

**Instances of the Romanian “People’s Democracy” State
in “May 1st” Enterprise in Ploiești (1948-1953):
Ideas and Practices**

by

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Abstract

How does a power structure act with regards to its workforce in a so-called “totalitarian” society? More specifically, how did the Romanian post-World War 2 “people’s democracy” alter the industrial workplace – the main social space of the “building of socialism” – and what were the specifics of the institutions that enabled the gradual state “penetration” of the enterprise? By trickling down research questions, I wish to frame the crux of my inquiries, namely the translation of state ideas to the local level in “May 1st” Oil Equipment Enterprise in Ploiești between 1948 and 1953, in a broader context of power relations and expand the validity of my approach to at least other enterprises in the heavy industry in Romania at the time – perhaps with different results.

My argument, deriving from my research questions, would be that in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Romanian state – led by the Romanian Workers’ Party (P.M.R. – Partidul Muncitoresc Român) – predominantly deployed in the enterprise a type of power that can be characterized as infrastructural by means of which the regime attempted to mobilize every individual worker for the “building of socialism.” This process got under way through enterprise institutions which embodied the power of the state “on the ground”: the party base organizations, the breaking down of the state plan to enterprise, shop-floor, brigade and individual levels, the Socialist contests, the wall newspaper, the workers’ clubs or the dissemination of legislation. Nonetheless, this translation of ideas was fraught with re-appropriations, repositioning and negotiations due to the fact that ideas can only function in certain situations which arise from specific social structures and are applied and received by actual people, who may use them in ways different from the ones envisaged by their creators. Therefore, an analysis only from the state perspective would not do justice to the process, as neither would only an analysis “from below” of the workers’ views.

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Introduction:

Justification, Chapter Summaries and Limitations

How does a power structure act with regards to its workforce in a so-called “totalitarian” society? More specifically, how did the Romanian post-World War 2 “people’s democracy” alter the industrial workplace – the main social space of the “building of socialism” – and what were the specifics of the institutions that enabled the gradual state “penetration” of the enterprise? By trickling down research questions, I wish to frame the crux of my inquiries, namely the translation of state ideas to the local level in “May 1st” Oil Equipment Enterprise in Ploiești between 1948 and 1953¹, in a broader context of power relations and expand the validity of my approach to at least other enterprises in the heavy industry in Romania at the time – perhaps with different results.

Several clarifications are in order with regards to method. My argument, deriving from my research questions, would be that in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Romanian state – led by the Romanian Workers’ Party (P.M.R. – Partidul Muncitoresc Român) – predominantly deployed in the enterprise a type of power that can be characterized as infrastructural² by means of which the regime attempted to mobilize every individual worker for the “building of socialism.” This process got under way through enterprise institutions which embodied the power of the state “on the ground”: the party base organizations, the breaking down of the state plan to enterprise, shop-floor,

¹ The periodization is useful for situating my research between the time of the establishment of The People’s Republic of Romania and that of I. V. Stalin’s death.

² Michael Mann. “The Autonomous Power of the State. Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results.” Originally published in *Archives européennes de sociologie*, Vol. 25, (1984), p. 185-213, available at <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/mann/Doc1.pdf>

brigade and individual levels, the Socialist contests, the wall newspaper, the workers' clubs or the dissemination of legislation. Nonetheless, this translation of ideas was fraught with re-appropriations, repositioning and negotiations due to the fact that ideas can only function in certain situations which arise from specific social structures and are applied and received by actual people, who may use them in ways different from the ones envisaged by their creators. Therefore, an analysis only from the state perspective would not do justice to the process, as neither would only an analysis "from below" of the workers' views. Guided by this framework, I thus move away from my initial intentions of forwarding a claim in the vein of class relations/power relations (seemingly more appropriate considering my object of analysis), first of all because the unfolding of my argument in this thesis implies that looking for "classes" in the economic sense in a Soviet-inspired state system might mean missing the point, since the position of a person or a group in the social space depended on their relationship of proximity – or distance – from power,³ and second of all because it is very difficult to avoid the reification of the concept of "class" – unless one's identity card reads Pierre Bourdieu.

The interactions between the Romanian "people's democracy" state and the workers in "May 1st" Oil Equipment Enterprise also requires a context for the specifics of the rise of the "leading force" of the "workers' state", the Romanian Workers' Party.⁴ The Communist Party of Romania (Partidul Comunist din România - PCdR), as it was called prior to October 1945, was one of the weakest movements of the kind from what would become the Eastern Bloc. Until August 23 1944, the party had been functioning illegally

³ Jean-Paul Depretto. "Pour une histoire sociale de la dictature soviétique," in *Le mouvement social*, no. 196, (2001), p. 14.

⁴ Details about the particularities of the Romanian working-class in the inter-war period are to be found in chapter 1, the theoretical one.

since 1924 and at the time had roughly 1,000 members.⁵ However, the dynamics of the party were impressive. By 1947 the number of party members had reached 710,000. Placed in context, the Romanians' prowess for joining the Communist Party during these three years was nine times that of the Bulgarians, eighteen times that of the Poles, twenty-six times that of the Yugoslavs, twenty-eight times that of the Hungarians and forty-five times that of the Czechs and Slovaks.⁶ This quick rise to power had been facilitated by the Soviet Red Army occupation of the country, since Romania had been counted amongst the losing belligerents in spite of its exit from the alliance with the Axis powers and its continued fighting alongside the Allied forces until the end of the war. The occupation was the primary cause for the appointment of a government dominated by Communists in order to ensure the stability of the country and organize elections, but it was still not the main cause for such massive enrollment in the party. The two main political forces of the country in the inter-war period, namely the National Liberal Party and the National Peasants' Party, both failed to come up with a program for governing that took into account the social transformations brought about by two successive dictatorships and a grueling war.⁷

The National Liberal Party based its political discourse on "the attachment to the generalist principles of representative democracy, of constitutionalism and of the traditions of Romanian liberalism, principles that, far from being actualized, were not even explained."⁸ The National Peasants' Party, in its turn, issued a program-manifesto in October 1944 "that repeated the provisions of its program from 1935 – 'having too few

⁵ See Daniel Barbu. *Republica absentă*. (București: Ed. Nemira, 1999), p. 89.

⁶ See Barbu, *Republica...*, p. 81-82.

⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 79-80.

⁸ *Ibid.*

adaptations to the new requirements,’ as its leader Ion Mihalache assessed –, contained vague references to a possible land reform in favor of the peasants [...] and particularly glorified the illustrious past of the ‘fighting, sacrificial’ party.”⁹

By contrast, the program of the National Democratic Front (the coalition the Communist Party was a member of, to be renamed the Bloc of Democratic Parties for the elections of November 1946) was “concrete, radical [...], on occasion even national, proclaiming free economic initiative [...], immediate land reform and the erasure of agrarian debts. This was a well-calculated operation of expropriating the democratic vocation of the historical parties, an operation which drew significant popular support for the Communists.”¹⁰

This data, corroborated by Barbu’s analysis, reveals that the tendency to favor the Communists before 1948, as well as after, was a historical choice and not “a triumph of collectivism or a natural inclination of Romanians towards uniformity.”¹¹ It is in this context that the Communist Party begins its gradual rise to power and its “penetration of the state apparatus prior to that of the enterprise.

The first chapter of my thesis represents a theoretical excursus into state theories and issues of domination in Soviet-inspired state systems. I discuss my understanding of the totalitarian and revisionist “paradigms” and explain my approach to state-formation and power in The People’s Republic of Romania, as well as the specifics of the “working-class,” my choice of enterprise and the two components of infrastructural power that I further elaborate on in chapters two and three: economic and ideological.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

The second chapter discusses the viability of central economic planning, the individualization resulting from the wage system legislation of 1948 and 1949, the material and alimentary supplies of industrial centers and the main provisions of the monetary reform of 1952, with a focus on the increase in the work norms (all this with an empirical focus on workers in “May 1st” enterprise in particular and on the surrounding enterprises in general).

The third chapter tackles the ideological aspects of the Romanian state’s power and their dissemination in the enterprise through propaganda/agitation, as well as the workers’ use of them. I will bring into discussion the impact of new institutions such as Socialist contests, wall newspapers, workers’ clubs and Red Corners, and the dissemination of legislation, with the same empirical focus as in chapter 2 (due to the relevance of the examples, I also added several instances from enterprises in Bucharest).

The primary sources of my research come from the National Archives of Romania in Bucharest, from the Prahova County Office of the National Archives in Ploiești and from the Central University Library (BCU) in Bucharest. They consist of party base organization reports from the “May 1st” enterprise and surrounding oil refineries, city and regional party committee reports, Central Committee reports from the Propaganda/Agitation and Economics departments and the daily of the General Confederation of Labor (Confederația Generală a Muncii – CGM), *Viața sindicală* (Union Life). The secondary literature was tracked down via the CEU Library and its databases, as well as in my personal bookcase. I am, therefore, aware of the limitations of my research, which is why the aim of my inquiry is not to pass a verdict, but to raise questions that might open new paths of research into the issue at hand. A document exists

only in its multiple interpretations, the first layers of which are applied by the issuing authority, the high-ranking officials discussing issues or the local Stakhanovite agitator writing at the end of a work day. Further layers are applied by the researchers and their never ending interpretative frameworks.

In addition, this thesis offers only a glimpse into the matter. Due to time constraints, I could not consult extensive demographic data (except for two monographs of Prahova county and Dragoș Petrescu's MA thesis), personal memoirs or do any interviews (the average life expectancy in this line of work is between 65 and 70). Only the idea for my thesis resulted from conversations with neighbors and relatives former workers from the "May 1st" enterprise and from several oil rigs on the Prahova Valley.

