Everyday Life under Late Socialism

Student Packets

I. Workers
II. Youth
III. Women

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Everyday Life under Late Socialism

Student Packets

I. Workers

The Communist Experience in the Twentieth Century

A Global History through Sources

GLENNYS YOUNG

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history

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To the memory of
Reggie Zelnik (1936–2004),
and for Elaine Zelnik

PHOTO ESSAY

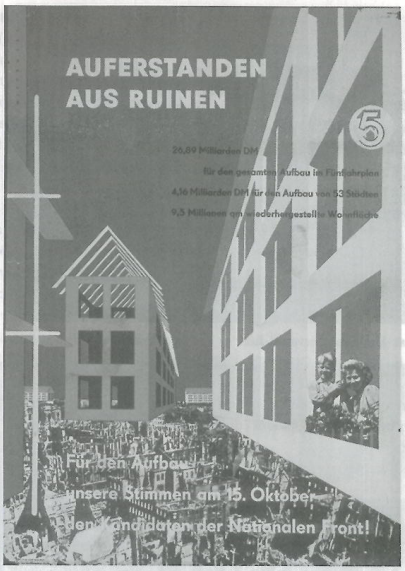
Everyday Life and Everyday Things Under Socialism, 1945–1989, and Beyond

Nationalizing a Factory Taken in 1949 in early postwar Romania, this photo depicts a worker who is covering up the former owner's name of the newly nationalized Tricorache factory.

The establishment of communist regimes in early post-war Eastern Europe brought the creation of the foundations of a socialist economy. By design anti-capitalist, socialist states did away with private property and privately-held corporations. They also developed the bureaucracies and institutional infrastructure needed by a state that differed from capitalist states—including post-World War II welfare states—in fundamental ways. In socialist countries, the state was the origin of all mass-produced goods, including those for consumers. It also owned all retail establishments, and was the employer of all involved in the production process—of both industrial and consumer goods.

Socialist states also presumed to dictate the price, style, and display of goods. State-owned stores, it should be noted, developed their own forms of advertising and ways of displaying products, as is apparent below in the images on page 301. Ultimately, socialist states did not manage to control all aspects of consumer consumption, and "black" or "grey" markets emerged.

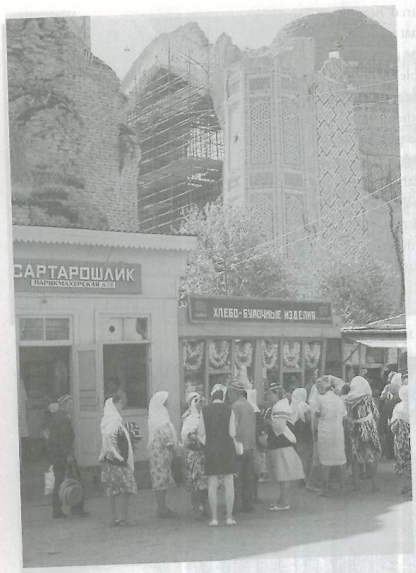
Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.



Rebuilding from War Depicted in this East German election poster of 1950 is the socialist built environment of the future. This was an urban landscape in which a specifically socialist modernist style would dominate from the 1960s onwards. This occurred throughout the Soviet bloc, as well as in other socialist societies, such as Communist China. The poster depicts images of large, modern buildings superimposed over the photo of a city destroyed by war. It is an indication of how the East German state tied its legitimacy to recovery from the ravages of World War II. By emphasizing the slogan "Risen Out of the Ruins" ("*Auferstanden aus Ruinen*"), the election poster sought to convince voters that candidates of the National Front (an alliance of East Germany's political parties, in turn under the control of the Socialist Unity Party or SED) were uniquely capable of helping East Germany rise, like a phoenix, out of the postwar ashes. The slogan at the bottom of the image says: "For reconstruction, vote for the candidates of the National Front on 15 October."

A major shift occurred in the USSR and the socialist states of Eastern Europe after Stalin died. The post-Stalinist "thaw' coincided, as the introduction to chapter 8 emphasizes, with a period of dynamic growth in Western capitalism. One component of this was a new kind of consumer culture in which household appliances and electronics were an important element. Socialist states staked their own legitimacy on the quality of life that they could provide for their citizens, a trend that intensified over the decades of the Cold War (ca. 1945-1985). In the immediate post-World War II period, socialist states accorded their citizens the "right" to employment, housing, education, and medical care. But by the 1950s, and increasingly in the 1960s and beyond, socialist states sought to provide their citizens with the kinds of mass-produced consumer goods that Western, capitalist economies provided. Consumer goods, including household products, furniture, television sets, electronics, and the like, were "presented as signs of state munificence and caring for its subjects." (Quotes from Krisztina Fehérváry, "Goods and States: The Political Logic of State-Socialist Material Culture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51, no. 2 (2009): 431, on which this photoessay draws.)

Artist: Wittkugel. Published in Berlin. Issuing agent: Amt für Information. Courtesy of the Poster Collection, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University.



Standing in Line, Uzbekistan Taken in 1970, this photo evokes what it was like to be a shopper in socialist states. Here, people are standing in line in front of a street kiosk selling bread and other baked goods. The socialist shopper, unlike her capitalist counterpart, was not, according to the state's intention, to be subjected to advertising for unneeded products. In contrast to the deception and manipulation of capitalist advertising and display of products, socialist consumer culture was to be based on "transparency and truth." (Féhérvary, "Goods and States," 440.)

One example of such "transparency" was the standardization of the names of retail establishments, including those providing services. With few exceptions, the only differentiating element in the name of a retail establishment was its number. The smaller letters on the sign on the larger kiosk on the left say, "Hair Salon No. 36" in Russian underneath the larger Uzbek word, *sartaroshlik*, which also means barberhop or hairdresser. For some types of establishments, there was no differentiation whatsoever. The name given to the retail kiosk pictured here on the right—"Baked Goods"—would have been found everywhere throughout the USSR.

Photo by Peter H. Newman. Used by permission.

Buying Meat This photo was taken on 7 December 1991, not long before Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev resigned on Christmas Day, 1991, and the Soviet Union's formal demise came on 31 December of that year. The transition from a socialist to a capitalist economy made food scarce. In fact, the day before the photo was taken, Gorbachev had pleaded with leaders of Soviet republics to send food to Moscow. Here, Soviets are buying meat shipped from Germany. In general, shopping in socialist societies was a challenging and frustrating experience, even in the 1960s and 1970s, when socialist societies sought to provide more consumer goods to compete with Western capitalism. It was often the case that sales clerks were rude and deliberately unhelpful, often lording their power over the customers. In a symbolic display thereof, they were sometimes seated on a raised platform above the store floor. To be a consumer of everyday goods, then, meant experiencing one's vulnerability vis-à-vis the clerk.

Photo by Pavel Romanov. Used by permission.

Consuming Nostalgia Pictured here is a fascimile of athletic shoes made and worn by people in East Germany. These shoes are being produced for consumers who want to purchase—perhaps out of nostalgia—the kinds of goods made under socialism.

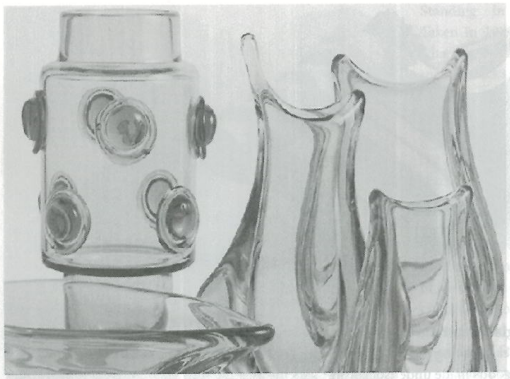
Despite the presumption that these facsimiles have fewer flaws than the shoes made in East Germany, consumers of socialist goods were often disappointed. The goods often fell short in the functions that they were supposed to perform, their durability, and basic design. In contrast, higher quality goods were available to Party elites or others having privileged status. Or, they were sold in Western capitalist economies.

Photo courtesy of ZEHA Berlin AG.

Manufacturing Toys East Germany was known for manufacturing high quality toys, such as the dolls pictured here. Produced around 1973, these "Sonni-Dolls" are made of porcelain and other materials. They exemplify that even as socialist shoppers often bought certain products that did not work or quickly fell apart, some socialist economies produced consumer goods of high quality and even exquisite design.

In fact, the favorable reputation of certain goods was known across the Eastern bloc. Toys made in East Germany, for example, were displayed in center city Budapest in the East German Cultural Center. (Fehérváry, "/Goods and States," 445.)

Photo by Klaus Morgenstern. Courtesy of akg/ddrbildarchive.de.



Designing Glassware Pictured here is another example of a high-quality consumer good produced in a socialist economy: glassware made in Czechoslovakia. In fact, Czechoslovakia, along with Italy and Scandinavia, comprised the "big three" of post–World War II glass design. All three countries were building on the strengths of the pre-war industry in glass design. Devastated by World War II, the Czechoslovak glass industry was rebuilt by the socialist state, which created its own educational system for training glass designers. While some of the more exquisite glass designs were exported to Western countries (bearing only the marking "Bohemian Glass"), everyday items such as plates, glasses, and cups were sold in state stores in Czechoslovakia and other Soviet bloc countries in Eastern Europe.

Hungarians would travel to Czechoslovakia to buy lingerie, linens, and glassware of higher quality than they could purchase at home. Travel in the socialist bloc was often about shopping!

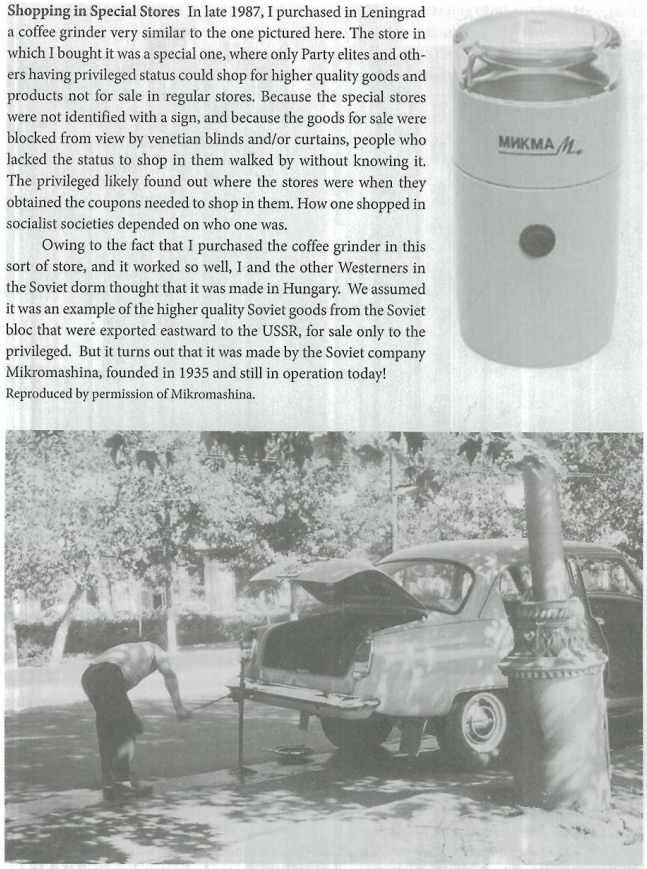
Photograph by Carolyn Barber.

Vending, Socialist Style Depicted here is a Soviet-era vending machine that was still in use in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in 2005. Similar machines had been in use in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Among the ways in which this vending machine differed from those that dotted the capitalist West at the same time was that consumers were to drink the beverage (not Coke) from a common cup. The design of the vending machine privileged standardization of the consumption experience—perhaps down to the germs that one ingested in the drink!

