidity in these countries. Our studies strongly suggest that the increases, followed by decreases, in the rate of industrialization in Eastern Europe were accompanied by cross-cohort increases and decreases in structural mobility.

Class Differences in Attitudes Toward Inequality

Surveys of attitudes toward wage inequalities, protection from unemployment, and guaranteed social security, showed public opinion in these societies to be more egalitarian than in Western Europe, and considerably more "socialist" than public opinion in the United States. Surveys conducted in Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia during 1987-1988 showed strong support for meritocratic wage differentials based on how hard people work, the authority of their position, and the education required for their job. At the same time, nearly 90% of the respondents in these surveys believed that the state had an obligation to provide a job for everyone; most persons thought the government ought to guarantee a basic minimum income; and there was considerable support for limits on maximum incomes. When asked to specify how great wage differentials should be, respondents advocated much smaller differences than actually exist, and smaller than those advocated by public opinion in Western Europe.

In Eastern Europe, there was little difference between lower nonmanual employees and skilled workers with regard to such attitudes; however, there were substantial differences between managers and professionals as opposed to lower nonmanual
employees, and an important division between skilled workers vis-a-vis unskilled workers and peasants. The lower the education of the respondents, the more egalitarian they tended to be. Yugoslavs showed substantial differences across republics, with Slovenia and Croatia least egalitarian, and with Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo being most so. Party membership made almost no difference for such attitudes, but religion did, with Muslims being most egalitarian. For the most part, those groups showing strongest support for "socialist" attitudes toward inequality in 1987-1988 -- the least skilled and educated, those in rural areas, and those in the southernmost Yugoslav republics -- were the same groups most likely to vote for socialist parties immediately after the East European revolutions.

In general, slightly more than forty years of state socialist policies in Eastern Europe did not result in societies with radically small social distances among classes. Only one class boundary, that between industrial manual workers and the peasantry, stood out as unusually narrow, mainly in those countries which had collectivized agriculture. This is not to say that class-related policies in these countries had no effect on social mobility and class boundaries. At least in Hungary, these policies seem to have played a role in making a historically very rigid society less so. State socialism may have made class boundaries in East-Central Europe more similar to class boundaries in the historically more open societies of Western Europe and the United States than they would have been otherwise. There remain substantial social boundaries -- between higher nonmanual employees and those below, between nonmanual and manual workers, and between skilled workers and less skilled workers -- which may have significant consequences in the future. For the most part, these boundaries have been associated with differences in attitudes toward the role of government in restraining inequality and maintaining a social safety net.
Implications

Originally intended to examine stratification in Eastern Europe and its implications for future trends and social strains under state socialism, it turned into an assessment of the nature and trajectory of stratification under socialism through its final period.

Obviously, the partial economic collapse of the economies of Eastern Europe, the dislocations of "shock therapies" or more moderate economic convulsions, increasing inequalities, and the dismissal of former officials from their positions render impossible any simple projection of earlier trends in social stratification. It will be years before we can adequately measure the magnitude of this historical disjuncture. Nevertheless, the events of the first two years following the revolutions suggest that the findings of this project are, and should continue to be, useful in understanding the post-state socialist era. In studying the changes in stratification under socialism, it is impressive that, even as radical as the political and social changes of the first years of communist party control were, the general societal patterns of social distances and mobility changed slowly. And, they changed more for new cohorts of persons entering their careers than for the older majority of the population. Similarly, while the economic circumstances of various groups and individuals are now going through tremendous changes, large changes in the basic social class divisions for most of the population will take considerable time. The biggest immediate changes will involve the elites rather than the middle and lower classes.

The magnitude of the division within the working class between skilled workers and less skilled workers appears very important. In some ways, unskilled workers are as close or closer to agricultural workers than to skilled workers in terms of social distances; and, unskilled workers and agricultural workers were very close indeed in terms of their attitudes toward inequality. This division appears to be quite relevant to the
political and electoral struggles following the end of communist party hegemony.