1. Power to/over the People? The “People’s Democracy” State and Its Transformation of the “Working-Class”

- theoretical excursus -

“What did the working-class do when it worked?” This paraphrase of Goran Therborn’s title-question in his 1976 article on the reproduction of power¹² represents one of the main starting points of my thesis inquiries into the presence of the Socialist state in the enterprise during 1948-1953; it is at the same time a question that has been paid disturbingly little attention by social scientists in Romania after the collapse of state socialism in 1989. Indeed, in the case of Romania, one of the two academics that have thus far touched upon issues concerning workers during Socialist rule wrote in 2009 that “[n]ew scholarship on the Romanian working class is almost non-existent [...]”¹³ Similarly, Raluca Mărgărit argued that workers constituted a socio-professional category neglected by the literature on Romanian Communism.¹⁴ The reasons for this omission could perhaps constitute an article on power relations on their own and one cannot speculate on them here. What can be said is that the discursively-privileged “working people” appear to catch the eye of post-Socialist research trends only when they mounted

¹² Goren Therborn. “What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules? Some Reflections on Different Approaches to the Study of Power in Society.” *Insurgent Sociologist*, 6:3, (1976).

¹³ Peter Heumos. “Workers under Communist Rule: Research in the Former Socialist Countries of Eastern-Central and South-Eastern Europe and in the Federal Republic of Germany.” *International Review of Social History*, no. 55 (2010), p. 102. The statement quoted belongs to Dragoș Petrescu. The only other scholar is Raluca Mărgărit, who has very recently published two articles based on research similar to that which I will conduct: “Ipostaze ale întreprinderii socialiste în anii ’80. Studiu de caz: Combinatul Siderurgic Călărași” [Faces of the Socialist Enterprise in the 80s. Case Study: The Călărași Integrated Iron and Steel Works], in *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, no. 2 (2011), p. 286-308, and “Întreprinderea socialistă – loc de producere a regimului comunist. Combinatul Siderurgic Hunedoara în primele două decenii comuniste” [The Socialist Enterprise – the Place of the Production of the Communist Regime. Hunedoara Steel Works in the First Two Communist Decades], in *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, no. 1 (2012), p. 63-90.

¹⁴ Mărgărit, “Ipostaze...”, p. 290.

some form of public, collective opposition to the regime, especially towards its final stages. These research trends have been following in-depth the evolution of the *nomenklatura*, the political and legal aspects of the constitution of the Socialist state and the physical violence unleashed by the said state on its citizens throughout its existence (with a particular focus on its incipient stages, since a significant part of the deportations, political imprisonments and state-orchestrated tortures occurred during the first ten years of the regime¹⁵), situating themselves within the so-called “totalitarian model”. However, the precious information uncovered by such studies has not been further used to map and historicize the social effects of institutional practices on different social groups during state socialism in Romania, social effects which in turn influenced the institutional practices in the long run. The question which arises, therefore, does not concern the ultimate dismissal of the political (the totalitarian model) and the crowning of the social history approach (the so-called “revisionist model”) as the best way of tackling the issue, but rather sets up the possibility that the latter use the former in order to avoid both the exclusion of the political from social processes and the top-down determinism of the all-encompassing totalitarian approach. I argue that the tracing of the totalitarian precepts in their embodied form, i.e. as institutional practices at the level of the enterprise – the main unit of economic production, but also of jobs, creativity, culture, solidarities and ways of life¹⁶ - can help identify other, less physical, types of state violence, map the infrastructural aspect of Socialist state power, not just the despotic one,¹⁷ and reveal the

¹⁵ See, among others, Dennis Deletant. *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State*. (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1999).

¹⁶ Mărgărit, “Ipostaze...”, p. 289, apud. Renaud Sainsaulieu. *Sociologie de l’entreprise. Organisation, culture et développement*. (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po et Dalloz, 1997), p. 189-191.

¹⁷ Mann, “The Autonomous...”, 113.

extent to which the workers also influenced those practices, thus limiting the control of the state.

The type of social history I wish to make a case for in my thesis does not exclude the political – as has often been the case with revisionist social history – but gives the Socialist state a central role in the evolution of society precisely due to the penetration of the latter by the former. While Sheila Fitzpatrick rightly lamented that “we have been strongly conditioned to see everything in terms of ‘The State’”¹⁸, to do the opposite and completely leave the socialist state (especially in its Stalinist period) out of the effects of the social processes it itself had accelerated (urbanization, forced industrialization and collectivization etc.) would mean to paint only half a picture. As Jean-Paul Depretto has argued in his review, it would be difficult to completely abandon the notion of totalitarianism, since it has placed the emphasis on a common feature of Nazism and Stalinism: state violence.¹⁹ He goes on to add that

[h]istorians cannot comprehend the history of the USSR by limiting themselves to a view ‘from below’. The social processes require an analysis that is at the same time ‘from above’ and ‘from below’: in fact, this is what the best of scholars have actually done, for instance Moshe Lewin or Sheila Fitzpatrick. This is why it is necessary to overcome the opposition between ‘the totalitarian school’ and social history. Far from ‘leaving politics outside’, the latter must do the opposite and offer central importance to relations of power [...]. The study of a dictatorship presupposes a double undertaking: analyzing the social bases of political processes and pointing out the social consequences of the decisions taken by the authorities.²⁰

Furthermore, it is important to give credit to Communist officials – both in the Soviet Union and in the post-war Socialist countries in Eastern Europe – who constantly

¹⁸ See Depretto, “Pour une histoire...”, p. 9.

¹⁹ Depretto, “Pour une histoire...”, p. 12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12-13.

emphasized “the party’s long-established belief that it must aim to carry its message to the *entire* population.”²¹ The intrusiveness of Soviet methods (“[t]he principle of embracing the entire population in a single ideological influence continues to be of pressing importance during the period of mature socialism [...],” as one Soviet official declared in 1984²²) raises the question of tracing the actual effects of this totalizing approach. In what concerns the state enterprise (“May 1st” Oil Equipment Enterprise in the city of Ploiesti, in my case – one of the few industrialized areas in Romania prior to World War 2, located 60 km north of Bucharest, in the Prahova Valley), I follow this precept of political domination as social practice first of all because it is necessary to “take into account the internal contradictions of the state apparatus,”²³ and second of all due to the fact that “[...] domination [...] must be analyzed as an exchange, albeit an uneven one, between those who exercise power [...] and are in possession of the means of repression and propaganda, and those who are subjected to them, but who are not devoid of resources.”²⁴ This is why I am guided by Alf Lüdtke’s conceptualization of the G.D.R. as a “*durchherrschte Gesellschaft*” (society traversed by domination).²⁵ “In the G.D.R.,” Lüdtke elaborates,

[d]aily life was *comparatively* more under the dependence of power than in industrialized societies where the media constituted a public space of expression – despite the restrictions imposed – and where judicial and parliamentary checks and balances were imposed on governments and bureaucracies. [...] In the case of the G.D.R., the striking

²¹ David Wedgwood Benn. *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 34.

²² See Benn, *Persuasion...*, p. 34.

²³ Sandrine Kott. *Le communisme au quotidien. L’entreprise d’État dans la société est-allemande*. (Paris: Belin, 2001), p. 16.

²⁴ Kott, *Le communisme...*, p. 16.

²⁵ See Depretto, “Pour une histoire...”, p. 13. Depretto’s translation in French is more appropriate: “société traversée par la domination.”

fact is not the success of the strategies of power, but the importance of the relations entertained with the latter.²⁶

One can extrapolate this assessment to interwar Soviet Union – especially after 1929, with Stalin’s change of course and the adoption of the first Five-Year Plan – and to early Socialist Romania. But what kind of state would this be and what types of power did it deploy throughout society in general (“durchherrschte Gesellschaft”) and throughout the enterprise in particular?

Charles Tilly has come up with an influential definition of states as “coercion wielding organizations that are distinct from households and kinship groups and exercise clear priority in some respects over all other organizations within substantial territories.”²⁷ But in the case of a state whose ideological pillars would require these organizations to reach “the entire population” and be “everywhere,” this definition simply will not suffice, regardless of how broad a definition of “coercion” one employs. The institutions developed by the Romanian Workers’ Party in the late 1940s and early 1950s during its penetration of the workplace²⁸ - Party base organizations, Party schools, Socialist contests, literacy schools, artistic groups, workers’ clubs, wall newspapers or mobilizations for local or national events – are part of a process of state-formation that involves the dissemination of ideas. Steinmetz is careful to point out that “states are never ‘formed’ once and for all. It is more fruitful to view state formation as an ongoing process of structural change and not as a one-time event.”²⁹ In my case, this process is

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁷ See George Steinmetz. “Introduction: Culture and the State,” in George Steinmetz ed. *State/Culture. State Formation after the Cultural Turn*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 8.

²⁸ See Anthony Giddens. *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism: The Nation State and Violence*. (London: Polity Press, 1987), p. 181-192. I will later explain my use of Giddens in this context.

²⁹ Steinmetz, “Introduction...,” p. 9.

part and parcel of the above-mentioned concept of domination as social practice and is also dependent on the practices enacted by the workers as knowledgeable social actors who engage with those institutions.

This line of thought is a variation of the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, which is seldom used for inquiries into the Romanian Socialist system³⁰, but I find it useful nonetheless. For Foucault, governmentality represents an “ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.”³¹ This is inextricably linked to the historical processes which in the Western world replaced political formations dominated by despotic types of power and the centrality of the sovereign. But in spite of the fact that most Foucauldian notions are thought for an investigation of Western modernity, I see real socialism as a specific path towards modernity³². Therefore, a fully relational analysis of power cannot dismiss the Foucauldian concept, but should use it for uncovering exactly how the Romanian state became governmentalized, through specific forms of knowledge, through specific forms of producing its population, and in particular through specific forms of producing its workers. The Secretary General of the P.M.R., Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, revealed the different types of domination different categories of population would be subject to. As I mentioned in the Introduction, after World War 2,

³⁰ For the use of Foucault’s concept of “pastoral power” in the Romanian context, see Barbu, *Republica...*, especially p. 89-93, and Andi Mihalache. *Istorie și practici discursive în România “democrat-populară”*. (București: Ed. Albatros, 2003).

³¹ Michel Foucault. “Governmentality,” in Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (eds.), *The Anthropology of the State*. (London: Blackwell, 2006), p. 142.