Shopping in Special Stores In late 1987, I purchased in Leningrad a coffee grinder very similar to the one pictured here. The store in which I bought it was a special one, where only Party elites and others having privileged status could shop for higher quality goods and products not for sale in regular stores. Because the special stores were not identified with a sign, and because the goods for sale were blocked from view by venetian blinds and/or curtains, people who lacked the status to shop in them walked by without knowing it. The privileged likely found out where the stores were when they obtained the coupons needed to shop in them. How one shopped in socialist societies depended on who one was.

Owing to the fact that I purchased the coffee grinder in this sort of store, and it worked so well, I and the other Westerners in the Soviet dorm thought that it was made in Hungary. We assumed it was an example of the higher quality Soviet goods from the Soviet bloc that were exported eastward to the USSR, for sale only to the privileged. But it turns out that it was made by the Soviet company Mikromashina, founded in 1935 and still in operation today!

Reproduced by permission of Mikromashina.



Repairing a Car Pictured here is a Volga sedan, model GAZ-M-21, in Leningrad in 1970. (The license plate, however, identifies the car as having been registered in the Tula region, or a little over a hundred miles south of Moscow.) Another way in which Party elites and others having privileged status in socialist societies differentiated themselves was by having a car. Ordinary people did own cars in the USSR and in other Soviet bloc countries, but in general it was the privileged who owned Volga sedans. The one pictured is likely an official car driven by a chauffeur, which was the case with most Volgas. People with lower status had, if they were lucky, a Lada. Non Party-elites in East Germany owned, if they were able to obtain one, Trabants or Wartburgs. And analogues existed throughout socialist societies around the world. (I am grateful to Lewis H. Siegelbaum for identifying the car and providing information about it.)

Photo by Peter H. Newman. Used by permission.

Living in Socialist Apartments Pictured here are two apartment buildings in Petržalka, a mass housing project built in the 1970s in Bratislava. Comprised of hundreds of blocks, this housing district was built south of the Danube River. The building on the left was recently renovated to meet the standards of the European Union, while the one on the right was not.

In the 1960s and 70s, socialist states around the world built mass housing in the form of high-rises often clustered on the outskirts of cities. The style was "socialist modern," and one of the purposes of such housing was to make socialist citizens modern. Standardization of such housing was, of course, a key feature. (It should be kept in mind that such standardized, mass housing was by no means unique to socialism.)

What was it like to live in this kind of housing? Although touted as an example of an alternative socialist "modernity," the experience had its downsides. Apartments were often small and construction was not of high quality. But perhaps most frustrating was the fact that the design and construction materials went against what people needed to make the apartments their home. The cement walls in many such buildings meant that it was impossible to hang a picture without a power drill, a tool that was often hard to come by.

There is also evidence that people living in such housing did not appreciate the "gift" that the state was giving them. Rather, they viewed such shoddy and uniform construction as an example of the socialist state's lack of care for its citizens, and of its "'intolerance for human diversity.'" (Fehérváry, "Goods and States," 447.) Put more directly, the people who lived in these housing complexes found them not to be examples of socialist collectivism and efficiency, but of socialist anomie and shoddiness. There is evidence to suggest that residents found them to be "authoritarian, dehumanizing, and atomizing." (ibid.)

Photo by Graeme Stewart. Used by permission.

Drying Clothes, Cuba Here, clotheslines adorn a Havana street in the 1960s. Even though socialist states wanted their citizens to live in homogenized spaces, people found ways to use space creatively, thereby differentiating their living environments from what the state intended.

Courtesy of the University of Miami Library, Cuban Heritage Collection.

"Carrying" Fruit and Produce Taken in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in 1970, this photograph shows a woman using her "headgear" in a very creative way. For many socialist citizens around the globe, the body was also a space to be personalized, despite state-imposed socialist styles and the lack of product diversity with which one could create distinction from others.

Photo by Peter H. Newman. Used by permission.

Smoking "Western" Cigarettes Western goods, such as the Kent cigarette the man is holding in his hand in this photograph taken in Samarkand in 1970, were denounced by socialist states as decadent and corrupting. Yet, from the 1960s onwards, and with increasing frequency in the 1970s and 1980s, socialist citizens had increasing exposure to foreign goods. Though hard to come by, goods that could be purchased on the black market included such Western consumer products as blue jeans, cassette tapes, and electronics. In some cases, socialist citizens obtained Western goods by having contact with foreigners (such as foreign scholars, including myself, who provided gifts). In fact, the photographer's mother gave the man the Kent cigarettes as he shared his mid-morning treat of vodka and tomatoes.

As the underground market for foreign products attests, socialist citizens prized such goods, in part for their qualities, such as brightness and elegance of design. Another reason that people living in socialist societies craved Western goods was because they came to signify a "Western" style of life. This was a life to which they ascribed all kinds of imagined qualities—not just "freedom," but celebration of diversity and constant affirmation of human dignity. For this reason, they used Western goods, including castaway objects, such as empty Coke cans or plastic department store bags, to decorate their apartments.

Photo by Peter H. Newman. Used by permission.

Wearing Soviet Internationalism Taken in Leningrad in 1970, this photograph features a small but important detail: the peace sign adorning the uniform (for Aeroflot, the Soviet, and now Russian, airline) that this guide for foreign tourists was wearing. This symbol, which in the 1960s expressed opposition to the US government, or at least participation in the anti-Vietnamese war movement, was valorized in official socialist material culture because it fit with the Soviet regime's projected stance of pacifist internationalism.

Photo by Peter H. Newman. Used by permission.

CHAPTER 9

Search for the Self and the Fall of Communism

The year 1989 was one of dramatic events that shook the world. Before January was even half over, the Communist authorities in Hungary had permitted the formation of political parties and trade unions. In March, the first competitive elections in the USSR were held for the newly reestablished Congress of People's Deputies: multiple candidates vied for each seat, and they represented political views beyond that of the Communist Party. But early in June hope for political liberalization in China was squashed when the Chinese Communists cracked down on student protests on Tiananmen Square and in other cities. Just a day or two later, in Poland, following "Round Table" talks during February through April between the government, Solidarity, and other opposition groups, elections resulted in an overwhelming victory for Solidarity, which had been banned since 1982. And several months later, in September, the first independent political organizations on a nationwide scale appeared in East Germany. On 9 November, the Berlin Wall, the icon of the Cold War, came tumbling down. Later that month, on 19 November, Civic Forum, the Czech analogue to East Germany's New Forum and other independent political organizations, emerged in Prague, Czechoslovakia. On 25 December Romania's Communist dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu, and his wife, Elena, were executed following a precipitous implosion of the Communist system. By the end of the year, the Communist Parties of Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany had given up their monopolies on power and agreed to multi-party elections. Three months into 1990, the Communist Party of the USSR, the world's first socialist state, renounced its own monopoly on power. And these are but some of the political, social, and cultural milestones of 1989.

There is no shortage of interpretations of what transpired in the momentous year of 1989. Everybody, it seems, has a version of what happened, and why, not just in that year itself, but during what the year has come to stand for, namely the

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From Lenin to Gorbachev

Edited, with introduction, notes, and original translations by

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governments that have signed the Final Act. It is the intention of the "group" to request that, in special cases, these countries form an international commission to investigate these matters. In addition, the "group" will rely on the pressure of Western public opinion on the Soviet government, and does not—in the words of Orlov—"seek support among the people."

Antisocial elements are calling on the heads of states participating in the Helsinki Conference to create in their countries unofficial monitoring groups, which could subsequently be unified into an international committee. . . .

The Committee for State Security is taking measures to compromise and put an end to the "group's" hostile activities.

Soviet Consumerism

While living standards for the Soviet population had been improving gradually since the privations of the 1930's and the Second World War, a major advance was promised with the adoption of the Ninth Five Year Plan in 1971. In part this was a response to sporadic protests among Soviet workers.

. . . In the new five-year period, our people's material well-being will increase first of all as a result of increases in the wages and salaries of workers and office employees and in the incomes of collective farmers in step with growing labor productivity and the improved skills of personnel. This will provide the bulk of the increment in the population's incomes.

The program for raising the people's living standard envisages the implementation of a number of large-scale measures.

The C.P.S.U. Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers, with the participation of the Central Council of Trade Unions, after weighing our possibilities, have determined the sequence and schedule for implementing the planned program.

In accordance with this program, the minimum wage will be raised to 70 rubles a month in 1971, and at the same time the basic wage and salary rates of workers and office employees in the middle pay categories of railroad transport will be increased. The basic rates for machine operators in agriculture will be increased during the same year.

As of July 1, 1971, it is planned to raise the minimum size of the pension for collective farmers and to extend to them the procedure for fixing pensions that has been established for workers and office employees.

At the same time, i.e., as of July 1, 1971, the minimum size of the old-age pension for workers and office employees will be increased. . . .

A high growth rate in the population's cash incomes is to be ensured by an increase in the production of consumer goods and by the growth of trade turnover.The draft Directives envisage that with a growth of 40% in the population's cash incomes, sales of goods to the population will increase by 42% and the volume of paid services will increase by 47%.

FROM: Alexei N. Kosygin, "Report on the Directives of the 24th CPSU Congress for the Five-Year Plan for the Development of the USSR National Economy in 1971–1975," April 6, 1971 English translation in *Current Soviet Policies*, VI, 1973, pp. 131–33).

In the new five-year plan, market supplies of such products as meat, fish, vegetable oil, eggs and vegetables will increase by 40% to 60%. The sale of clothing will increase by 35%, that of knitwear by 56%, and that of cultural and everyday goods by 80%. The rate at which the population is supplied with refrigerators will increase from 32 per 100 families in 1970 to 64 in 1975; for television sets, the corresponding figures will be 51 and 72, and for washing machines they will be 52 and 72. By the end of the five-year plan, the sale of automobiles to the population will have increased more than sixfold in comparison to 1970.

Given the volume of the increased production and sale to the population of consumer goods, it is necessary constantly to expand and improve their assortment. The task is not only to cover customer demand in terms of quantity; the most important thing is the kind of goods the customer finds in the stores and how well they satisfy him in terms of their diversity and quality. This increases the demands on industry and trade, which must respond efficiently to all changes in demand.

It is time to intensify the responsibility of trade organizations for the correct determination of the orders they file with industry and for making goods available to the consumer in good time. For its part, industry must influence the population's demand by producing new and improved goods.

The turnover of public catering will increase by 50% during the five-year period. We must continue expanding the network of dining rooms, restaurants, and cafés, especially on construction sites, at enterprises and in educational institutions. The most important thing in the development of public catering is improving its quality and service standards.

As the draft Directives state, the stability of state retail prices will be ensured in the new five-year plan. As commodity resources accumulate, prices will be lowered on certain types of goods.

In the next few years, the production and sale of ready-to-cook products, precooked items, concentrates and other items that make the home preparation of food easier should be developed on a broad scale. We must substantially increase the production of packaged goods and develop the practice of advance orders, mail trade and other progressive trade forms.

Provision has been made for at least doubling the volume of *everyday services* to the population. To this end, we shall have to expand the network of workshops, tailoring shops, dry-cleaning plants, laundries and other everyday-service enterprises. In today's conditions, everyday services should be developed as a large-scale mechanized branch.

In connection with the growth in incomes, the cultural needs of broad strata of the population are rising and new requirements are appearing. For example, tourism is becoming more and more important. We must expand and strengthen its material base and build more hotels, campsites and other service facilities for tourists.

The draft Directives stipulate that housing with a total space of 565,000,000 to 575,000,000 square meters will be built in 1971–1975. *Housing construction* will to an increasing extent be carried out according to new designs that provide for more convenient layouts and better equipment and finishing in apartments.