Since democratization, reformed "democratic socialist" successors to the former communist parties have competed with nonsocialist parties throughout Eastern Europe. In nearly all instances, it has been unskilled workers, cooperative peasants, and agricultural laborers who have been most likely to support such socialist parties. And, the countries where such parties have had the greatest strength and occasional success have been those countries with the largest proportions of their populations belonging to the groups of unskilled workers and agricultural workers: Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, and Bulgaria. In other countries, such as Slovakia, Romania, and perhaps Croatia, unskilled workers and agricultural workers have apparently been most likely to support those "nonsocialist," more or less nationalist, parties which include among their leaders significant numbers of former communists.

A first implication is that it seems that the electoral prospects of parties of the left might have been hurt and may continue to be hurt by the size of the social divide within the working class between skilled workers on one side and unskilled workers and agricultural laborers on the other. If the hardships accompanying the economic collapse of the former CMEA system and the transitions to market economies fall most heavily on the less skilled workers and those in agriculture, demands that the state protect such workers will carry most weight when they are supported by the entire working class. To the extent that skilled workers are socially distant from less skilled workers and agricultural laborers, they will be less likely to support those policies and parties that would appear to protect them. One of the most interesting aspects of the first stage of democratic development in Eastern Europe has been the failure of noncommunist social democratic parties. One explanation of this outcome is the near total discrediting of any party labeled "socialist." Another is the substantial social divide within
A second important finding is the magnitude of the social distance between intellectuals and the other classes in society. Unquestionably, the first stage of democratization in Eastern Europe was accompanied by the intellectuals' rise to power. However, since the initial revolutionary stage, the parties of the intellectual opposition have often splintered and lost popular support. Until 1989, the greatest division in these societies was between "them" (the elite and privileged Soviet collaborators of the nomenclatura) and "us" (everybody else). In this context, the opposition intellectuals were seen as the representatives of each nation, the pride of nationalists of all classes, even if these intellectuals were considerably more cosmopolitan in their attitudes than most of the population. With the end of the leading role of the communist party nomenclatura, the conventional division between "us" and "them" could easily shift to isolate the intelligentsia from the interests of the working class and the rest of society, since the intelligentsia was indeed separated from the rest of society by a substantial objective social distance. While the intelligentsia might be saints of resistance during the period of occupation, after the revolution they could be seen by the rest of society as privileged and out-of-touch — those who talk, but can't do. The pattern of substantial objective distance we have observed between the intellectuals and the rest of society is part of the explanation of the popular political appeal of emigre entrepreneurs or popular nationalists. The structure of social interaction determines that the members of the working class are closer to industrial managers and entrepreneurs than to members of the historical intelligentsia.

A third important finding is that the division between nonmanual employees and manual workers remained throughout the period of state socialism. In terms of attitudes toward egalitarian redistribution, there was not much difference between
the lower white collar stratum and the skilled workers at the end of the 1980s; however, the objective pattern of distances through marriage, friendship, mobility, and so on revealed that this distinction remained a significant dividing line between social groups. This social division is a potential source of political division between nonmanual employees and manual workers. It is unlikely to be such a political division while the requirements for making industry more efficient require laying off nonmanual employees at the same rates as manual workers. However, if the impact of "shock therapies," privatization, and enterprise failures fall with different weight upon nonmanual and manual workers the social distance dividing these groups can be expected to contribute to the development of political division.

Finally, our analyses of attitudes toward inequality in Yugoslavia demonstrated significant effects of region, nationality, and religion, above and beyond those of class or education. Forces of regional and ethnic division have assumed terrible prominence in the current history of Eastern Europe. These divisions have been partly influenced by the different class structures of the different groups and regions, and their different orientations toward the governments responsibility to limit inequalities and maintain a social safety net. We are reminded that, as class structures can bear on divisions among regions, ethnic groups, and religious groups, so too can regional, ethnic, and religious divisions bear on those economic policies with consequences for issues of class.