³² Alexei Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 10.

the membership of the party rose from 1000 in August 1944 to 800,000 four years later³³ and the official discourse pushed for a “purification” of party ranks. The industrialization process and the fulfillment of the objectives set forth in the Five-Year plans “required and enabled the predominance of industrial workers and peasant-workers in the party structures.”³⁴

We must ensure within our Party the growth in the number of shop-floor workers – especially from the heavy industry – so that the working element becomes predominant in our Party, which represents the avant-garde of the working-class. Let us welcome in the Party those that are worthy of the high distinction of Party member and let us fiercely guard the purity of our Party ranks.”³⁵

Due to the fact that there is still a strong state authority disseminating this form of knowledge, one must be careful with the interpretation of such documents, since the tracing of this top-down process might uncover mishaps that enable shop-floor workers to enact practices that do not necessarily conform to the norm. In this case, the interpretation given by the Party base organizations to the central directives was that the number of shop-floor workers allowed in the Party must be increased and therefore paid less attention to the “purity” of the applicants and more to the planned quota they had to fulfill.³⁶ Nevertheless, from 1948 onwards the type of power that is exercised in the enterprise is of an infrastructural and disciplinary sort, relying less on interdiction or repression and more on mobilization and the call to action.³⁷ According to Daniel Barbu,

³³ Mărgărit, “Întreprinderea...”, p. 69-70. See also Daniel Barbu, *Republica absentă* [The Absent Republic]. (Bucuresti: Editura Nemira, 1999), p. 81-82. The membership dynamics of the party is impressive.

²³ Mărgărit, “Întreprinderea...”, p. 70.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, part of a speech made at the Second Congress of the Romanian Workers’ Party which took place between the 23rd and the 28th of December 1955.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

³⁷ Barbu, *Republica...*, p. 83.

“the civilization of the enterprise instituted ‘the field of labor’ as the sole area for the social validation of the individual. [...] The inhabitants of totalitarianism will be principally defined as ‘working people,’ not as citizens. Therefore, their political status is defined by their individual participation to ‘the building of socialism’ [...].”³⁸

The Romanian authorities’ maniacal quest for coherence³⁹ in the late 1940s led to the development of a social formation that was “generated by an act of will and sustained by the act of will that must be constantly renewed.”⁴⁰ The universe of social relations in the enterprise did not yet contain in itself the principle of its own reproduction and therefore had to be maintained by “nothing less than a process of continuous creation.”⁴¹ The institutions established by the state in the enterprise in post-war Romania needed to be sustained by the act of will, which, when not expressed or “improperly” expressed, would expose the institutions to failure. But failure of state power in this case is not the failure of state power in subarctic Siberia. Harsh climate and long distances do not play any role in the proximity to state power of the “May 1st” enterprise and the surrounding refineries, which are amongst the most favored from this point of view. What I see as failure in this case is in the translation of ideas to the enterprise, shop-floor and individual worker levels, revealed in the many “hardships,” “difficulties,” “shortcomings” and “uncooperative manifestations” documented by party reports which threaten the “act of

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 88-89.

³⁹ I borrow the expression from Luc Boltanski, *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation*. (London: Polity Press, 2011), p 117-118. Boltanski essentially argues that part of the normal course of social life is its partial coherence, which at the same time enables the coexistence “whose differences and divergences are always stronger than what they can unite around, albeit only sometimes.” Therefore, a situation of domination can be assessed as “pathological” not when it exhibits incoherence or disagreement, but a “maniacal quest for coherence, as if it were possible for human beings to live in a single world and, all together, always in the same one.”

⁴⁰ Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov. *The Social Life of the State in Subarctic Siberia*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 6, apud. Émile Durkheim.

⁴¹ Ssorin-Chaikov, *The Social...*, p. 10, apud. Pierre Bourdieu.

will,” an act of will whose constant renewal at the local level resulted in the infrastructural power of the state in the enterprise.

Adopting a Soviet-style centrally planned economy – at least normatively – and “penetrating” the factory ideologically triggered a Giddensian transformation of the workplace. In the enterprise, the state diminished the manifest use of violence – which it deployed in the case of social categories labeled as “uncooperative” or as “enemies of the people” – and resorted more to the pervasive use of administrative power.⁴² As I mentioned previously, the state does deploy different types of power which produce different effects – due to the practices that they enable – and the specifics of the factory social space allowed for a multitude of power rapports, but seldom was direct physical violence employed.⁴³ The union leader the shop-floor worker encountered collected part of his salary for the union contribution, but he was also the one who decided on the vacation tickets for holiday resorts. The agitators were not just in charge of praising the Party, but they also organized the factory sports teams and the cultural events. The agitator and the union leader, in turn, might be foremen or brigade leaders who depended on the efficiency of the shop-floor workers.⁴⁴

Under these conditions, one must tread carefully when dealing with a concept such as “state power.” For this reason I chose to work with variations of the concept of “power” as adapted in these theoretical premises, rather than apply indiscriminately whatever

⁴² Giddens, *A Contemporary...*, p. 188

⁴³ Several workers’ protests took place in 1951 and 1952 in the most industrialized areas of the country due to the low wages, poor economic conditions and low food supplies. In some cases, workers were arrested and in other, smaller-scale strikes, official delegations from the Party came to discuss with the workers and the latter had some of their demands met. See Dragoş Petrescu. “A Threat from Below? Workers’ Protests in Communist Romania.” CEU History Department Masters Thesis, 1998/10, p. 52-54, 99.

⁴⁴ See Lewis H. Siegelbaum. “Masters of the Shop Floor. Foremen and Soviet Industrialization,” in William G. Rosenberg and Lewis H. Siegelbaum (eds.). *Social Dimensions of Soviet Industrialization*. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 166-193, especially p. 181-186.

concept sounded appropriate, and give credit to the actions of human agents. The structure of my thesis follows the same rationale as it is informed by a variation of Michael Mann's theorization of "infrastructural power." For Mann, infrastructural power is "the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm."⁴⁵ Such a definition does not imply that I see an overall coherence in Stalinist state socialism, but that the economic and ideological penetration of the enterprise by such a state lead to the development of practices that shaped its reproduction and also drew its limits.⁴⁶ The way I wish to show this is by tracing the functioning in the "May 1st Oil Equipment Enterprise" of two of the four most persistent types of state functions identified by Mann (the third and fourth, which I do not include in my analysis, would be maintaining internal order and military power, but I do not see these as rigid categorizations⁴⁷): economic distribution and conditions, and ideology.

The propagandistic and economic aspects are meant to be intertwined throughout the thesis, since the Soviet-style totalitarian project built its legitimacy on the economic aspect in the sense that "governance was synonymous with modernization and economic growth, on the one hand, and with the monopoly of a uniform redistribution of the national product, on the other."⁴⁸ In an article in the party monthly *Lupta de clasă* (The Class Struggle) from May 1952, the intertwining of politics and economics is posited as "the essential condition for the accomplishment of the political leadership of enterprise

⁴⁵ Mann, "The Autonomous...", p. 113.

⁴⁶ For the way wages limited the state's influence on the shop floor in Stalinist Hungary, see Mark Pittaway, "The Social Limits of State Control: Time, the Industrial Wage Relation and Social Identity in Stalinist Hungary, 1948-1953," in *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 12, no. 3, (1999), p. 271-301.

⁴⁷ Such categorizations do not aim at describing the totality of state functions or serve the purpose of drawing overarching conclusions about the social reality, but merely help me channel my inquiries.

⁴⁸ Barbu, *Republica...*, p. 90.

activities by the party organization.”⁴⁹ Quoting heavily from I.V. Stalin and Andrei Zhdanov, Raia Vidraşcu emphasized that the quality of the work performed by party base organizations in enterprises could be evaluated “above all” by the way the fulfillment of the state plan was carried out in that enterprise.⁵⁰

For the period of the first Five-Year Plan in the Soviet Union (1929-1934), scholars have drawn attention to social processes which are similar in type, if not in scale, to the ones triggered by the same phenomenon in Romania and Hungary in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The most relevant of them is the fragmentation of the working-class due to a large extent to the dysfunctions, improvisations and lack of planning in the “planned economy.” Moshe Lewin elaborates:

The history of the five-year plans is one of deep-seated arrhythmia, of ‘storming’⁵¹ at the end of each quarter, of spasmodic campaigning, of constant jolting of individuals and masses of people, of cascades of emergencies dealt with by ‘shock methods.’ No wonder that the system tended to be characterized as ‘mobilizational’ by some [...] Bottlenecks were treated by shock methods and shock methods created imbalances: [...] labor productivity was demanded, but not enough food, spare parts, or material ever arrived on time, causing endless production stoppages. [...] The whole industrialization story is [...] one of an economy launched and run ‘from above’ that frustrated and undermined initiatives from below – without being able to prevent the self-defensive, informal or illegal initiatives that proved to be unbeatable, and shadowed the system constantly.⁵²

These informal initiatives were, to Donald Filtzer, the individual response of the workers to the erratic and unrealistic norms imposed by the regime, a regime which was forced to

⁴⁹ Raia Vidraşcu. “Problemele producţiei în centrul preocupărilor organizaţiilor de partid din industrie” [Issues of Production, the Core Concern of Party Organizations in Industry], in *Lupta de clasă* [The Class Struggle], series V, no. 5 (May 1952), p. 38.

⁵⁰ Vidraşcu, “Problemele...”, p. 38-39.

⁵¹ Putting in extra-work at the end of each month in order to reach the plan targets. Pittaway shows how in Hungary managers would make tacit deals with some workers to make the latter redundant and then hire them again as “shock workers” for better pay. This would create antagonisms with other workers. See p. 287-288.

⁵² Moshe Lewin. “On Soviet Industrialization,” in Rosenberg, *Social...*, p. 277-283.

cede unprecedented control of the labor process to individual workers.⁵³ However, rather than reflecting “the growing political despair of the workforce,”⁵⁴ I see the development of informal relations and practices (present also in Hungary and, from what I could tell out of the limited empirical research undertaken thus far, Romania) as a conscious decision to negotiate a better position for themselves and compromise with the state. Following William Sewell’s argument that “[t]he structures of capitalist society include both a mode of production based on private property and profit and a mode of labor organization based on workplace solidarity” and that “the factory figures as a crucial resource in both these structures, and its meaning and consequences for both workers and managers is therefore open and contested,”⁵⁵ one can say that the structures of a socialist society grounded on common property can obviously include a mode of labor organization that is *not* based on workplace solidarity.