We should develop housing-construction cooperatives and assist individual housing construction in cities and in rural areas.

It is necessary to devote great attention to improving communal services and the

provision of communities with public services and amenities. The overwhelming majority of cities and large urban-type settlements will be provided with centralized water supply. The consumption of electric power for the population's everyday needs will increase. During the next five years, it is planned to provide 17,000,000 to 18,000,000 apartments with gas service. The level to which housing in cities is supplied with gas service will come to 65% to 75%, and in rural areas it will be 40% to 50%.

In the years of the first five-year plans, we put universal primary education into effect. In the new five-year plan, we shall *complete the introduction of universal secondary education.* The accomplishment of this task is of enormous political and social importance. The implementation of universal secondary education will give everyone broad possibilities for choosing an occupation that suits him, to employ his capabilities to the best advantage for the welfare of all society.

The Scientific-Technical Revolution

With much fanfare the Brezhnev-Kosygin leadership endorsed a "scientific-technical revolution" to improve the education of the populace and the performance of the economy as well as the readiness of the armed forces.

. . . In implementing the chief tasks of the five-year plan, it is necessary:

to ensure an improvement in the proportions of social production and high growth rates in agriculture and in the branches producing consumer goods; and significantly to increase the efficiency of all branches of the national economy. During the five-year period, to increase the country's national income by 34% to 40%, with 80% to 85% of the increment coming from increased labor productivity;

to accelerate the rates of scientific and technical progress through the all-round development of research in the most promising fields of science and the shortening of time periods for the introduction of the results of scientific research in production, to carry out the replacement of manual labor by machines on a broad scale, and to ensure the improvement of the branch and intrabranch structure of the national economy;

consistently to raise the level of the education and skills of the working people, to complete the changeover to the universal secondary education of young people, to carry out the necessary measures for the training of highly skilled specialists and workers and the retraining of cadres in connection with the introduction of new machinery and improvements in the organization of production;

to continue work on the improvement of management, planning and economic incentives to production in accordance with the requirements of the present stage of communist construction; to apply the latest techniques in management. To enlist the working people in the management of the economy on a broader scale;

to introduce the scientific organization of labor in every way, and to improve the forms and systems of pay and material and moral incentives to workers.

Proceeding from the basic tasks of the new five-year plan:

FROM: "Directives of the 24th Congress of the CPSU on the Five-Year Plan of Development of the National Economy of the USSR for the Years 1971–1975," April 9, 1971 (English translation in *Current Soviet Policies*, VI, 1973, pp. 151–53).

1. To carry out a broad program of social measures in the field of increasing the population's income. To increase real income per capita by approximately 30%, bearing in mind that pay must continue to be the main source for an increase in the population's income. To provide for a further increase in minimum earnings. . . .

2. To accelerate the rates of scientific and technical progress and to ensure the implementation of a unified technical policy:

to make broader use of the possibilities created by the scientific and technological revolution for accelerating the development of productive forces;

to create and introduce fundamentally new implements of labor and material and technological processes that are superior in their technical and economic indices to the best domestic and world achievements;

to improve in every way the quality of output in all branches of the national economy;

more rapidly to raise the technical level of the inventory of technological equipment, and also to accelerate the replacement and modernization of obsolescent machinery and aggregates, providing for the necessary development of the requisite branches of machine building. To work out and gradually to introduce new and shorter time periods for the depreciation of production equipment, limiting the volume of ineffective capital repairs and increasing the share of depreciation allowances allocated for the replacement of worn-out obsolescent equipment;

to ensure a reduction in the materials-intensiveness of production through *the perfection of the branch structure of industry, improvements in the design of machinery, apparatus, instruments and other items, the application of progressive technology, a rise* in the qualitative characteristics of the intitial raw materials and other materials and their fuller and more integrated utilization, and also the development of finishing production lines in the branches of the processing industry. . . .

To provide for . . . the broad introduction of the scientific organization of labor, production and management, using up-to-date means of organizational and computer technology. To master the series production of highly productive means of computer technology, small computers and information-transmitting devices. To carry out the series production of electronic computers in complete sets with all the necessary devices for information input and output and sets of standard programs.

To raise the scientific and technical level of standards and their role in improving output quality. To carry out the updating of existing standards and technical specifications, ensuring the replacement of obsolete indices and the timely reflection of the requirements of the national economy that guarantee the high technical level and quality of output. . . .

To improve scientific and technical information and to ensure the systematic transmittal to the interested branches and enterprises of data on scientific and technical achievements and advanced experience in the fields of machinery, technology and the organization of production and management.

Broadly to develop the creative initiative of the working people in the technical improvement of production and to facilitate in every way the improvement of rationalization and invention work. To enhance the role of engineers and technicians as organizers and champions of scientific and technical progress in production.

3. To develop in every way basic and applied research and more rapidly to introduce the results of research in the national economy.

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To the memory of
Reggie Zelnik (1936–2004),
and for Elaine Zelnik

9. Steven Pfaff, *Exit-Voice Dynamics and the Collapse of East Germany: The Crisis of Leninism and the Revolution of 1989* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 88.
10. Quoted in ibid., 95.
11. After the Peace Prayer, people gathered outside of St. Nikolai in the small square located in Leipzig's compact city center. They held up a banner that read "For an Open Land with Free People" ("*Für ein offenes Land mit freien Menschen*").
12. These were by no means the first critiques of East German state violence in oppositionist circles. In the summer of 1989, the *Environmental Newsletter* (*Umweltsblätter*) of East Berlin's Zion Church had drawn upon Gorbachev's "New Thinking" to condemn the regime's violence as "'bloodily and permanently betraying socialist goals.'" Quoted in Pfaff, *Exit-Voice Dynamics*, 99.
13. A figure of eight thousand people is given elsewhere. See, for example, Dirk Philipsen, *We Were the People: Voices From East Germany's Revolutionary Autumn of 1989* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 394.
14. This summary is drawn from Pfaff, *Exit-Voice Dynamics*, 104–105. Quotes at 104.
15. This is the figure given in Jörg Schönbohm, *Two Armies and One Fatherland: The End of the Nationale Volksarmee*, trans. Peter Johnson (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996), 13. On the demonstrators' political goals, see Philipsen, *We Were the People*, 394, and Schönbohm, *Two Armies*, 13.
16. I am grateful to Sabine Lang, Dorothea Trottenberg, Helma Young, and, especially, Wolfram Latsch for consulting with me about the nuances of this translation. The German text begins with the following note by the editors of the volume in which it originally appeared: "This reconstruction of the Peace Prayer on 25 September 1989, which was held by the Working Group of Human Rights under the responsibility of Pastor Wonneberg, was based on the manuscript and a tape recording." For details, see *Freunde und Feinde,: Friedensgebete in Leipzig zwischen 1981 und dem 9. Oktober 1989. Documentation* (Leipzig, 1994), 417 n. 646.

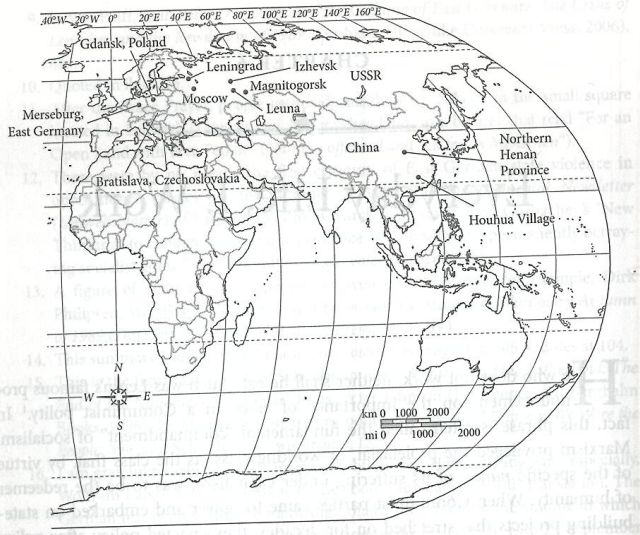
CHAPTER 6

Everyday Life, I: Work

"He who does not work, neither shall he eat." Such was Lenin's famous pronouncement on the importance of labor in a Communist polity.[1] In fact, this phrase is often called the fundamental "commandment" of socialism. Marxism privileged the proletariat, or working class, as the class that, by virtue of the specific *nature* of its suffering under capitalism, was to be the redeemer of humanity. When Communist parties came to power and embarked on state-building projects that stretched on for decades, they enacted policy after policy that sustained the importance of worker identity in membership in the Communist party, in securing educational opportunities, and in the allocation of other scarce resources such as pay, housing, and vacations. As we saw in chapter 4, individuals in Communist polities learned how to play the identity game, that is, how to invoke the poetics of self-representation to show that, no matter one's class origins, one was really, truly, now a "worker" and had attained working-class consciousness.

Yet the kinds of labor that Communist polities valorized, and the ways in which they delivered messages about the importance of labor, varied greatly across time and space. In general, as Communist polities proliferated around the world, they proved to be increasingly flexible on the issue of who was a "worker." While Lenin had already assigned poor peasants to the proletariat prior to the Bolshevik Revolution, Mao and other Chinese Communists made peasants the center of the "proletarian" revolution. Soviet political posters of the late Stalin era and beyond moved beyond the iconic heroism of industrial laborers and collective farm workers in the political posters of the 1930s to praising "heroes of labor" in white-collar, even technocratic, positions.[2] The same shift can be seen in political posters in other Communist polities.[3]

Not only was there significant change in who could be "labor heroes" on the socialist front. Beyond a shift in the message, there was also transformation in the *medium*, or *media*, through which it was delivered. The technological revolutions of the post–World War II period—the emergence of television, home music entertainment systems, the expansion of radio, and so on—seeped into Communist



Locator Map for Chapter 6

polities. The new media provided additional ways to transmit changing messages about the valorization of labor to the population. To the extent that the state could not control access to unofficial sources, people in Communist polities were able to view and hear nonsocialist messages about labor and its rewards. For example, East Germans could watch West German television,[4] and people living in the "Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic" could watch Finnish TV.[5] Some Soviet citizens were exposed to alternative views about labor through underground music performances.

Hence, what also varied was the meaning, or meanings, that people living in Communist societies ascribed to the work they did (and didn't do!) over the life-course of Communist polities. The comparative study (over both time and space) of attitudes to labor within and across Communist polities is in its infancy. But what we do know is that in some cases, highly educated individuals sought, during the USSR's "late socialism," to be underemployed—to take jobs in which they would have a lot of free time—such as working in boiler rooms—so that they could pursue other kinds of "labor" that had more meaning to them (writing music, fiction, poetry, etc.).

The selections in this chapter provide readers with glimpses into how people's understandings of labor, and attitudes toward it, varied across time and space in Communist polities. Readers will encounter Chinese students studying to be good

Communist cadres in Moscow in the late 1920s, people involved in the labor crusades of the heroic building of heavy industry in the USSR during the "building of socialism" (roughly 1929–1934), East German workers who mounted the first major uprising in Communist Eastern Europe in the post–World War II period, Chinese cadres (and, though obliquely, Chinese peasants) during Mao's utopian bid to have China surpass the West in industrialization during the "Great Leap Forward" of 1957–1961, working people in Slovakia calling for improvements in working and living conditions in the early 1960s, underground Solidarity activists in Poland who, in the early 1980s, counseled workers on creating a culture of everyday resistance at their workplaces, and a late Brezhnev-era Soviet rock musician on the kinds of jobs that worked well with his creative pursuits.

is one side of things. The second side of things is this, that Slovaks were significantly harmed when the hard-won gains of the Slovak National Uprising and the Košice Program* disappeared and this was caused by Prague, which also made up all sorts of deviationists from among the Slovak comrades who did not go along with it, [who were called] bourgeois nationalists, and even enemies of the state and ridiculed as agents of the imperialists. The aforementioned speech in Košice struck almost a similar tone, even if not as a whole.

