

Some Latent Sources of Economic Deprivation Among Non-Communist Hungarian Refugees

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This brief report, gleaned from a larger study of aspects of the Hungarian revolution, is based upon data collected from sixty-nine, four hour, depth interviews. The entire study program consisted of a two day, medical, sociological, psychological, and anthropological examination of seventy-six Hungarian refugees in this country and England.*

The sample was gathered as subjects became available. However, specimens of the main social categories were included, together with subjects drawn from subgroups known to have been intimately linked to the course of Communism in Hungary and the subsequent revolution. While the sample is not representative of the Hungarian home population or the entire exodus, its ratios are roughly approximate the segment of the exodus which entered the United States.

Although the experiences which led the individual Hungarian to flee from his country varied, this report is concerned with deprivations perceived by the respondents to be directly associated with the policies and practices of the Communist regime. The concept deprivation suggests the existence of standards and the presence of expectations which are violated or hedged in the course of day-to-day living and is usually articulated as discontent.

Some degree of deprivation and, therefore, some measure of discontent may be assumed to exist when one or more of the following conditions are met:

1. The person is violated (interrogation, arrest, imprisonment, beatings, and the like).

* The study was made in conjunction with the Cornell Medical College Human Ecology Center and is sponsored by The Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology.

2. Primary group ties are violated (fragmentation and atomization of inter-personal relationship, elimination of primary group ties, manipulation of informal relations, and the like).
3. Personal goals are violated (expectations in the major institutionalized areas of life activity are not met).
4. Standards of legitimacy are violated (either diffuse standards, such as concepts of nationalism or freedom; or specific standards, such as those concerned with occupational roles or exercise of authority).

While examples of all these violations were found among the sample, this report is concerned with the violation of personal goals. Among personal goals, violation of economic expectations was reported most frequently. However, violation of occupational expectations was registered more frequently than violations of income standards. As might be anticipated, occupational deprivation was concentrated in the professional and managerial strata, while industrial workers were more concerned with income increments and deprivations flowing from the organization of work, authority, and politics in the factory.

The central expressions of occupational deprivation for all strata were as follows:

1. The general claim that the Communist regime discriminated in multiple ways against non-party members.
 2. The specific claim that various career lines were closed to the non-Communist.
 3. The specific claim that higher education was denied to so-called "class aliens".
- In sum, there was a strong aspiration among respondents to maintain position or to move upward in the occupational hierarchy accompanied by a firm belief that there was little opportunity to do so under the Communist regime.

The finding of a high degree of occupational discontent appears somewhat paradoxical when viewed in the light of the actual pattern of occupational mobility. Using a six point scale, the relationship between the father's and the respondent's occupation was determined as follows: 30 per cent of the respondents remained at

their fathers' occupational level; 32 per cent moved from one to three occupational steps above their father; 39 per cent moved from one to five steps down. Using the same scale, the relationship between the occupational aspiration of the respondent and his occupational achievement demonstrated that 49 per cent realized their aspiration, 26 per cent fell short one step; 13 per cent, two steps; and 11 per cent, three steps. A total of 28 respondents desired and sought university training under the Communist regime. Of these, all but seven were able to realize this aspiration and had completed their education or were in training at the time of the revolution. It should be noted that eight of those who were successful in obtaining education were at one time refused, but subsequently actually were admitted to a university.

This pattern does not appear to vary greatly from that of our own society. It is especially striking that nearly half of the sample were able to realize their occupational aspirations and three-quarters, their educational aspiration in light of the large number of "class aliens" in the sample, the known fact that job placement often depended upon party or political criteria, the considered policy of the Communist party in favor of educating a new intelligentsia, and the widely diffused hostility towards the regime which depressed cooperation on the part of the respondents.

In view of the actual pattern of occupational mobility and educational achievement, how is the high registration of occupational deprivation to be understood? A more detailed examination of the interview material revealed the following conditions to be associated with the feeling of occupational deprivation:

1. The family in all social classes managed to transmit its patriotic and nationalistic sentiments and a diffuse feeling of oppression to younger members. The resulting political and social estrangement was strong enough to create a mood of antipathy which led nearly all respondents to perceive whatever happened to them as a deprivation attributable to the machinations of the Communist regime.
2. Although over sixty per cent of the respondents were able to maintain or increase their occupational status, their fathers and older male relatives more often suffered acute downward occupational mobility. Thus, the respondent's reported occupational deprivation may be due to identification with the very real difficulties of their family unit or to a reaction to the implications of their own relative success.

3. In order to maintain or achieve desired occupational rank, concessions were made, and adaptive techniques such as deception, instrumental use of others, stalling tactics, and cooperation were employed. These successful adaptations often elicited feelings of guilt, fear, anxiety, and tension which conditioned perception of the respondent's occupational role.
4. While occupational stability and upward movement in the occupational hierarchy were indeed present, upward movement within a specific occupation was restricted on a variety of grounds. The inability to obtain goals within an occupation was quite as depriving as failure to move among occupational groups and was invariably perceived as a consequence of deliberate policy on the part of the regime.
5. The social stratification system in Communist Hungary was inconsistent and unstable. One consequence was that high occupational rank did not insure equivalent high income, prestige, or power. Thus, the non-Communist professional or manager found difficulty in having his status and income expectations met. This "status inconsistency" established a frame-of-reference in which the occupational role was viewed as depriving.
6. As the system of social stratification changed, evaluations of life situations were pitched to the changing relative positions of different sub-groups. Thus, even though a respondent was relatively high in the total scale of income or occupation, he felt deprived when he evaluated his position in terms of the real or assumed rewards of party functionaries, of groups privileged prior to the Communist regime, and of State sponsored subgroups such as artists, miners, and Stakonovites.

A number of implications stem from the foregoing analysis, two of which will be briefly mentioned. First, given the characteristics of the high registration of economic deprivation found among the respondents and the amorphous structure of Western capitalistic society, it is more than probable that Hungarian refugees will have considerable difficulty in adapting to new economic roles. Complicating this adaptive process is the widespread image of Western society and particularly the United States as a virtual land of opportunity where frustrated occupational aspiration may be immediately realized. Secondly, because economic position is pivotal in industrial societies, feelings of discontent tend to center on occupational and consumer roles. As studies of industrial relations make clear, voiced economic discontent often conceals disaffection that has its sources elsewhere in the social structure. If these notions are sound, then perceived economic deprivations will be magnified

in satellite societies undergoing forced industrialization. Under such conditions, it may be that economic discontent collects hostility which might otherwise be directed against the political system.

The working hypotheses which are presently guiding our larger study are pertinent here: when economic deprivation, whether objectively justified or not, induces alienation from the social system there is less probability of revolutionary action and greater probability of withdrawal. Correspondingly, we believe that there is an efficacious relationship between other than economic deprivations and revolutionary involvement. These hypotheses are at least partially confirmed by the finding that respondents with the highest scores on economic deprivation had long planned to leave the country and participated least in the revolution of 1956.