Such an approach might be favored by the fact that the Romanian working-class was a weak one, one of the main reasons for its weakness being the low industrialization level of the country. Although the total number of employees in the big industry rose from 152,198 in 1932 to 289,117 in 1938, the industry itself was concentrated and isolated in a few areas (Bucharest, the Prahova Valley – petroleum, my area of research, the Jiu Valley – coal mining, Hunedoara and Reșița – metallurgy).⁵⁶ Petrescu quotes Henry Roberts in his assessment of Romania’s industrialization:

In Bucarest [*sic*] one is startled by the abrupt transitions from modernity to backwardness. The oil wells and refineries at Ploesti [*sic*] spring out of a peasant

⁵³ Donald Filtzer. *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization*. (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p. 117. A similar argument is made by Pittaway in the case of Hungary, p. 272-273.

⁵⁴ Filtzer, *Soviet...*, p. 2.

⁵⁵ William Sewell, Jr.. *Logics of History. Social Theory and Social Transformation*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 143.

⁵⁶ See Petrescu, “A Threat...”, p. 42.

landscape. Discussions on Romanian industry revolve not around branches of industry, but around specific large enterprises, Reșița, Malaxa, I.A.R. – isolated spots in the economy. In both Rumanian agriculture and industry there is lacking a ‘middle ground,’ a diversified, intensive peasant farming and the complex of intermediate industrial activities.⁵⁷

“May 1st” enterprise was located in the southern part of the industrial city of Ploiești, 60 km north of the capital city of Bucharest, in what is now Prahova County (in 1952 it became part of the wider Ploiești Region). It was the second largest of its kind in Europe and was classified as an enterprise “of Republican importance.”⁵⁸ Due to its oil resources, the so-called Prahova Valley was one of the few heavily industrialized areas in Romania prior to World War 2.⁵⁹ During the industrialization drive of early state socialism, the percentage of the urban population in the county grew from 26.9% in January 1948 (150.218 people out of 557.776) to 46% in February 1956.⁶⁰ In the enterprise itself, the number of employees rose from 3.200 in 1949 to 5.671 in March 1951 (but with the instability of the workforce making the number constantly fluctuating), out of which 1.276 were party members, organized in 22 party base organizations, each one corresponding to a shop-floor.⁶¹ According to a local official at a meeting of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation in March 1950, there were 1871 youths

⁵⁷ In Petrescu, “A Threat...”, p. 43.

⁵⁸ Adrian Atineu et al. *Prahova. Monografie* [Prahova. Monograph]. (Bucuresti: Editura Sport Turism, 1981), p. 164.

⁵⁹ “The analysis of the censuses of 1901 and 1930 indicated the concentration of industrial activity to Ilfov and Prahova counties,” according to Dragos Petrescu. “A Threat from Below? Workers’ Protests in Communist Romania.” CEU History Department Masters Thesis, 1998/10, p. 42.

⁶⁰ Atineu, *Prahova...*, p. 112.

⁶¹ Arhivele Naționale ale României [National Archives of Romania – NAR], fond CC of the P.C.R., Department of Economics, file 18/1949, 96, and NAR (Prahova County Office - PCO), fond 58 (City Committee of P.M.R. Ploiesti 1950-1951), file 3/1950, 35. In the Bucharest office of the archives, the enterprise was occasionally found listed with its pre-1949 name, Concordia.

working at “May 1st” Enterprise, “most of them undisciplined rural elements.”⁶² This was the environment in which agitation was deployed by the Socialist state in order to “discipline” the workforce.

These theoretical considerations require that the state in the enterprise during a controversial period such as the early years of state Socialism be traced to the effects it had on the workers and in turn, the workers’ individual and collective practices must similarly be observed in relation to the state-system. The findings are not meant to reveal the peculiarity of my particular choice of enterprise (although there are workplace specifics), but rather to be extrapolated to similar objects of analysis in that period.

⁶² NAR (PCO), fond 58 (City Committee of P.M.R. Ploiesti 1950-1951), file 3/1950, 1.

2. Post-War Economic Conditions and the New Economy in the Enterprise

*Storming at the end of the month leads to the exhaustion of the machinery and of the human element.*⁶³

2.1. Some Traits of the Planned Economy

The type of state-formation process initiated after World War 2 in Romania had as its underlying principle economic growth and modernization. The art of governance would be synonymous with good economic management, but the logic of welfare would be completely different from the capitalist one.⁶⁴ Katherine Verdery accurately – and colorfully – explained that

[s]ocialism's inner drive was to accumulate not profits [...] but distributable resources. This is more than simply a drive for autarchy, reducing dependency on the outside: it aims to increase dependency of those within. [...] In capitalism, those who run lemonade stands endeavor to serve thirsty customers in ways that make a profit and outcompete other lemonade stand owners. In socialism, the point was not profit, but the relationship between thirsty persons and the one with the lemonade – the Party center, which appropriated from producers the various ingredients (lemon, sugar, water) and then mixed the lemonade to reward them with, as it saw fit. Whether someone made a profit was irrelevant: the transaction underscored the center's paternalistic superiority over its citizens – that is, its capacity to decide who got more lemonade and who got less.⁶⁵

It follows from this that one of the most important assets of a unit of production was its bargaining power for the procurement of supplies. The constant “storming”, “shock work” and overall jolting that the planning system presupposed actually made impossible one of the ideological pillars of state socialism – the rational, “scientific” calculation of

⁶³ Official from the “May 1st” enterprise party committee, NAR, (PCO), fond 58, file 14/1951, 162.

⁶⁴ Barbu, *Republica...*, p. 90.

⁶⁵ Katherine Verdery. *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 25.

production, distribution and consumer needs. The economy might no longer have worked for profits, but it also did not work for consumers. Instead, it worked “for the plan.”⁶⁶ As Lewin observed, “this meant [...] that the whole setting built in the primacy of the politico-administrative institutions and principles over the economy and economic ones.”⁶⁷ What I see reinforced here is the idea that to look for economic “classes” and to perform class analysis in societies shaped by these principles would mean to miss the point, considering that the position of a person or group in the social space depended largely on their proximity to, or distance from, power.⁶⁸

The “breaking down” of the plan⁶⁹ to enterprise, department, brigade and individual level also enabled negotiations between every one of these levels and gave the shop-floor workers more leverage over the work process. The translation into practice of this operation depended on the supplies the enterprise received from the center. Since supply shortages were constantly disrupting the production process and bargaining (with the center as well as with other enterprises) was an unofficial practice without which the official system would have been impossible to maintain, the state and the managers could not prevent workers from having increasingly more control over the said production process in order for work not to grind to a halt.⁷⁰ “Just as managers’ bargaining with

⁶⁶ Lewin, “On Soviet...”, p. 276.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 276-277.

⁶⁸ Depretto, “Pour une histoire...”, p. 14.

⁶⁹ In The People’s Republic of Romania, the first Five-Year Plan was designed for the years 1951-1955. In 1949 and 1950, respectively, economic planning was guided by one-year plans.

⁷⁰ See Michael Burawoy. *The Politics of Production: Factory Regimes under Capitalism and Socialism*. (London: Verso, 1995), p. 121 *passim*.

bureaucrats undercut central power,” Verdery mentions, “so labor’s position in production undercut that of management.”⁷¹

2.2. “Rational” work-time

Such a process of politically reshaping the economy had to be initiated through a new disciplining of work-time. Sandrine Kott argues that in the case of the GDR – but I posit that this can be extended to Romania as well – the mastering of time had always been a concern of the regime, a regime which defined political economy as “an economy of time.”⁷² This held especially true for the large enterprises, since industrialization generates a new relation with time and the discipline of industrial labor entails the institutionalization of a new temporal rhythm.⁷³ In Romania, the economic measures proposed by the Communist Party (in 1947 still part of the Democratic Parties’ Bloc – BPD⁷⁴) prior to the adoption of a planned economy in June 1948 provide a glimpse into the intended transformations of the work process by the state in what regards time and the workplace. After decrying the fact that “what the working masses and the democratic government have accomplished so far is being threatened by the inability to make savings on the material and financial resources of a war-torn country after two years of drought

⁷¹ Verdery, *What...*, p. 23. One production report from the “May 1st” enterprise for the 2nd trimester of 1951 mentions that the General Direction of the Sovrompetrol “changed our plan for the month of April three times.” NAR, (PCO), fond 58, file 14/1951, 162.

⁷² Kott, *Le communisme...*, p. 295.

⁷³ See *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Blocul Partidelor Democratice (BPD) was a coalition established in 1946 in order to take part in the elections of November 19 that year. It was led by the PCR, whose leaders hoped to have as broad an electoral base as possible, and it also contained the Tătărescu and Alexandrescu factions of the Liberal and the Peasants’ Party, respectively, the Plowmen’s Front (Prime-minister Petru Groza’s party), the Romanian Social Democratic Party, the Patriots’ Union and the Jewish Democratic Committee.

[...]”⁷⁵ and after a tirade against the “economic sabotage of the reactionary circles,”⁷⁶ the party posits that the industrial sector meets the necessary objective conditions for the increase of production.⁷⁷ The tools to accomplish that would be provided by the economic and logistic aid of the Soviet Union and by the intervention of the state organs.⁷⁸ The latter entailed the institution of the system of labor by piece rates (according to time worked and number of products made) and production bonuses (the norms of which would have to be established according to “scientific” criteria⁷⁹), the introduction of two or three shifts where objective conditions allowed it (in the years of planning, this allowed enterprises to increase work hours, especially during “shock work” periods) or the “rational” distribution of workforce by relocating excess workers from some enterprises to others where there was a shortage of labor (this included public projects and agriculture).⁸⁰

The “rational” distribution of the workforce did not have merely social and economic goals, but blatant political ones, as well. The desired decrease of production costs, rise in workers’ buying power, smoother delivery of supplies to enterprises and strengthening of discipline could allegedly only be achieved by “combating the reactionary forces that will attempt to sabotage by all means the just application of economic laws and of the rational distribution of the workforce.”⁸¹ The union members and the Communists in the enterprises had to “fight for the removal of those elements strangers to the working-class and to industrial production. [...] Peasant elements, owners of households in the

⁷⁵ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Department of Economics, file 2/1947, 2.