Now, just because Slovaks, regardless of political conviction, are first of all Slovaks, it's not necessary to reproach them for this, because even the last Slovak feels that he was not born in order to "serve" someone forever, to be yanked by the nose, but today's Slovak would also be very curious to see how many Slovaks are [Czechoslovak] ambassadors and even how many people on the staff of our foreign embassies are Slovaks, whether Slovaks are being given the same opportunities to travel abroad as brother-Czechs, to investigate what obstacles are put before them in sports, etc.

That said, the feeling remains widespread among Slovaks that our state union is best. This is the only solution that would definitively eliminate the distrust between Slovaks and Czechs. However, if things keep going they way they've gone up to now, if the current conditions and Prague's methods of governing don't change, the anger of our people could simmer to the point that sooner or later it could mean the complete parting of Slovaks with Czechs in one state entity. Just like the comrades, we certainly do not wish this, but Prague, first of all, must understand this.

It is ironic that the backward states of Africa are gaining full freedom yet Slovaks still would not deserve it, when we live in the twentieth century, when inquisitorial methods should no longer apply, while we say more and more that we buried the cult of personality.

Comrade president, rise to the occasion in implementing these principles and the Slovak nation will have nothing but thanks for you and there will be mutual satisfaction between our nations. Otherwise, we could only say, as the folk saying goes, that "a fish rots from the head down," and believe us, we would not want this.

We greet you in the spirit of this letter.

The working people of Slovakia.

*This is the what the 1945 document that set up the structure of the new Czechoslovak state came to be called; it bears the name of the city in Eastern Slovakia where the new government was proclaimed. Drawn up the by KSČ (the Communsit Party of Czechoslovakia), the document asserted that Czech lands and Slovakia would henceforth be joined together as equal national partners in a common state, a "people's democracy." It also set forth the rights of Czechoslovak citizens, and defined citizenship as contingent upon the individual's capacity to prove "national and patriotic credentials." For more on this last point, see Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 193.

6-6

Poland, 1982

Polish Workers Generate a Common Knowledge of How to Resist on an Everyday Basis

In August 1980, Polish workers grabbed world headlines with strikes that would lead to a dramatic development in the history of Communism. Perhaps the best organized strike was staged in Baltic port city of Gdańsk, in the Lenin Shipyards. Adding to the strike's organizational power was the way that workers marshaled symbols. Images, and even festive performances, were everywhere. The strikers, joined by their supporters, placed flowers on one of the shipyard's gates, and also hung pictures of Pope John Paul II (who, of course, was Polish), and the Virgin Mary. One of their most dramatic actions was to erect a wooden cross inside the factory, on the very spot where, in 1970, the regime had killed shipyard workers engaging in protests. No doubt the power of symbols galvanized a strike movement that brought to a standstill a Polish economy already saddled with unsustainable debt to the West.

At the end of the proverbial day, the Communists, led by Stanisław Kania, had to allow trade unions that operated independently of state control. Following negotiations in August 1980 between this new entity—Solidarity—that was independent of party control, and representatives of the Polish Party-Sate, the two sides signed agreements that legalized the former's independent status. The next sixteen months brought mutual suspicion, if not tense hostility, between the regime and Solidarity. Finally, facing a planned strike by Solidarity in December 1981, Poland, under pressure from the USSR, declared martial law. General Wojciech Jaruzelski (born in 1923), who had replaced Stanisław Kania in October 1981, kow-towed to Moscow's pressure for repression. However, street demonstrations continued until the autumn of 1982, as did deaths from state violence, as well as arrests of demonstrators and Solidarity activists.

But what exactly was Solidarity, and how does its symbolic repertoire speak to that question? Countless textbooks and scholarly studies have labeled

"Basic Principles of Resistance," from Bulletin Solidarność [Solidarity Bulletin], no. 2 (March, 1982). (Originally published by Solidarity in Warsaw Solidarity's Information Bulletin, no. 8.) (Bulletin Solidarność was published in New York, jointly by the Committee in Support of Solidarity, the League for Industrial Democracy, and the Polish Workers Task Force.) Reprinted by permission of Eric Chenoweth, Editor, Bulletin Solidarność, and Director, Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe.

Solidarity a trade union—the first independent trade union anywhere in the Communist world. That it was. But it was also more than that. Solidarity was not just about securing better working conditions, better pay, better goods, or even political rights. As its powerful symbolic dimension suggests, Solidarity was also about using culture to create a new identity, a new way of life. Because of that, it is more accurate to speak, as one scholar has done, of a "Solidarity Culture" of 1976–1981, and, in its underground phrase (1982–1988).[17]

The following passage exemplifies the sense in which, even and especially during its underground phrase, "Solidarity culture" entailed a way of life. In sustaining and elaborating that way of life, the everyday decisions of workers—decisions about how quickly one was going to work, whether one was going to show up at all, what kind of excuse to give for not showing up—were of utmost importance. For Solidarity was about creating a common knowledge (one thinks here of the common knowledge of how to protest generated by the Leipzig Peace Prayers) of how to resist on an everyday basis. Such everyday resistance, by definition,[18] lacked leaders and central organization, but this by no means diminished its power.

SOLIDARITY UNDERGROUND

Basic Principles of Resistance

Despite the harsh penalties that have been imposed for organizing resistance, spreading information, and possessing printing equipment, Solidarity continues to publish underground bulletins, which call for passive resistance on a large scale, disseminate what is known about the resistance and about the brutalities committed by the army and police, and instruct people how to organize Solidarity underground, as well as how to assist prisoners, their families, and those deprived of jobs for continuing union activity.

In Warsaw alone, ten publications have appeared, such as the War Weekly, Current Commentary, *and a Warsaw Solidarity* Information Bulletin. *Reports indicate that in every region, widespread underground publications exist and that the people are organizing resistance to the military junta.*

THE FOLLOWING APPEARED IN WARSAW SOLIDARITY'S INFORMATION BULLETIN NO. 8, DATED IN LATE DECEMBER [1981]

THE COUP D'ETAT PRESENTED SOLIDARITY MEMBERS WITH a dramatic choice: Resist or capitulate? The following is some practical advice for those who choose the courage to resist and who will participate in Solidarity's Union of Resistance. The present oppression is a variant of the total Stalinist terror [before 1956], which our generation has not yet encountered. The new situation imposes new rules, which must be learned as quickly as possible.

These are some principles of resistance:

1. During a strike or other form of protest, stay with your colleagues.
2. Do not establish strike committees. Protect your leaders and organizers. Basic principle of action: the entire crew goes on strike—there are no leaders.
3. In contacts with the police or the military, YOU ARE UNINFORMED, YOU KNOW NOTHING, YOU HAVE HEARD NOTHING.
4. In every work place Solidarity members must be present *physically*—don't risk arrest by foolhardiness—and *morally*—the behavior of a Solidarity member should be a clear signal of reassurance to the factory crew that WE SHALL NOT DESERT YOU, WE ARE WITH YOU.
5. Do not denounce ordinary people. Your enemies are: the *policeman*, the *eager conformist*, the *informer*.
6. Work slowly; complain about the mess and incompetence of your supervisors. Shove all decisions, even the most minor, into the lap of commissars and informers. Flood them with questions and doubts. Don't do their thinking for them. Pretend you are a moron. Do not anticipate the decisions of commissars and informers with a servile attitude. They should do all the dirty work themselves. In this way you create a void around them, and by flooding them with the most trivial matters you will cause the military-police apparatus to come apart at the seams.
8. [Number 7 did not appear in the original text.]. Eagerly carry out even the most idiotic orders. Do not solve problems on your own. Throw the task onto the shoulders of commissars and informers. Ridiculous rules are your allies. Always, remember to help your friends and neighbors regardless of the martial law rules.
9. If you are instructed to follow mutually contradictory rules, demand written orders. Complain. Try to prolong such games as long as possible. Sooner or later the commissar will want to be left in peace. *This will mark the beginning of the end of the dictatorship.*
10. As often as possible take sick leave to care for an "ill" child.
11. Shun the company of informers, sycophants, and their kind.
12. Help the families of the arrested, wounded, and killed.
13. Establish Social Self-Help Funds and collect money.
14. Take an active part in the campaign to counter official propaganda by spreading information about the situation in the country and the examples of resistance.
15. Paint slogans, hang posters on wails, and distribute leaflets. Pass on independent publications—*but be cautious.*
16. In any organizational activity adhere to the old conspiratorial rule: KNOW ONLY WHAT I NEED TO KNOW. Remember: there is nothing more important than the struggle to free those who were arrested, for the lifting of the state of war, for civil liberties, and for union rights.

WE SHALL WIN! *Solidarity's Union of Resistance*

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WE SHALL WIN! *Solidarity's Union of Resistance*

6–7

Leningrad/St. Petersburg, Early 1980s/Early 1990s/Early 2000s

Alexei Rybin (1960–), The Guitarist for the Soviet Rock Band Kino, on the Meaning of Work and Other Things

Alexei Rybin, the author of the next passage, was the guitarist for the Soviet rock band *Kino** from 1981–1983. Like many Soviet rock-and-roll bands that got their starts in the late 1970s and early 1980s, *Kino*, which was formed in the summer of 1981 in Leningrad,[19] first played in the apartments of band members, as well as in quasi-underground clubs. In 1982, when Rybin was still *Kino*'s guitarist, the group made its first album, *45*, as a joint effort with the underground Soviet rock band *Akvarium* (about which there is a document in chapter 8 of this volume.) Distributed through underground channels, the album brought the group some notoriety.

But it was not until 1986, after Gorbachev's *perestroika* was underway and Rybin had left the band, that *Kino* had its first major success with the album *Noch'* (*Night*). The band reached the height of its popularity with its 1988 album *Gruppa krovi* (*Blood Type*) and continued to draw large audiences even after the tragic death in 1990 of its leader, Viktor Tsoi, who wrote the lyrics for all of its songs—including the song "Electrichka," whose composition is mentioned in Rybin's account (following). As the name "Electrichka" (Russian for "suburban commuter train") suggests, Kino's songs tended to focus on everyday life in what turned out to be the twilight years of the USSR. Few songs had an overtly political content.

Though Rybin and his co-musicians in Kino did not know it at the time, they were part of what, in fact, was the "last Soviet generation."[20] This was the generation of Soviet citizens who were entered the world between the 1950s and 1970s, and came of age in it between the 1970s and mid-1980s. Despite the

From Aleksei Rybin, *Kino s samogo nachala i do samogo kontsa (Kino from the Very Beginning to the Very End)* (Rostov-na-Donu: Feniks, 2001), 107–109. Rybin's 2001 book is a revised and expanded version of his 1992 *Kino s samogo nachala* (Smolensk, 1992). Reprinted by permission of Aleksei Rybin. Translation: Glennys Young.

* "Kino" means "cinema" in Russian. The name of the band was often placed in all capital letters: KINO.

important differences in characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, career, and locale that divided them, the approximately ninety million people who were between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four in the mid-1980s had important things in common, too. For one thing, unlike the Soviet generations that preceded and followed it, this one was not defined by any "inaugural event" such as the revolutions of 1917, Stalin's Great Break, the "Great Patriotic War" (World War II), or Khrushchev's de-Stalinizing "thaw."[21] Rather, what was common about their identity stemmed from the regime's official discourse and official institutions during the Brezhnev years. Almost without exception, members of this generation belonged to the Komsomol, where they were exposed to official rhetoric and to the official values of late socialism—concern for the environment, for the welfare of others, for peace. Though shaped by this milieu and its values, they nonetheless interpreted the latter in ways that the Soviet Party-state did not foresee. Usually highly educated and the offspring of professionals, members of this generation often took up cultural pursuits such as the visual arts, literature, theater, and, like Rybin and Kino, music, and rock 'n' roll in particular.