⁷⁶ NAR, fond CC, Economics, file 2/1947, 5.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 7. In Romanian *muncă în acord* and in French *travail aux pièces*.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

countryside, absentees, unprofessional elements, these are unruly elements that represent deadweight for the enterprise.”⁸² The instructions for the application of this provision given to the local committees of the PCR detail the attributions of the newly-formed Party commissions in every county capital and in major industrial centers. The commissions were comprised of the head of personnel (cadres), a union representative, a party member from the Local Union Commission, a party member from the Internal Affairs Ministry and a local representative of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.⁸³ Their tasks were, among others, “the mobilization of the unions for a just representation of employees’ interests, influencing the local workforce redistribution commissions in order for them to justly translate the provision into practice [...] and to guide the working masses towards supporting the efforts of the ‘Ministerial Commission for the economic and financial recovery of the country.’”⁸⁴

The local application and the effects of this provision are difficult to evaluate. However, taking into account the fact that an obedient management was necessary for the nationalization of the means of production and the institution of a planned economy, most of those purged – for lack of a better word – were part of the old, so-called “reactionary” management.⁸⁵ Moreover, in the case of the Prahova Valley refineries and enterprises, the strict application of the provision would have meant the replacement of most of the workforce; the roughly 30 km oil rig hallway alongside the Prahova river between Ploiești and Câmpina relied mostly on workers from the adjacent rural environment. Indeed, according to a local official at a meeting of the Department of Propaganda and

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Most likely personal relations, grudges and understandings influenced the process. Unfortunately, I have yet to find any written trace of them.

Agitation in March 1950, there were 1871 youths working at “May 1st” Enterprise, “most of them undisciplined rural elements.”⁸⁶

Still, there is an intervention from engineer I.G. from the Liliești oil rig addressed to the “Sovrompetrol” headquarters that gives an example of the results of interfering in workforce mobility from above. Close to what Kott calls “anarchie temporelle” – which came counter to the state’s discursive insistence on the plan as a firm regulator of industrial labor⁸⁷ - the engineer decries the fact that the boilermakers⁸⁸ which were brought in are not skilled and do not have official residence in the area (they were *flotanți*), therefore he cannot send them to qualification schools.⁸⁹ The report also reveals the countless stoppages, the improvisations the technical intelligentsia had to make in order to, at best, keep the worksite in production, and the fluctuations in the workforce. With relevance to the incoming discussion of norms and wages according to groups, the engineer mentions that due to issues of qualification and in order to keep the rig operational, he has had to make foremen out of young boilermakers, bona-fide boilermakers out of older apprentices, and bona-fide welders out of apprentice welders.⁹⁰ Their new status in the work nomenclature required a rise in salaries, and those who did not receive it stopped working or threatened to leave.⁹¹ In the Digging-Pipes section, there was “chaos” with the provisional and definitive industrial working staff; the workers “have no consistency and there’s a permanent transit in this department. [...]

⁸⁶ NAR (PCO), file 3/1950, 1.

⁸⁷ See Kott, *Le communisme...*, p. 295-296.

⁸⁸ Where possible, I will translate into English the names of the many professions mentioned in reports. In the cases of untranslatable jargon, I will leave the terms as they are in the original, since most of the professions have died out in the industrialization process and the issue is also not particularly relevant in this context.

⁸⁹ NAR (PCO), fond “Sovrompetrol Regional Office I Ploiești”, file 12/1949, 16.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Some work for 2-3 days, then skip a week. Others don't receive their bread rationing cards even after weeks of employment. A lot of them won't work in the ditches, because they were not assigned protection gear."⁹² Material shortages also intertwined with work nomenclature status in this department, since "we were given very few boots and these workers do not officially have the right to be issued boots, so whenever they get their hands on a pair, they never take it off regardless of our instructions."⁹³ Another wage issue was the big difference between older workers' hourly pay and that of younger ones, in favor of the latter. Some of them, who had been working for one year in the Digging-Pipes department, earned as little as 17 lei an hour, while some who had been there for only 5 months got 18-19,50 up to 21 lei an hour.⁹⁴ As a result, there was a lot of discontent and many stoppages occurred.⁹⁵

2.3. The Worker:

The Individual and the Collective

In 1949, the adoption of the piece rate labor system, the division of wages according to work groups and the subsequent "breaking down" of the plan created tensions between individual and collective. What occurred could be regarded as a process of individuation, a term coined by Oleg Kharkhordin, who nuanced Foucauldian individualization and distinguished between two sides of such an experience: "individuation," when human beings "are separated from the primary group in which they were embedded and thus become units, to which personal responsibility for actions may be assigned and which

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

may be studied as particular objects”⁹⁶ and “individualization proper,” when these units “become the subjects of independent action, including the acts of self-perfection and self-transformation.”⁹⁷ In the case of the wage system, one can say that there is a tendency towards individuation not merely in the on-the-ground improvisations described above, but even in the principles that underscored its enactment, as I will attempt to demonstrate in what follows.

Interestingly enough, one of the main flaws identified in the wage system that was about to be changed was “the system’s tendency towards the equality (leveling) of labor and not making a clear distinction between skilled and less skilled workers, between heavy labor and light labor [...]”⁹⁸ This situation, the party assessment continued, led to the “demoralization of skilled workers, [...] the carelessness of lesser qualified workers with regards to the need for perfecting their knowledge and the avoidance of physically strenuous or hazardous labor, which leads to the disorganization of the production process [...]”⁹⁹ In work environments such as the one described earlier, these issues have been shown to occur *after* the enforcement of the new wage system and as a result of it.

Another important flaw identified in the then-current wage system was the practice of overtime, which would subsequently become a regular thing in enterprises, especially during the Socialist contests and moments of shock work, as we will see in the second chapter. The declared objective was to do away with overtime and make more efficient the eight-hour work-time because overtime created “an unhealthy, unscientific behavioral

⁹⁶ Oleg Kharkhordin. *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 164.

⁹⁷ Kharkhordin, *The Collective...*, p. 164.

⁹⁸ NAR, fond CC, Economics, file 28/1949, 4.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

pattern for workers during production, since a worker is paid up to 100% extra for it [...] and it leads to expensive products and lower living standards for workers.”¹⁰⁰

The wage system was meant to revise work-time according to scientific bases and reflect the principle “to each according to the quality and quantity of their work.”¹⁰¹ It was designed as a crucial stage in the “creation of The New Man in socialist production.”¹⁰² Briefly, the characteristics of the new wage system were as follows: four groups of retribution which accounted for all the industries and eight categories of laborers that would fall under the above mentioned groups. Group 1 included the steel, coal, mineral extraction and oil industry, together with certain trades from the transport industry (engine mechanic, pilot etc.). Group 2 included the specific trades of the metal working industry, railroad, road, air and water transport, methane gas, chemical industry, electro-technical, cement, celluloses, filing, as well as trades performed in difficult and hazardous conditions from the glass industry, ceramics, rubber, quarries, salt mines and graphic arts. Group 3 included the trades from the glass industry, ceramics, rubber, quarries, salt mines, graphic arts, forestry, wood working, paper industry, textile, shoes, construction materials, telecommunications, as well as certain trades performed in hazardous conditions from the cement, celluloses, tobacco and matches industries. Group 4 included the trades from the food, alcohol, tobacco and clothing industries.¹⁰³ An enterprise from the oil industry, for instance (oil equipment, refinery or oil rig), would theoretically employ workers from all groups, even though as a whole unit of production it fell under group 1; electricians, drivers and canteen personnel, present in such

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁰³ Information about wages in this paragraph is taken from NAR, fond CC, Economics, file 28/1949, 8-9. I mention it in this manner in order to avoid footnoting every single sentence.

enterprises, belonged to the other groups. However, these distinctions could be negotiated according to certain job specifics. In the case discussed earlier, the engineer mentioned that the entire personnel working on the drills above ground demanded to be upgraded to wage group 1 because they were officially registered as working in the Drills department,¹⁰⁴ even though they were not performing the types of labor officially required for that appointment.

The eight categories ranged from unskilled laborers (category 1) to foremen (category 8),¹⁰⁵ but due to job specifics and ambiguities between categories (“slightly higher qualifications,” “special knowledge” etc.¹⁰⁶), appointment to one or the other would regularly be the subject of negotiations at the level of the enterprise and the departments within it.

To account for the quantity of labor, a follow-up methodological provision to the new wage system was adopted in June 1949 in the form of individual piece rates. “Individual piece rates,” the provision stipulated, “are better suited to the principle of payment-by-quantity than team piece rates.”¹⁰⁷ It was up to the enterprise to determine first the category of the work and then the quantity of products required in a certain amount of time. The earnings of the worker were calculated according to what he/she produced regardless of the time it took them to produce it.¹⁰⁸ If one takes, for instance, a work done in “May 1st” enterprise (the metallurgic industry): this means group 1. If the work is deemed part of, let’s say, category 3 (skilled labor of medium difficulty), according to the

¹⁰⁴ NAR (PCO), fond “Sovrompetrol Regional Office I Ploiești”, file 12/1949, 17.