For members of the last Soviet generation committed to such creative pursuits, certain jobs were coveted and others were to be avoided. Many of them, like Rybin, engaged in a deliberate search for what some might call underemployment—for jobs that didn't ask much, and offered free time on the job, and the privilege not to show up without sanction. Among the most coveted positions were those in the boiler rooms of cities such as Leningrad. Such jobs allowed those committed to certain creative pursuits to comply with the Soviet state's law on mandatory employment (thereby, as Rybin points out, avoiding criminal charges), but to use the employment provided and required by the state to create meanings and identities that the state did not anticipate, yet could not control. Individuals like Rybin—in fact, the prevalence of amateur rock musicians who worked in boiler rooms spawned the slang term "boiler-room rockers" (*kochegary-rokery*)—had identities that were both inside and outside the system. Jobs in boiler rooms, as well as the other positions mentioned by Rybin (yard sweepers and night watchpersons), were so coveted in the early 1980s that they became scarce, and one had to have an "in" to get one.[22]

In the passage that follows, Rybin elaborates on his attitudes toward work. He explains why he wanted to work, and why he sought the jobs he did. This passage is valuable as a lens into the social and cultural history of late Soviet socialism and the "last Soviet generation." Yet it should also be kept in mind that Rybin was writing *after* the Soviet collapse in 1991. Thus, readers should take note of how he may have wanted to portray himself, and might take with a proverbial grain of salt that he hated bureaucrats as much as he said he did.

I had to find work—money was necessary, yes and with our way of life in those times, it was rather dangerous not to be counted at any kind of employment more than two or three months. They could easily bring a criminal charge according to the article [of the criminal code] "For Parasitism" or "For Unearned Revenues," I

don't exactly know how it was formulated. I also don't know the numbers of these articles. Superfluous information.

In the case of young people playing rock music, they [the Soviet authorities] fought as if [against] a terrible infection, of the sort we also seemed to be for the Soviet way of life and for Soviet ideology. Any purely formal violations of the law that they would write off for others, could be for us, and for many did become, fatal, and the consequences were extremely unpleasant.

Rock musicians for the most part settled into boiler houses, stokers, watchmen and similar establishments (see the song BG "Storohz Sergeev" and others), where it was not required to drive into your head the Soviet manner of production and one had sufficient free time. Some worked one in two days, others—once in three, some got away with going to work once in five days, and my acquaintance Maika Rodion worked one day in seven.

"I get tired," he said "when I work every day. This week—on Monday, the next [week] on Tuesday....

Some, like Gena Zaitsev, for example, worked only in the winter, and resigned in May, travelled for three months, and in September got fixed up in the old job. But when I faced the problem of finding work, all the prestigious boiler room, watchmen, and janitor positions were already taken. Fall was beginning, and the rock musicians, writers, poets, artists, philosophers and journalists of Leningrad had already returned to the city and occupied their work positions. Yes, to speak honestly, the pay for being a watchman didn't work very well for me—I was collecting records, and then, just as now, this is a rather expensive pleasure, and also it was necessary to give some money to the family.... And, moreover, instruments were necessary.

And for almost the entire month of September I walked throughout the city searching for decent work—finding it turned out to be a matter that was not at all easy.

The certificates I got during my internship at the institute for being a metalworker of some sort of category, a lathe operator, and something else as well, which I allegedly studied at the factory, lay about in disorder in a drawer in my desk, and I didn't intend to retrieve them from there in any event*. It is too much of a good thing†. Nor did I want to work in some laboratory in an institute.... I would have to interact with the big-wigs, and even more loathsome, with the little bureaucrats, but they make me sick. In general, I physically could not and cannot exist in any bureaucratic structure, be it an office, an institute or something else.

Up until this point, in second place on my personal scale of unpleasant feelings stand departments of cadres, bookkeepers, registration department, and all the rest that is connected [with them] in characteristics and features. In first place

* In other words, he did not want to use the certificates to obtain these jobs.

† In other words, having the internships was enough for him. He is being sarcastic here.

are dentists. However with time dentists have become much nicer and closer to me, than any deputies for cadres....

And I roamed the streets, reading the notices, dropping in on acquaintances, and inquiring about the presence of open positions anywhere, when didn't I see a notice saying that the Theater for Young Spectators was looking for a decorator. I went to TIuZ [Theater for Young Spectators] and they hired me in an instant, without any filling out any forms. Owing to the fact that the work turned out to be physically very difficult, it of course became beneficial to me to complain not as a tiresome person and appropriately. Moreover, a huge plus was that I could quietly not show up for work, when I didn't want to. All I was obliged to do was notify the foreman in advance, and they divided my daily earnings among those working as members of the team. This situation suited [me best] of all, and I worked at the TIuZ for more than a year. That was almost a record length of time for me....

I went to work at seven in the morning on the *elektrichka* from Glory Street and somehow shared with Vit'ka* my impressions of these morning commuter trains, about the rumbling platforms that had frozen overnight, about people who had overslept who were trying to wake up with the help of "Belomor†" or "Arrow‡." Vit'ka could understand this—he also went to his school by taking morning commuter trains. It was a very unpleasant moment—the rumbling, cold journey every morning. The impressions were so strong that Vit'ka began to curse everything that was connected with the railroads, and on one of the evenings, anticipating tomorrow's journey, after one hour of work he composed some half-mystical, joking song, "Elektrichka." This was a hypnotizing thing, based in two chords, in which I played solo with minor seconds, an interval which grates upon one's ears. "I went to sleep too late last night, got up early today...."

NOTES

1. For the context, see Vladiimir Ilyich Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, ed., trans., and introduced by Robert Service (New York: Penguin, 1993), 85.
2. For examples from the late Stalin era, see Victoria Bonnell, *Iconography of Power; Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), Figure 6.2, Viktor Koretskii, "Soiuz nauki i truda—zalog vysokikh urozhaev!," [The Union of Science and Labor Is the Guarantee of High Yield Harvests!], 1948, and Figure 6.3., Boris Mukhin, "Aktvinost' i initsiativa—vazhneishii istochnik nepobedimykh sil kommunizma! [Active and Initiative Are the Most Important Source of the Invincible Strength of Communism!], 1952.

* This is a reference to Viktor Tsoi, the leader of KINO, and its lead singer and guitarist from 1981 until his death on 15 August 1990, in a car accident near Riga, Latvia.

† A popular brand of Soviet cigarettes, named after the White Sea Canal, which was built using forced labor under Stalin's watch.

‡ In Russian, the name of this brand was "Strela."

3. See, for example, James Aulich and Marta Sylvestrová, *Political Posters in Central and Eastern Europe 1945–1995: Signs of the Times*, (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1999), 165 (depiction of women as part of a specialist and scientific elite).
4. See, *inter alia*, Fritz Stern, *Five Germanys I Have Known* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007).
5. See, e.g., Andrus Park, "Ethnicity and Independence: The Case of Estonia in Comparative Perspective," *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol. 46, no. 1 (1994): 69–87.
6. For details, see Yihong Pan, *Tempered in the Revolutionary Furnace: China's Youth in the Rustication Movement* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), Chapter 8 ("Love and Marriage"). The author remembers youth who, in the 1950s and 1960s, who said things like: "My first love? It was Mao Zedong" and "In those days we did not pursue love; we pursued political progressiveness." (182)
7. The KUTV shut its doors late in the 1930s.
8. Katayama co-founded the Japanese Communist Party in 1922.
9. For detailed elaboration on this issue, see Elizabeth McGuire, "The Sino-Soviet Romance: How Chinese Communists Fell in Love with Russia, Russians, and the Russian Revolution," Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, July 2010.
10. For an effective exposition of the political significance of work during Stalin's "Great Break," see especially Stephen Koktin, "Coercion and Identity," in Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class and Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 278–282, and *passim*.
11. In Magnitogorsk, there were reportedly cases in which wives didn't let their husbands come home at night because the latter had performed so poorly at work. There were also wives who visited their husbands on the job, checking up on them, encouraging them, or scolding them. Wives' tribunals shamed husbands, too, and tried to get them to stop drinking. See Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), 218.
12. See especially Jeffrey J. Rossman, *Worker Resistance Under Stalin: Class and Revolution on the Shop Floor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).
13. A year after making this proclamation, Mao changed the deadline. All this would happen in one more year, not fifteen. Such fantastical revisions in the timetable of already exaggerated targets (for such products as steel, cotton, and grain) was as characteristic of Mao's Great Leap Forward as it had been of Stalin's "Great Break." On the frequent revision of goals and the schedule for reaching them, see Dali Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change Since the Great Leap Famine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996) and http://chronicle.uchicago.edu/960314/china.shtml, accessed on 9 February 2010.
14. Yang interview, University of Chicago website. http://chronicle.uchicago.edu/960314/china.shtml. Accessed on 9 February 2010.
15. The delegitimizing effect of these catastrophes on the Party's authority in one village (Da Fo, in the decimated Henan region) is demonstrated in Ralph Thaxton, *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China: Mao's Great Leap Forward Famine and the Origins of Righteous Resistance in Da Fo Village* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), esp. 262. Though it remains unclear how typical Da Fo was, it is likely that the Party's authority was significantly weakened throughout most of China. See also David Bachman, "China in the 1950s: Nationalizing the Revolution, Revolutionizing the Nation," 15, paper presented at Stanford University, January 2010. Cited by permission of the author.
16. For example, Jaroslava Krajčová, a forty-year-old factory clerk living in Prague, said the following in April 1968: "I've been in Slovakia several times on business and it seemed to me that life is freer there than in the Czech Lands." (*Práca*, 6 April 1968.) Quoted in Scott Brown, "Socialism with a Slovak Face: The Slovak Question in the 1960s," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 2010), introduction.
17. On "Solidarity culture," see Jan Kubik, *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power: The Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 2 and *passim*.
18. The pioneer in the conceptualization and investigation of "everyday resistance" in the politics of subordinate groups is James Scott. See his classic book, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT, 1987). There he shifted scholars' attention to the "prosaic but constant struggle" between peasants and superordinate groups, struggles in which the "relatively powerless" engage in actions that require little planning, mimic self-help, and avoid open symbolic conflict with elites. Examples include "foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, and sabotage." See 29.
19. First founded as a punk-rock band, the group's first name was "Garin i giperboloidy," after Alexei Nikolaevich Tolstoy's novel, *Giperboloid inzhenera Garina* [*Engineer Garin and His Death Ray*], 1926.
20. The already classic work on the "last Soviet generation's" experience of late Soviet socialism is Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
21. Ibid., 32.
22. This paragraph draws upon the section entitled "Boiler Rooms" in Yurchak's *Everything Was Forever*, 151–154.