¹⁰⁵ NAR, fond CC, Economics, file 28/1949, 13-14. In English, the term “foreman” can be used to translate the qualification of those included in category 7, as well (*șef de echipă* would literally be translated as “head of team,” but it is roughly the same as *maistru*, which was category 8, except the latter had a higher degree of skill).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

criteria, the payment for it would be 22 lei per hour. The time norm for a part is 30 minutes (or 0,5 hours), which means the production norm is 2 parts per hour. The value of the wage for one part would be:

$$22 \text{ lei/h} \times 0,5 \text{ h per part} = 11 \text{ lei/part}$$

$$\text{Or } 22 \text{ lei/h divided by } 2 \text{ parts/h} = 11 \text{ lei/part}^{109}$$

This trickling down shaped how work was performed and led to an unpredictability of planning targets and to the “temporal anarchy” I mentioned earlier in the chapter.¹¹⁰ In the early days of 1951 (the first year of the first Five-Year Plan), in the Drills department of “May 1st” enterprise, the majority of the workers gathered to demand a change in work-time from eight working hours a day to twelve working hours a day followed by twenty-four hours off. According to the report, the reason for that was the workers’ long commute to and from their villages. The head of the department said that was impossible, “because you can’t work 12 hours continuously in that heat and I can’t turn off the ovens for 24 hours.”¹¹¹ After a week of discussions with the workers and the base organization, on January 23rd all the workers living in the countryside gathered to tell the head of the department that they are the majority and he has to do what they decide and as of next day, they would be coming to work on a 12/24 basis.¹¹² After the involvement of the City Party Committee and several days of work in this rhythm, the workers were convinced to return to the eight hour day. They were told that “this operation was planned by the

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ See footnote 23.

¹¹¹ NAR (PCO), fond 58 (City Committee of P.M.R. Ploiești), file 5/1951, 11.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

kulaks and their henchmen [...] and the Plan will suffer as a result.”¹¹³ The only sanction was the exclusion from the party of one worker, considered to be one of the more “vocal elements, with a history of disorder.”

Understandings between workers or between foremen and workers when it came to norms also shaped work-time. At a meeting of the base organization of the Mechanics 1 department held in January 1952, “comrade” foreman C. was called out for not handing out the norm forms¹¹⁴ to his workers. Such understandings were common in the period of the first Five-Year plan in the Soviet Union, as well, due to the perceived over-regulation of labor by the state. Siegelbaum mentions that the state campaign to wipe out absenteeism in enterprises, initiated by a decree in November 1932, was sabotaged in numerous ways: “Foremen could retroactively inform timekeepers that absences were authorized or simply strike certain names from their list. [...] even those workers dismissed from one shop could be rehired by another without losing their entitlement to rations or accommodation.”¹¹⁵

The “breaking down” of the plan, as I mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, was one of the most important measures undertaken by the state to shape the workplace. Kott pointed out that “for the employees of an enterprise, the nation-wide Five-Year Plan was more of a ‘fiction’ than a concrete order. It was in fact the annual plan, often called the enterprise plan, which really mattered and it was the one that imposed its rhythms on the employees.”¹¹⁶ Judging from the party reports, I would add that a further division would be made down to a monthly plan, which is constantly mentioned as “fulfilled and passed”

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ The official sheets on which individual norms were mentioned and where workers would write down the amount of work performed.

¹¹⁵ Siegelbaum, “Masters...”, p. 182.

¹¹⁶ Kott, *Le communisme...*, p. 297.

or “under-fulfilled” by either department brigades or individual workers. Mark Pittaway asserted that “[I]n actual fact, planning sought to directly control the labour process itself. In order to do this, planners aimed to define the role each individual citizen was supposed to play in the economic life of the country.”¹¹⁷

The instructions for the breaking down of the first Five-Year Plan issued by the State Committee for Planning (Comitetul de Stat a Planificării – CSP) reveal the procedures envisaged by state officials. First, the plan was distributed to the ministries, institutions and central economic organizations on December 23rd 1950. Then the General Directions of each industry would break it down to the level of each enterprise in its supervision, with all its indicators: production plan, technical plan, supply plan, labor force and wages plan, cost reduction plan, investment plan, design plan and enterprise profile plan. This stage was supposed to last 2-4 days. The following stage involved discussions of the plan with enterprise managers, chief engineers, planning service chiefs and union delegates under the direct supervision of ministers (1-2 days). Next, the enterprise manager, chief engineer and planning service chief have to break down the plan for each department in their enterprise in collaboration with the heads of the departments. The secretary of the enterprise party organization and the president of the union had to get involved in this stage (1-6 days). After this came the discussion of the enterprise plan by the manager in a meeting with the personnel (all heads of departments, engineers, foremen, Stakhanovites, innovators and “rationalizers”). The party organization bureau and the union committee had to take part (1 day). At this meeting, department heads, foremen and Stakhanovites were supposed to state their opinions about the possibility of fulfilling and passing the

¹¹⁷ Pittaway, “The Social...”, p. 274.

enterprise plan. The party organization and the union were required to carry out agitation work in relation to the provisions and issues of the plan.¹¹⁸

The next step would be analyzing the department plan by the head of each department in a meeting with the engineers, foremen, Stakhanovites, innovators and rationalizers from their respective departments (1-2 days). The plan was to be broken down into teams, groups or brigades; party agitators, union representatives and Stakhanovites were required to carry out agitation work amongst the workers to fulfill and pass the department and brigade plans. Then would come the sixth stage, discussions on the plan with all the workers and breaking it down to individual work stations (2-3 days). Workers were supposed to “make commitments” to fulfill and pass their brigade plan. Posters with the commitments of every workers and progress graphs were to be displayed in the work sector of each brigade.¹¹⁹

The last two stages involved the centralization and dissemination of the commitments throughout the factory¹²⁰. The department plan, the workers’ commitments and their progress were to be displayed in visible areas. These issues also had to be “politically handled” in meetings of the unions and party base organizations.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ The information about the breaking down of the plan comes from NAR, fond CC, Economics, file 18/1950, 1-2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

¹²⁰ In the third chapter I elaborate more on these aspects during the Socialist contests and the dissemination of legislation amongst the workers.

¹²¹ NAR, fond CC, Economics, file 18/1950, 3-4.

2.4. Working and Eating for the Plan:

Materials and Food

As I mentioned in the first chapter, the emerging state structures in post-war Romania implied a social order “generated by an act of will and sustained by the act of will that must be constantly renewed.”¹²² But it was necessary for the act of will to be doubled by some form of material embodiment of its precepts; otherwise the mobilization of “working people” for the “building of socialism” would have little justification.

The issue of adequately supplying the working centers was first taken up by the central authorities of the newly-established state in a special meeting in November 1948. “Comrade” Petrescu mentioned that “several letters from various citizens arrived for the Central Committee and even for Com. Gheorghiu-Dej himself, letters in which people complain about the lack of food supplies for workers in winter. From the reports received from party organizations in the country and from what many of us have seen for themselves on the ground, the situation is extremely serious.”¹²³ The state company APROZAR in particular was considered to be in dire straits. After an inspection in the markets in Bucharest, it was reported that the vegetables and potatoes sold there “were in such a state that the workers, even though they desperately needed them, refused to buy them.”¹²⁴ A similar situation was encountered in butchers’ shops, where meat was seldom available for workers with rationing cards, while the demand was so high that “violent brawls between workers have been reported.”¹²⁵

¹²² Ssorin-Chaikov, *The Social...*, p. 6.

¹²³ NAR, fond CC, Economics, file 52/1948, 1.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

The discussion revolved predictably around the “sabotages” enacted by “dubious elements” which aimed at compromising state commerce. However, several interventions pointed to the need for an improvement of the role of the state in organizing food collections and distribution. “Comrade” Tănăsescu explained that “as far as the selling of meat for workers’ rationing cards, the butchers are not the only ones that avoid this kind of service. Meat is sold ‘freely’ even in workers’ cooperatives in the enterprises and at the Ministry of Industry.”¹²⁶ “Comrade” Vinea went on to stress that “food supplies are not yet integrated into the socialist sector. [...] It is only fair that the peasants do not give their best produce to the state for an insignificant price, but to the merchants, who pay better. Not to mention that the harvest for potatoes and corn this year have been very poor and state commerce only began its activity 6 months ago.”¹²⁷ The relationship between city and village is highlighted when “comrade” Țiu pointed out the fact that “in areas where there are no industrial centers, like Ialomița, Argeș, Putna, there are enough supplies, whereas in the more industrialized counties nothing was sent.”¹²⁸ “Comrade” Pârvulescu concluded by saying that all these hardships could not be dealt with properly “until the State becomes the sole buyer.”¹²⁹

In the city of Ploiești, the matter of food supplies was approached in similar fashion, with an emphasis on the then-ubiquitous principle of “strengthening the alliance between the working-class and the working peasantry.”¹³⁰ The fulfillment of the plan was said to depend on supplies, goods circulation and the exchange between village and city. The economics section of the Party City Committee pointed out that this exchange suffered,

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹³⁰ NAR (PCO), fond 58, file 12/1951, 23.

state commerce being unable to supply the canteens in enterprises with the necessary food stuffs for their menu plan: serving meat 4 times a week. “Workers have begun to complain about the menus”¹³¹ and in “May 1st” enterprise at the Central Tools department, “they said they want meat and won’t come to work any more if they keep getting spinach and beans, as if they were animals.”¹³² State shops were not supplied with the amount of basic goods initially planned; they had a shortage of butter, cheese, potatoes, meat by-products and meat: “From the 10,000 kgs. of fish meat we were planned to receive for the first trimester, we only received 2,730. Out of the 30,000 kgs. of live birds we only received 200. The 283,000 eggs we were programmed to receive from Dorohoi turned out to be only 150,000.”¹³³ The canteen at “May 1st” was reported to have serious supply issues because of the high prices in state commerce: 30 lei per meal.¹³⁴

The supply of machinery and tools was also an important pillar in the mobilization for the plan. After an inspection at several enterprises in Ploiești, a local official reported that at “May 1st” in the Mechanics 2 department, the enterprise plan for January 1951 had been passed by 114, 12%, in spite of the fact that there had been a shortage of tools.¹³⁵

I talked to a lathe operator about the socialist contests and his plan, and he told me that they couldn’t take part because they ran out of Widia knives¹³⁶. The head of the department told him that the Widia pieces were in short supply because special orders

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, file 14/1951, 163.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, file 12/1951, 23.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, file 14/1951, 162.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹³⁶ Widia (cemented carbide) is a hard material used in machining tough materials such as carbon steel or stainless steel.

had to be placed for them. The comrade later talked to the manager about the issue and a special order was made from Moscow.¹³⁷

Such improvisations were considered proof of “resourcefulness” and dedication to the fulfillment of the plan. At “Red Glass” cooperative, the same official reported that a locksmith made two machines out of scrap metal (because he had no other choice),¹³⁸ but the criticism is directed at the fact that “the comrade was not singled out and stimulated as an innovator.”¹³⁹ The fact that these improvisations increased production costs – whose reduction was one of the declared main goals of the new approach to labor, as I mentioned earlier – was overlooked.

Still, savings officially remained an important issue. One of the tasks of the department of economics of the City Committee was the introduction of savings books “in all enterprises of the heavy and light industries and for all workers at the production site, where an up-to-date status of individual and brigade savings books will be held.”¹⁴⁰ By the end of the year, 550 personal savings accounts had been opened for the workers in “May 1st” enterprise, 60 of them actually writing down their savings in the books.¹⁴¹

2.5. The Monetary Reform of 1952:

Taking from the “Peasants”, Not Giving to the “Workers”

Assuming that the living standards of workers in industrial centers were decreasing while the peasantry was well-off, the central authorities attempted to intensify the establishment of collective farms (gospodării agricole colective – GAC, the Romanian

¹³⁷ NAR (PCO), fond 58, file 12/1951, 20.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, file 14/1951, 137.

version of the sovhoz), the target being 1,000 GACs for 1950.¹⁴² Due to the violence that accompanied this drive¹⁴³ and in order to avoid alienating the entire peasantry, Gheorghiu-Dej temporarily halted the establishment of GACs and put forward the development of the TOZ.¹⁴⁴ In order to settle the collectivization issue, the leadership of the PMR went to Moscow for a meeting with Stalin, where he suggested that Romania was in need of a new monetary reform: “The leu is shaky because of the peasantist, non-Marxist politics that has been implemented,” Stalin is alleged to have said,¹⁴⁵ one of the implications of this statement being that the days in office of Romania’s Finance Minister, Vasile Luca, were numbered.¹⁴⁶ The ensuing monetary reform – adopted on January 28 1952 – sought to sterilize the “excess cash” that the countryside allegedly benefited from and, by means of a more efficient taxation, oblige the peasantry to relinquish their reserves to the state. It would also increase the planned norms for industrial workers without a complementary increase in wages.

With regards to the increase in work norms, the issue was framed by the authorities in the vein of “progress.” Leonte Răutu, head of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation, came out in February 1952 with a long speech in which he attempted to justify the new course. Hinting at the increasing discontent of the workforce, he attacked the “backwardness” of society, asking himself rhetorically whether the party set off from the

¹⁴² See Dan Cătănuș. “Componenta agrară a ‘devierii de dreapta’ din P.M.R., 1951-1952” [The Agrarian Component of the ‘Right-Wing’ Deviation in P.M.R., 1951-1952], in *Arhivele Totalitarismului*, no. 64-65 (3-4/2009), Bucharest: INST, p. 56-57.

¹⁴³ “Arrests, tortures, gun-point threats, [...] sending the children home from school, threatening to write down the names of middle peasants as kulaks [...]” Cătănuș, “Componenta...”, p. 57. See his footnotes for the archival sources of his information.

¹⁴⁴ Russian abbreviation for “association for the joint cultivation of land.” In a TOZ, only the workload was collective.

¹⁴⁵ Cătănuș, “Componenta...”, p. 58.

¹⁴⁶ The struggle for power at the top of the party, as well as the implications of the reform on the peasantry, are discussed in more detail throughout Cătănuș, “Componenta...”.

premise that the workers would remain “forever backward.”¹⁴⁷ “Are we not lacking the courage,” he insisted, “to smash the conservatism of our engineers and technicians, to smash the old traditions and norms and empower the new forces of the working class?”¹⁴⁸

The production norms were said to be constantly fulfilled and passed by the greater majority of the workforce:

Even as early as 1950, the decision was made to revise the norms in the chemical industry, because the greater mass of workers – not just the Stakhanovites – fulfilled them at a level of 144%. Three months after the increase, the average production level for the industry was 145%. At one of the largest enterprise in the country, the average norm fulfillment was 202%, meaning each worker made 2 norms. [...] Granted, the average production norm takes into account the capacity of the average worker, not that of the Stakhanovite, but if everyone easily fulfills the norm, it’s no longer a norm.¹⁴⁹

According to the provisions of the reform, the work-time would be reduced in the sense that a shorter manufacturing time would be required to make the same number of parts. The fulfillment of the new norms was said to be made possible by “profilisation,”¹⁵⁰ a process which also took place in Hungary.¹⁵¹ Every enterprise developed a profile, a range of products for which it had exclusive or near exclusive responsibility, “so that a given enterprise had a production range that would be transparent to central planners.”¹⁵² As a result, “the number of products in an enterprise has now been reduced, the organization of labor has improved. Enterprises are increasingly better equipped, supplied

¹⁴⁷ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Department of Propaganda and Agitation, file 1/1952, 89.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁵¹ See Pittaway, “The Social...”, p. 274-275.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 275.

with new machinery made domestically or in the Soviet Union and in other people's democracies."¹⁵³

Still, the reports from local organizations suggest that such assertions were covering up a much more tedious process. In "May 1st" enterprise, an agitator reports that "the plan was fulfilled, but storming has taken its toll on the machinery. [...] If the machinery were taken care of according to the technical provisions, we would perform better."¹⁵⁴ At Mechanics 3, "the new machines from the Soviet Union have been left in disarray. They needed fixing and none of the 15 men assigned to the task has tended to them."¹⁵⁵ A production report for the second trimester of 1951 mentions that

[I]n the Steel Smelting department, we received help from the Soviet Union to fulfill our high plan targets in the form of a 1 ½ ton oven for smelting steel, but for the past 5 months we have been sending memos to the General Direction of the Sovrompetrol to make it operational and we received no reply. The inability to use this oven leads to hectic shock work at the end of each month, which exhausts both man and machine.¹⁵⁶

Closely related to this issue was the workers' skill in using the machinery. The party erected qualification schools in each enterprise and pushed for the use of "the Soviet method of workplace qualification." For the early 1950s, most of the reports about the functioning of the qualifications schools indicate positive results. "Workplace qualification," mentioned a general overview for the city of Ploiești, "has yielded very good results in enterprises in the heavy industry: at "May 1st", Atelier Utilaj Petrolier, Macazul and Feroemail."¹⁵⁷ In the qualification schools, the problems are said to arise

¹⁵³ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 1/1952, 91.

¹⁵⁴ NAR (PCO), fond 58, file 14/1951, 138.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, file 12/1951, 116.

due to the fact that “most unskilled workers are from the agrarian sector and they don’t have much workplace stability in the enterprise, despite the efforts of the Party Committees, base organizations and union committees.”¹⁵⁸ Managers are also criticized for “not sending reliable workers from the ranks of those who perform skilled labor without being qualified. This does not encourage other unskilled laborers to come to the qualification schools.”¹⁵⁹

2.6. Conclusions

The centrally planned economy in Romania involved a great deal of decentralization and “unplannable” aspects of production work.¹⁶⁰ One of the party center’s main ideological pillars, namely “scientifically” controlling the state economy to ensure better governance for the “working people,” was actually translated into breaking down the state plan to the level of the individual and establishing a wage system that led to the individualization of the industrial worker’s efforts for better pay. It thus invited “non-scientific” bargaining, understandings between shop-floor workers, foremen and technical intelligentsia, but also prompted the singling out of highly skilled workers as Stakhanovites, half-baked improvisations in the technical process due to the shortage of materials and a struggle between workers and the state for the appropriation of the production process. I would say, as Pittaway pointed out in the case of Hungary, that the implementation of centralized economic planning led to centralization at the level of

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ This process has been shown to be more evident in the cases of early state Socialism in Hungary and the GDR, and in the Soviet Union during the 1930s than in Romania during the same period. See Pittaway, Kott and Lewin.

national institutions, but presupposed considerable individualization of production and remuneration.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, as we have seen in the letters to the leadership of the P.M.R. and in the reports from enterprises, there is increasing demand that the state “solve things.” The more the Romanian people’s democratic state found it difficult to “scientifically and rationally” plan the economy, the more it was requested of it to get involved. Therefore, the ideological presence of the state in the enterprise is still strong and in the next chapter we shall see how it trickled down with further hardships and re-appropriations.

¹⁶¹ Pittaway, “The Social...”, p 293.

3. Propaganda and Agitation

We must re-educate the masses; and only propaganda and agitation can re-educate them. (V.I. Lenin)

Paraphrasing Comrade Stalin's words about writers ('writers are the engineers of human souls'), one may say that the Bolshevik agitator must be the architect of human souls. In our epoch, when the main and basic task is the liquidation of the survivals of capitalism in the economy and in people's awareness, Bolshevik agitation is a powerful battering-ram which breaks down the hostile fortresses of old traditions and practices. (L. Perchik)¹⁶²

3.1. Agitation as Education

Although the subject of extensive research, the amount of resources invested by the Soviet Union and by post-World War 2 Soviet-inspired "people's democracies" into the work of propaganda and agitation requires continuous nuances guided by an understanding of local contexts and by the process of translation of ideology enacted both by the recipients of that ideology and by its rank-and-file disseminators. Ideas, after all, can only function in certain situations which arise from specific social structures and are applied and received by actual people, who may use them in ways different from the ones envisaged by their creators. The attitudes of Communist officials towards the dissemination of ideology, its materializations in society and its social consequences can perhaps be better grasped if one turns to some of the basic tenets of achieving and maintaining power (inextricably linked to propaganda and agitation) set forth by

¹⁶² In David Wedgwood Benn. *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 93. Perchik wrote those words in a 1937 issue of *Agitatsy'ia*.