Everyday Life under Late Socialism

Student Packets

II. Youth

The Communist Experience in the Twentieth Century

A Global History through Sources

GLENNYS YOUNG

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To the memory of
Reggie Zelnik (1936–2004),
and for Elaine Zelnik

PHOTO ESSAY

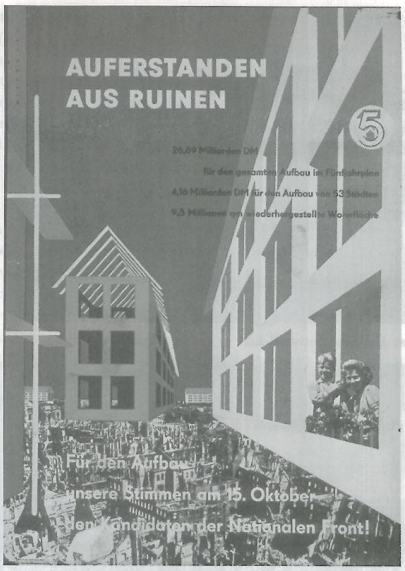
Everyday Life and Everyday Things Under Socialism, 1945–1989, and Beyond

Nationalizing a Factory Taken in 1949 in early postwar Romania, this photo depicts a worker who is covering up the former owner's name of the newly nationalized Tricorache factory.

The establishment of communist regimes in early post-war Eastern Europe brought the creation of the foundations of a socialist economy. By design anti-capitalist, socialist states did away with private property and privately-held corporations. They also developed the bureaucracies and institutional infrastructure needed by a state that differed from capitalist states—including post-World War II welfare states—in fundamental ways. In socialist countries, the state was the origin of all mass-produced goods, including those for consumers. It also owned all retail establishments, and was the employer of all involved in the production process—of both industrial and consumer goods.

Socialist states also presumed to dictate the price, style, and display of goods. State-owned stores, it should be noted, developed their own forms of advertising and ways of displaying products, as is apparent below in the images on page 301. Ultimately, socialist states did not manage to control all aspects of consumer consumption, and "black" or "grey" markets emerged.

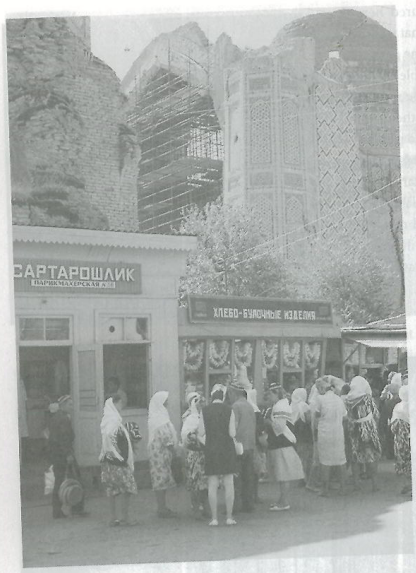
Courtesy of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.



Rebuilding from War Depicted in this East German election poster of 1950 is the socialist built environment of the future. This was an urban landscape in which a specifically socialist modernist style would dominate from the 1960s onwards. This occurred throughout the Soviet bloc, as well as in other socialist societies, such as Communist China. The poster depicts images of large, modern buildings superimposed over the photo of a city destroyed by war. It is an indication of how the East German state tied its legitimacy to recovery from the ravages of World War II. By emphasizing the slogan "Risen Out of the Ruins" ("*Auferstanden aus Ruinen*"), the election poster sought to convince voters that candidates of the National Front (an alliance of East Germany's political parties, in turn under the control of the Socialist Unity Party or SED) were uniquely capable of helping East Germany rise, like a phoenix, out of the postwar ashes. The slogan at the bottom of the image says: "For reconstruction, vote for the candidates of the National Front on 15 October."

A major shift occurred in the USSR and the socialist states of Eastern Europe after Stalin died. The post-Stalinist "thaw' coincided, as the introduction to chapter 8 emphasizes, with a period of dynamic growth in Western capitalism. One component of this was a new kind of consumer culture in which household appliances and electronics were an important element. Socialist states staked their own legitimacy on the quality of life that they could provide for their citizens, a trend that intensified over the decades of the Cold War (ca. 1945-1985). In the immediate post-World War II period, socialist states accorded their citizens the "right" to employment, housing, education, and medical care. But by the 1950s, and increasingly in the 1960s and beyond, socialist states sought to provide their citizens with the kinds of mass-produced consumer goods that Western, capitalist economies provided. Consumer goods, including household products, furniture, television sets, electronics, and the like, were "presented as signs of state munificence and caring for its subjects." (Quotes from Krisztina Fehérváry, "Goods and States: The Political Logic of State-Socialist Material Culture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51, no. 2 (2009): 431, on which this photoessay draws.)

Artist: Wittkugel. Published in Berlin. Issuing agent: Amt für Information. Courtesy of the Poster Collection, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University.



Standing in Line, Uzbekistan Taken in 1970, this photo evokes what it was like to be a shopper in socialist states. Here, people are standing in line in front of a street kiosk selling bread and other baked goods. The socialist shopper, unlike her capitalist counterpart, was not, according to the state's intention, to be subjected to advertising for unneeded products. In contrast to the deception and manipulation of capitalist advertising and display of products, socialist consumer culture was to be based on "transparency and truth." (Féhérvary, "Goods and States," 440.)

One example of such "transparency" was the standardization of the names of retail establishments, including those providing services. With few exceptions, the only differentiating element in the name of a retail establishment was its number. The smaller letters on the sign on the larger kiosk on the left say, "Hair Salon No. 36" in Russian underneath the larger Uzbek word, *sartaroshlik*, which also means barberhop or hairdresser. For some types of establishments, there was no differentiation whatsoever. The name given to the retail kiosk pictured here on the right—"Baked Goods"—would have been found everywhere throughout the USSR.

Photo by Peter H. Newman. Used by permission.

Buying Meat This photo was taken on 7 December 1991, not long before Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev resigned on Christmas Day, 1991, and the Soviet Union's formal demise came on 31 December of that year. The transition from a socialist to a capitalist economy made food scarce. In fact, the day before the photo was taken, Gorbachev had pleaded with leaders of Soviet republics to send food to Moscow. Here, Soviets are buying meat shipped from Germany. In general, shopping in socialist societies was a challenging and frustrating experience, even in the 1960s and 1970s, when socialist societies sought to provide more consumer goods to compete with Western capitalism. It was often the case that sales clerks were rude and deliberately unhelpful, often lording their power over the customers. In a symbolic display thereof, they were sometimes seated on a raised platform above the store floor. To be a consumer of everyday goods, then, meant experiencing one's vulnerability vis-à-vis the clerk.

Photo by Pavel Romanov. Used by permission.

Consuming Nostalgia Pictured here is a fascimile of athletic shoes made and worn by people in East Germany. These shoes are being produced for consumers who want to purchase—perhaps out of nostalgia—the kinds of goods made under socialism.

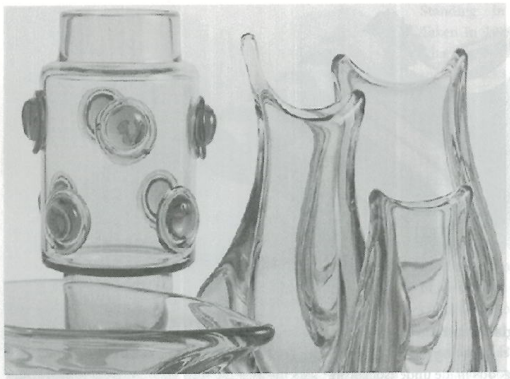
Despite the presumption that these facsimiles have fewer flaws than the shoes made in East Germany, consumers of socialist goods were often disappointed. The goods often fell short in the functions that they were supposed to perform, their durability, and basic design. In contrast, higher quality goods were available to Party elites or others having privileged status. Or, they were sold in Western capitalist economies.

Photo courtesy of ZEHA Berlin AG.

Manufacturing Toys East Germany was known for manufacturing high quality toys, such as the dolls pictured here. Produced around 1973, these "Sonni-Dolls" are made of porcelain and other materials. They exemplify that even as socialist shoppers often bought certain products that did not work or quickly fell apart, some socialist economies produced consumer goods of high quality and even exquisite design.

In fact, the favorable reputation of certain goods was known across the Eastern bloc. Toys made in East Germany, for example, were displayed in center city Budapest in the East German Cultural Center. (Fehérváry, "/Goods and States," 445.)

Photo by Klaus Morgenstern. Courtesy of akg/ddrbildarchive.de.



Designing Glassware Pictured here is another example of a high-quality consumer good produced in a socialist economy: glassware made in Czechoslovakia. In fact, Czechoslovakia, along with Italy and Scandinavia, comprised the "big three" of post–World War II glass design. All three countries were building on the strengths of the pre-war industry in glass design. Devastated by World War II, the Czechoslovak glass industry was rebuilt by the socialist state, which created its own educational system for training glass designers. While some of the more exquisite glass designs were exported to Western countries (bearing only the marking "Bohemian Glass"), everyday items such as plates, glasses, and cups were sold in state stores in Czechoslovakia and other Soviet bloc countries in Eastern Europe.

Hungarians would travel to Czechoslovakia to buy lingerie, linens, and glassware of higher quality than they could purchase at home. Travel in the socialist bloc was often about shopping!

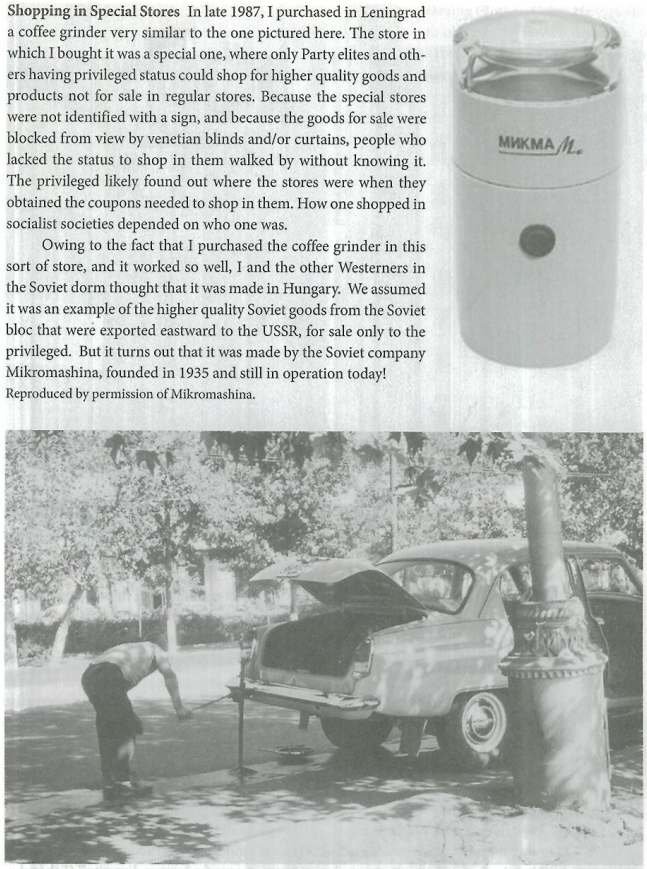
Photograph by Carolyn Barber.

Vending, Socialist Style Depicted here is a Soviet-era vending machine that was still in use in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in 2005. Similar machines had been in use in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Among the ways in which this vending machine differed from those that dotted the capitalist West at the same time was that consumers were to drink the beverage (not Coke) from a common cup. The design of the vending machine privileged standardization of the consumption experience—perhaps down to the germs that one ingested in the drink!

Shopping in Special Stores In late 1987, I purchased in Leningrad a coffee grinder very similar to the one pictured here. The store in which I bought it was a special one, where only Party elites and others having privileged status could shop for higher quality goods and products not for sale in regular stores. Because the special stores were not identified with a sign, and because the goods for sale were blocked from view by venetian blinds and/or curtains, people who lacked the status to shop in them walked by without knowing it. The privileged likely found out where the stores were when they obtained the coupons needed to shop in them. How one shopped in socialist societies depended on who one was.

Owing to the fact that I purchased the coffee grinder in this sort of store, and it worked so well, I and the other Westerners in the Soviet dorm thought that it was made in Hungary. We assumed it was an example of the higher quality Soviet goods from the Soviet bloc that were exported eastward to the USSR, for sale only to the privileged. But it turns out that it was made by the Soviet company Mikromashina, founded in 1935 and still in operation today!

Reproduced by permission of Mikromashina.



Repairing a Car Pictured here is a Volga sedan, model GAZ-M-21, in Leningrad in 1970. (The license plate, however, identifies the car as having been registered in the Tula region, or a little over a hundred miles south of Moscow.) Another way in which Party elites and others having privileged status in socialist societies differentiated themselves was by having a car. Ordinary people did own cars in the USSR and in other Soviet bloc countries, but in general it was the privileged who owned Volga sedans. The one pictured is likely an official car driven by a chauffeur, which was the case with most Volgas. People with lower status had, if they were lucky, a Lada. Non Party-elites in East Germany owned, if they were able to obtain one, Trabants or Wartburgs. And analogues existed throughout socialist societies around the world. (I am grateful to Lewis H. Siegelbaum for identifying the car and providing information about it.)

Photo by Peter H. Newman. Used by permission.

Living in Socialist Apartments Pictured here are two apartment buildings in Petržalka, a mass housing project built in the 1970s in Bratislava. Comprised of hundreds of blocks, this housing district was built south of the Danube River. The building on the left was recently renovated to meet the standards of the European Union, while the one on the right was not.

In the 1960s and 70s, socialist states around the world built mass housing in the form of high-rises often clustered on the outskirts of cities. The style was "socialist modern," and one of the purposes of such housing was to make socialist citizens modern. Standardization of such housing was, of course, a key feature. (It should be kept in mind that such standardized, mass housing was by no means unique to socialism.)

What was it like to live in this kind of housing? Although touted as an example of an alternative socialist "modernity," the experience had its downsides. Apartments were often small and construction was not of high quality. But perhaps most frustrating was the fact that the design and construction materials went against what people needed to make the apartments their home. The cement walls in many such buildings meant that it was impossible to hang a picture without a power drill, a tool that was often hard to come by.

There is also evidence that people living in such housing did not appreciate the "gift" that the state was giving them. Rather, they viewed such shoddy and uniform construction as an example of the socialist state's lack of care for its citizens, and of its "'intolerance for human diversity.'" (Fehérváry, "Goods and States," 447.) Put more directly, the people who lived in these housing complexes found them not to be examples of socialist collectivism and efficiency, but of socialist anomie and shoddiness. There is evidence to suggest that residents found them to be "authoritarian, dehumanizing, and atomizing." (ibid.)

Photo by Graeme Stewart. Used by permission.

Drying Clothes, Cuba Here, clotheslines adorn a Havana street in the 1960s. Even though socialist states wanted their citizens to live in homogenized spaces, people found ways to use space creatively, thereby differentiating their living environments from what the state intended.

Courtesy of the University of Miami Library, Cuban Heritage Collection.

"Carrying" Fruit and Produce Taken in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in 1970, this photograph shows a woman using her "headgear" in a very creative way. For many socialist citizens around the globe, the body was also a space to be personalized, despite state-imposed socialist styles and the lack of product diversity with which one could create distinction from others.

Photo by Peter H. Newman. Used by permission.

Smoking "Western" Cigarettes Western goods, such as the Kent cigarette the man is holding in his hand in this photograph taken in Samarkand in 1970, were denounced by socialist states as decadent and corrupting. Yet, from the 1960s onwards, and with increasing frequency in the 1970s and 1980s, socialist citizens had increasing exposure to foreign goods. Though hard to come by, goods that could be purchased on the black market included such Western consumer products as blue jeans, cassette tapes, and electronics. In some cases, socialist citizens obtained Western goods by having contact with foreigners (such as foreign scholars, including myself, who provided gifts). In fact, the photographer's mother gave the man the Kent cigarettes as he shared his mid-morning treat of vodka and tomatoes.

As the underground market for foreign products attests, socialist citizens prized such goods, in part for their qualities, such as brightness and elegance of design. Another reason that people living in socialist societies craved Western goods was because they came to signify a "Western" style of life. This was a life to which they ascribed all kinds of imagined qualities—not just "freedom," but celebration of diversity and constant affirmation of human dignity. For this reason, they used Western goods, including castaway objects, such as empty Coke cans or plastic department store bags, to decorate their apartments.

Photo by Peter H. Newman. Used by permission.

Wearing Soviet Internationalism Taken in Leningrad in 1970, this photograph features a small but important detail: the peace sign adorning the uniform (for Aeroflot, the Soviet, and now Russian, airline) that this guide for foreign tourists was wearing. This symbol, which in the 1960s expressed opposition to the US government, or at least participation in the anti-Vietnamese war movement, was valorized in official socialist material culture because it fit with the Soviet regime's projected stance of pacifist internationalism.

Photo by Peter H. Newman. Used by permission.

CHAPTER 9

Search for the Self and the Fall of Communism

The year 1989 was one of dramatic events that shook the world. Before January was even half over, the Communist authorities in Hungary had permitted the formation of political parties and trade unions. In March, the first competitive elections in the USSR were held for the newly reestablished Congress of People's Deputies: multiple candidates vied for each seat, and they represented political views beyond that of the Communist Party. But early in June hope for political liberalization in China was squashed when the Chinese Communists cracked down on student protests on Tiananmen Square and in other cities. Just a day or two later, in Poland, following "Round Table" talks during February through April between the government, Solidarity, and other opposition groups, elections resulted in an overwhelming victory for Solidarity, which had been banned since 1982. And several months later, in September, the first independent political organizations on a nationwide scale appeared in East Germany. On 9 November, the Berlin Wall, the icon of the Cold War, came tumbling down. Later that month, on 19 November, Civic Forum, the Czech analogue to East Germany's New Forum and other independent political organizations, emerged in Prague, Czechoslovakia. On 25 December Romania's Communist dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu, and his wife, Elena, were executed following a precipitous implosion of the Communist system. By the end of the year, the Communist Parties of Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany had given up their monopolies on power and agreed to multi-party elections. Three months into 1990, the Communist Party of the USSR, the world's first socialist state, renounced its own monopoly on power. And these are but some of the political, social, and cultural milestones of 1989.

There is no shortage of interpretations of what transpired in the momentous year of 1989. Everybody, it seems, has a version of what happened, and why, not just in that year itself, but during what the year has come to stand for, namely the

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STUDENT DURING THE COMMUNIST REGIME

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ARGUMENT

Lumini şi umbre în *Elev în comunism*

Luciana Marioara Jinga
IICCR

FOREWORD

Lights and Shadows in *Student during the Communist Regime*

Luciana Marioara Jinga
IICCR

Scrisoare către conducătorul iubit

Larisa Baciu
Colegiul Național „Mihai Eminescu" — Botoșani

Letter to Our Beloved Ruler

Larisa Baciu
"Mihai Eminescu" National College — Botoșani

Dragă tovarășe Nicolae Ceaușescu, eu sunt unul dintre curajoșii pionieri care apără țara noastră iubită de dușmanii cei răi și mă bucur că sunt unul dintre cei ce stau de strajă. Mă simt mândră de tot ceea ce mi se întâmplă și de toate condițiile pe care regimul nostru multilateral dezvoltat mi le oferă ca eu să fiu al țării fiu între fii. Și de aceea îți mulțumesc ție, conducător preaiubit, că ai grijă de noi, pionierii patriei. Mă simt mândră de fiecare dată când aud imnul cântându-se și simt un fulger care mă străbate prin toată ființa mea la îndemnurile mărețe pe care le primesc de la profesorii noștri.

Dragă tovarășe Nicolae Ceaușescu, sunt mândră că sunt româncă și că fac parte din cea mai măreață națiune de pe acest Pământ. Sunt mândră că părinții mei sunt bogați, ca și semenii noștri, și că avem tot ce ne dorește inima. Beneficiem de cele mai bune condiții pe care societatea multilateral dezvoltată ni le oferă pentru a deveni cei mai buni, cei mai deștepți dintre toți. Îi întrecem chiar și pe inamicii noștri care sunt mulți și care de abia așteaptă să ne atace pentru a ne distruge patria noastră iubită. Sunt pregătită în fiecare clipă să mă sacrific pentru iubita mea patrie, România, și să lupt cu dușmanii care ar îndrăzni să ne atace.

Dragă tovarășe Nicolae Ceaușescu, sunt fericită că partidul are grijă de noi deoarece el este cel mai bun părinte pe care-l putem avea. Datorită lui ne bucurăm de cele mai bune condiții

Dear comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, I am one of the brave pioneers who are there to defend our beloved country against the wicked enemies and I am glad to be among those who stand guard. Thinking of all that is happening to me and of all the opportunities that our multi-developed regime keeps offering me in order to be a child of our motherland's, I feel proud. Thus I feel I must thank you, most-beloved ruler, for taking care of us, our motherland's pioneers. Every time I hear our national anthem and whenever I feel the lightning strike through my whole being while listening to our teachers' exhortations, I feel proud.

Dear comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, I am proud to be Romanian and thus belong to the greatest nation on this Earth. I am proud that my parents are rich, just like all our fellows, and that we have got everything our heart could ever crave for. We benefit from the best opportunities that our multi-developed society is offering us to become the best and cleverest of all — even better and cleverer than our enemies, who are by no means few and who can barely wait to attack us and destroy our beloved motherland. I am prepared, at any moment, to sacrifice myself for Romania, my beloved motherland, and to fight against the enemies who would dare attack us.

Dear comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, I feel fortunate to be taken care of by the party, for the party is the best parent one could ever have. Thanks to it, we enjoy the best life conditions and

de trai și de învățătură. Primim gratuit din partea sa uniformă, cravata roșie cu frumosul tricolor, epoleții mândrei cămăși de pionier, cărți, caiete și multe altele. Partidul se îngrijește ca noi să avem cei mai buni profesori care să ne învețe despre minunile socialismului și despre cum acesta ne va duce pe culmile gloriei și civilizației. Desigur, ca orișice părinte, partidul are grijă să ne pedepsească dacă greșim. Eu, recunosc, am pierdut șnurul albastru de pionier pentru că am încercat să o conving pe o colegă de clasă să meargă la o înghețată la taraba din colț, chiulind pentru a mai găsi un ultim cornet pe care să-l împărțim. Am fost descoperite și fapta noastră mârșavă a fost pedepsită de tovarășul diriginte și de ceilalți pionieri care ne-au reproșat că răspundem la binele partidului prin rău. Recunosc că am greșit, dar nu am făcut acest lucru decât pentru că o iubesc pe colega mea și mă rog ca data viitoare când voi mai greși partidul să mă ierte și să mă pedepsească ca un tată mult mai blajin. La fel, la ora de istorie, am fost pedepsită deoarece am spus că bunicul meu a fost un erou al țării. Tovarășul profesor a fost entuziasmat când a aflat că sunt nepoata unui erou de război și a dorit să afle cu cine și unde a luptat bunicul meu. Eu am fost cinstită și am spus că bunicul meu s-a luptat cu rușii care ne-au furat Basarabia și averea țării, undeva în pustiu, pe Don. Am mai spus că bunicul meu a fost rănit și medaliat pentru sacrificiul său. Mă simțeam mândră pentru că aveam rude atât de importante. Dar fără să-mi dau seama, tovarășul profesor a început să mă certe și să-mi spună că nu știu cum să mulțumesc marelui prieten de la răsărit care ne-a eliberat și ne-a civilizat. Nu mai știu ce să cred. Cine are dreptate? Bunicul meu care jură că spune adevărul și nu pot să nu-l cred deoarece este cel mai onest om pe care îl cunosc, în afară de tovarășul diriginte, sau partidul care nu ne-a mințit niciodată? Poate reușiți dumneavoastră să mă lămuriți.

Dragă tovarășe Nicolae Ceaușescu, aș dori să știu de ce atunci când merg pe lângă hotelul central de la noi din oraș văd oameni străini care ies cu tot felul de bunătăți de acolo, pe când noi nici nu avem dreptul să ne uităm spre ei. Aș vrea să pot și eu să mănânc o portocală și o ciocolată ca Alin, colegul meu de clasă, al cărui tată lucrează la comitetul de partid. Am bani, sau

educational opportunities. Our uniform, the red tie with our beautiful tricolour flag, not to even mention the epaulettes for our outstanding pioneer shirt, the books and notebooks and so many other things — all these are given to us for free. The party sees to it that we are favoured with the best teachers who could teach us the miracles worked by socialism and how socialism will take us up to the peaks of glory and civilization. Indeed, as any parent would certainly do, the party also sees to it that we receive our due punishment if we err. Here I must confess that once I lost my blue pioneer braided cord while trying to talk a classmate into going to have an icecream together with me at the corner of the street; so, because we wanted get the last icecream cone in order to share it, we skipped a class. But we were caught and our infamous deed was punished by our class master and by the other pioneers, who reproached us for answering with bad the good bestowed upon us by the party. Well, I acknowledge my mistake, though I must say the only reason I did it is because I love my classmate; therefore I pray that, next time I make a mistake, the party would forgive me and punish me with the heart of a far milder father. Likewise, during our history class, I was punished for saying that my grandfather was a hero of our country. Our comrade teacher was enthusiastic about finding out that I was a war hero's granddaughter, so he was eager to find out where and against whom my grandfather had fought. I was honest and told him that my grandfather had fought somewhere in the wilderness on the Don river against the Russians, who had stolen from us Bessarabia and also our country's treasure. I also told him that my grandfather had been wounded and got a medal for his sacrifice. I felt proud to belong to such a family and to have such important relatives. But without even realising what was going on, our comrade teacher started scolding me for not being thankful to our big friend in the East, the one who set us free and civilized us. I am now having a hard time understanding all these. My grandfather swears he is telling the truth and I cannot help believing him, for he is the most honest man I know, beside our class master, or the party, which has never lied to us. Maybe you could clear this up.

Dear comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, I would like to know why sometimes, when I go past the central hotel in our town, I can see foreigners getting out of there carrying all sorts of goodies, while

dacă nu sunt de ajuns aș putea să economisesc ca să pot să am și eu așa ceva. Nu înțeleg de ce tatăl lui are atât de multe portocale și al meu nu. Sau poate să-mi spună la ce magazin se găsesc pentru ca să merg și eu acolo. Știu că rugămintea mea nu e atât de importantă pentru un om atât de ocupat ca dumneavoastră, dar cred că nu puteți refuza un copil. Cel puțin așa ne-a învățat la noi la școală când au pus tabloul acela nou cu dumneavoastră pe perete, în fața clasei. Nu aș insista atât de mult, dar să știți că o iubesc mult pe colega mea și vreau să-i fac o bucurie.

Dragă tovarășe Nicolae Ceaușescu, sunt fericită pentru că ieri am putut să-mi scriu toată tema la matematică pentru că nu s-a luat curentul. Ca un adevărat comunist, sunt de acord cu economisirea resurselor țării și funcționarea întreprinderilor. Dar aseară am putut să-mi rezolv mai repede temele fără să lăcrimez. Știu că plata datoriilor către străinii cei asupritori și imperialiști trebuie făcută, pentru că altfel aceștia ar veni și ne-ar lua țara noastră dragă și ne-ar da afară din case. Am rămâne fără pic de căldură termică și sufletească iar noi, comuniștii, nu vrem acest lucru. Când scriu aceste rânduri îmi vin în minte fotografiile cu americanii care dorm pe cartoane pe stradă, zgribuliți de frig și fără haine pe ei. Și cică se laudă că sunt cea mai bogată țară din lume. Eu nu cred. După mine la noi e mai bine deoarece nu doarme nimeni pe stradă cu excepția domnului Mitică, un vecin de-al nostru. Să nu credeți că nu are casă. Doarme pentru că nu reușește să mai ajungă la etajul doi deoarece e foarte beat. Și să știți că spune multe lucruri urâte despre comuniștii de la noi din județ. Pasămite, aceștia stau toată ziua să mănânce și rămân noaptea la hotel cu muncitoarele și activistele de partid în ședință! Nu știu dacă e adevărat, dar pare că ei au o muncă foarte istovitoare de nu ajung acasă!

Dragă tovarășe Nicolae Ceaușescu, aș mai avea o rugăminte la dumneavoastră. La mine în casă e mai frig ca la vecinul meu, deoarece tatăl meu nu este descurcăreț să poată face rost de două butelii la două săptămâni. Aș vrea să faceți ceva pentru ca să fie mai cald. Degetele mele sunt mai mereu înghețate, în special la școală când scriem pe bănci. Tovarășii profesori vin și

we don't even have the right to look that side. I would like to be able to eat an orange and a chocolate bar like Alin, my classmate, whose father works for the party's committee. I have got money and, if it is not enough, I could save more to get such things. I don't understand why his father has so many oranges and mine doesn't. Or maybe he could tell me in what shop they are available so I can go there and buy. I know my asking is not so important for such a busy man as you are, but I don't think you can refuse a child. At least this is what they have taught us at school, when they have put that new picture of you up on the wall in front of the class. I would not go on insisting so much but I love my classmate very much and I want to offer her this joy.

Dear comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, I am happy that yesterday I could write through my homework for Maths, because there was no power cut as usual. As a true communist, I fully agree to saving the resources of our country and helping our factories function. But last night I could solve my homework easier and without even dropping a single tear. I know about the debts we must hurry and pay to the opressive and imperialistic foreigners, who, otherwise, would come and take our beloved motherland away from us and throw us out of our houses. We would be left without a trace of both thermic and inward heat, and we, the communists, don't want this to ever happen. What is actually coming to my mind while writing these lines is the image of those photos of the Americans sleeping on cardboard pieces in the streets, crooked from cold and without any clothes on them. And fancy that they boast to be the richest country in the world. I don't believe that. According to me, it is better in our country, where nobody has to sleep in the street, except for Mr. Mitică, a neighbour of ours. But don't imagine he does it because he hasn't got a home. He sleeps there because he doesn't manage to get to the second floor because he is too drunk. And you should also know that he utters a lot of bad words about the communists in our county. Neither more nor less, he says they are all day long busy eating and drinking and, at night, they remain at the hotel for meetings with the women workers and party activists! I don't know if this is true or not but, judging by the fact that they hardly get home, they must really have a very exhausting job to do!

ei îmbrăcați gros. Și noi facem la fel, dar tot e frig. Tovarășa profesoară de română ne pune să ne dăm jos gecile pentru că, dacă scriem cu ele, ne vom forma un scris urât și vom face de rușine partidul. Dar când îmi este frig parcă nu-mi mai pasă de partid. Știu că gândesc ca un revizionist (termen pe care l-am auzit la o ședință de la un tovarăș profesor și am înțeles eu că e un dușman al socialismului, mai rău ca americanii și că, dacă nu suntem vigilenți, ne poate distruge orânduirea dătătoare de viață). Mă iertați, dar așa am înțeles eu. Dacă mai înjur partidul când e frig, sper să mă iertați. Nu o fac din rea-voință, ci pur și simplu pentru că mi-e frig. Ce bine ar fi dacă ar fi căldură. Ce bine ar fi dacă vara nu s-ar mai termina niciodată.

Dragă tovarășe Nicolae Ceaușescu, aș dori să dați o lege prin care noi, copiii, să nu mai fim nevoiți să stăm mult la magazine ca să cumpărăm pâine. Dar mie îmi convine pentru că scap de teme și mă mai furișez la joacă fără ca părinții mei să știe. Nu ne jucăm cine știe ce, doar de-a v-ați ascunselea. La jocul acesta eu sunt cea mai bună dintre prietenii mei. Nimeni nu reușește să mă găsească. Stau ascunsă după tejghea și nimeni nu mă caută acolo. Pot să fac acest lucru deoarece tovarășa vânzătoare mă lasă, că nu are nici ea nimic de făcut până ce nu vine mașina. Aș dori ca acesta să fie secretul nostru. Și, ca orice secret, el nu trebuie niciodată trădat.

Dragă tovarășe Nicolae Ceaușescu, îți mulțumesc că m-ai ascultat pe mine, un copil, om de bază al țării și pionier fruntaș la mine în clasă. Îți mulțumesc că exiști și că ai grijă de mine și de prietenii mei și mai ales de colega mea de clasă pe care o iubesc mult. Îți mulțumesc că exiști pentru a ne face viața mai ușoară și pentru a ne face mândri că suntem români. Îți mulțumesc pentru că geniul tău ne conduce către cele mai măreț culmi ale socialismului și prosperității. Îți mulțumesc că ai grijă să am un acoperiș deasupra capului și că veghezi ca eu să fiu un bun comunist. Îți mulțumesc pentru tot.

Al tău mândru pionier,
Larisa Baciu

Dear comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, I would have one more thing to ask you. In my home it is colder than in my neighbour's, because my father is not able enough to get two gas cylinders every second week. I would like you to do something to get it all warmer. My fingers are always frozen, especially at school when we write on our desks. Our comrade teachers come warmly dressed to school. We do the same, but still it is cold. Our comrade teacher of Romanian has us all take off our jackets for fear we would abash the party with our handwriting turned ugly because of wearing them. But when I am cold, I kind of feel I don't much care about the party. I know I am thinking like a revisionist (this is a term that I have heard from a comrade teacher at a meeting, meaning — as I've understood it — an enemy of socialism, someone worse even than the Americans, and who, if we are not alert, can bring our life-giving system to destruction). I'm sorry, but this is the way I've understood it. If sometimes when it is cold, I curse the party, I hope you will forgive me. I never do it out of malevolence, but because I am cold. If only it were warm! If only summer never ended!

Dear comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, I would like you to pass a law saying that we, the children, need no longer queue in front of the shops to buy bread. But you know, it is fairly convenient for me because this way I am spared from doing my homework and I can slip away to play outside without my parents noticing it. Well, we don't play anything special, it's just hide-and-seek. It's the game where I am the best among my friends. Nobody can ever find me. I always stay hidden behind the counter and nobody ever looks for me there. I can do that because our comrade shop-assistant allows me to, since she doesn't have anything to do by the time the car with bread arrives. But this will be our little secret, please keep it! Like any secret, it must never be betrayed.

Dear comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, I want to thank you for having listened to me, a child, a reliable person of our country and a front-rank pioneer in my class. I want to thank you for being there and taking care of me and my friends and, what's more, of my classmate whom I love a lot. I want to thank you for being there to make our life easier and to make us proud to be Romanians. I want to thank you for leading us with your genius to the highest peaks of socialism and prosperity. I want to thank

P.S. Aș mai fi vrut să scriu mai multe, dar îmi este frig și lumânarea mea e aproape să se stingă. Îmi este frig, chiar dacă sunt sub plapumă. Poate deschid fereastra, să se mai încălzească.

you for your seeing to it that I have a roof over my head and for your keeping an eye on me, to help me be a good communist. I want to thank you for everything.

Your proud pioneer,
Larisa Baciu

P.S. I would have had a lot more to write, but I am cold and the candle will fade soon. I am cold, even though I am covered with a blanket. Maybe I should open the window; who knows, it might get warmer.

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