Vladimir Ilich Lenin. In Lenin's adaptation of Marxism, a revolutionary minority could seize power and then persuade the majority to support it by "enlightening" the latter:

Suppose that a small number of people are waging a struggle against a hideous evil of which the mass of slumbering people are unaware, or towards which they are indifferent. What is the main task of those waging the struggle? [It is] (1) to awaken as many of the slumberers as possible; (2) to enlighten them about the task and conditions of the struggle; (3) to organize them into a force capable of achieving victory; (4) to teach them how to make *correct* use¹⁶³ of the fruits of victory. Naturally, (1) must precede (2)-(4), which without (1) are impossible.¹⁶⁴

The question which subsequently arises is how this "correct" use of this achievement of power turned out to be implemented in Romania. This is a legitimate line of inquiry since the emphasis Lenin places on propaganda is as a necessary precondition for the accomplishment of other things. As Benn puts it, "[i]mplicit in this passage is the notion that the Bolshevik message was merely drawing attention to an objective reality; and also that the target audience would be sympathetic, once the message had been properly explained and understood."¹⁶⁵ In enterprises in Romania during the so-called Stalinist period, national and local level officials would have to constantly renew the message in order for the state to be able to shape the workplace.

A corollary to this assertion would be the emphasis placed by Soviet officials on the proper organization of propaganda and agitation¹⁶⁶ work as being in and of itself sufficient to ensure the success of implanting the political ideas of the Party. In its widest

¹⁶³ Emphasis mine.

¹⁶⁴ In Benn, *Persuasion...*, p. 58.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58-59.

¹⁶⁶ The initial distinction between "propaganda" and "agitation" posited by Gheorghe Plekhanov and used also by V. I. Lenin gradually became obsolete in Soviet state systems, which is why I use the terms interchangeably (the distinction was between propaganda as the presentation of complex ideas to a small group of politically-aware people, while agitation meant the presentation of a few simple ideas to large groups of people). See Peter Kenez. *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 7-8.

sense, according to a Soviet textbook, propaganda denoted “a special kind of social activity whose basic function is to disseminate knowledge, ideas, artistic values or other information for the purposes of moulding definitive views, notions or emotions and thereby exerting influence on people’s behavior.”¹⁶⁷ Indeed, the directives sent by the central office of the Propaganda and Agitation department within the Central Committee of the P.M.R. (Partidul Muncitoresc Român – Romanian Workers’ Party, which in 1965 became the Romanian Communist Party – P.C.R.) to the county, local and base organizations in the enterprises and collective farms, and the reports it in turn received, are loaded with issues of organizing ideological work for better results. In a meeting of the central office of the Propaganda and Agitation department which took place in September 1948, a certain “comrade” Cotiga pointed out that “from an organizational point of view [...] in Constanta, which is one of the counties where guidance work is relatively well performed, the secretary of one of the Party base organizations in the naval shipyards is also in charge of guidance work, thus he reports to himself and nobody has any responsibility. This must be improved.”¹⁶⁸ This Romanian example would correspond to well-known Soviet precepts on the matter dating back to the time of the first industrialization drive in the early 1930s which continued to be invoked well into the 1970s; the Editor of *Pravda* wrote in 1977 that “the effectiveness of information work, of ideological activity as a whole, depends on who plans, organizes and controls it; and this is the prerogative of the party,”¹⁶⁹ while Mikhail Nenashev, future head of the *Goskomizdat*, was more forthright and stated that “[...] after a correct political line has

¹⁶⁷ Benn, *Persuasion...*, p. 21.

¹⁶⁸ Arhivele Nationale ale României [Romanian National Archives], fond C.C. of the P.C.R., Department of Propaganda and Agitation, file 9/1948, 231.

¹⁶⁹ See Benn, *Persuasion...*, p. 52.

been drawn up, organizational work decides everything, including the fate of the political line itself.”¹⁷⁰

These organizational strategies do not, however, fully explain the intrusiveness of propaganda and the authorities’ desire to penetrate every area of society – to reach literally everyone, as I mentioned in the theoretical chapter. Neither does the obvious desire of the Communist Party to maintain and legitimate its rule offer sufficient grounds for the enormous amount of resources invested in mass propaganda. While there was an exaggerated preoccupation with the planning and organization of propaganda and agitation, I claim that the stake was for propaganda mechanisms to shape and organize the “mobilization” of “the working people” towards the building of socialism. Indeed, the Soviet system

[...]has never been based on the notion of control by a ruling elite over a purely passive citizenry. The Soviet system derives its entire *raison d’être* from a programme of far-reaching social and economic transformation; and the system cannot achieve these goals merely by neutralizing opposition or protecting itself from overthrow. The attainment of these stated goals ultimately depends on the fulfillment of a further vital precondition – namely affirmative public action in pursuit of these goals. This, in turn, ultimately depends on the existence of conscious, motivated commitment to the goals at the grassroots level¹⁷¹

This is why I posited that in the enterprise it is infrastructural power – “the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm”¹⁷² – that takes precedence over despotic power – “the range of actions which the elite is empowered to undertake without routine,

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁷² Michael Mann. “The Autonomous Power of the State. Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results.” *Archives européennes de sociologie*, Vol. 25, (1984), p. 113.

institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups.”¹⁷³ Similarly, this complements the approach to the Socialist state’s penetration of the enterprise during the late 1940s and early 1950s as part of a process of state-formation¹⁷⁴ which entailed the development of institutional forms such as Socialist shop-floor contests, wall newspapers, workers’ clubs and the dissemination of legislation within the ideological effort in the enterprise. In what follows I will present these institutional forms in “May 1st Oil Equipment Enterprise” in Ploiești during the Stalinist period and the way they were shaped by agitators and workers alike.

The institutional forms for the ideological dissemination within the enterprise were foreshadowed already in the speech that Miron Constantinescu – then-editor of party newspaper *Scînteia* (“The Spark”) and future director of the Committee for State Planning – gave to the new members of the party in June 1945. Constantinescu assessed that due to its previous illegal status, the party was threatened by sectarianism.¹⁷⁵ It nonetheless had to overcome that burden and create “the link with the masses” that was “the essential task of each Party member.”¹⁷⁶ Setting the political line for the years when the Communist Party would become the only political force of the country (from 1948 until 1989), he added that “to be linked with the masses means to live permanently in their midst” and “to have an exemplary behavior in all circumstances, both when performing Party labor and in the private realm.”¹⁷⁷ He further put forward a precept that rank-and-file members and agitators would have difficulties with, namely that

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ See George Steinmetz. “Introduction: Culture and the State,” in George Steinmetz ed. *State/Culture. State Formation after the Cultural Turn*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 8-9.

¹⁷⁵ Arhivele Nationale ale României [National Archives of Romania - NAR], fond CC of the P.C.R., Department of Propaganda and Agitation, file 35/1945, 2.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

a leading organ of the Party, such as a Party committee in a big enterprise [...] must at all times be aware of the Party work throughout the sector and of the way in which the cadres and the mass of the Party apply the Party line in the given conditions [...] In Party information reports, an organization must not simply present the situation of the Party, but reveal the concrete measures that were taken in order to do away with the weaknesses [...] Minutes of meetings, reports and notes are important, but the best means of information is direct contact with the people from both larger and smaller Party organizations.¹⁷⁸

In his general assessment of the propaganda work of Party base organizations in enterprises three years later, the same comrade Cotiga pointed out serious shortcomings in this area. He complained that “as far as work method is concerned, what goes out from the center trickles down to the field as if it were a stencil. That’s how they work in enterprises.”¹⁷⁹ He specifies that he “talked to an agitator¹⁸⁰ who was looking after 3 machines which were used by 7-8 men who were sometimes missing, came late or came drunk. He said he mobilized them only by telling them it was in the interest of the People’s Republic, he didn’t know anything else. He didn’t even read *Scînteia*, to be aware of the issues at hand.”¹⁸¹ The recommendations comrade Cotiga gives are relevant for the party’s approach to ideological work in the enterprise, in the sense of a formally declared preoccupation with concrete local issues. He mentions that “[...] in order to know people, you need to talk to everyone of them, and it is above all politically aware workers that must accomplish this task. [...] It is not enough for 3-4 workers to do good work and not be preoccupied with the other workers.”¹⁸² Following Cotiga’s intervention,

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷⁹ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 9/1948, 231.

¹⁸⁰ At the time they were also called “guidance workers” (îndrumători).

¹⁸¹ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 9/1948, 231-232.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 232.

Leonte Răutu, head of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation, emphasized and exemplified the issue of “little hiccups that often become serious problems”¹⁸³ by revealing how everyday social organization would prevent the enforcement of party decisions in the enterprise. Rautu pointed out that “the agitator must spot the little hiccups, because [...] our Party may be good, just and come with important improvements, but in the meantime someone might step on the worker’s toes and the smallest of hiccups ends up causing the greatest of discontents.”¹⁸⁴ He specified that “at an enterprise, it was noticed that the workers go to get drunk after they get their paychecks on Saturday. When they thought of giving out the paychecks on Mondays to prevent this, it caused an uproar and the Party base organization had to step in; the workers’ wives were complaining that in these conditions, they could not go to the market on Sundays.”¹⁸⁵

This meant some form of institutionalization of ideological efforts in the workplace was required. The plenary of the CC of the P.M.R. from January 23-24 1950 provided a legal framework for the party shop-floor organizations in the large enterprises through the establishment of party base organizations. These organizations were officially empowered to oversee the activities of the management of the enterprise.¹⁸⁶ But this did not mean that the institutions whose existence was channeled and shaped through these organizations – Socialist shop-floor contests, wall newspapers, workers’ clubs, Red Corners and the dissemination of legislation being the ones which I will discuss in the chapter – were shaped exclusively by top-down directives that reached an amorphous

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Vidrașcu, “Problemele...”, p. 39-40.

mass. As Newman and Clarke put it, “[e]ven where changes are experienced as imposed ‘from above’, actors have to find ways of translating them that are more or less congruent with ‘local’ contexts.”¹⁸⁷ While in this Romanian case, the instances of collective public contestation of central directives are rare,¹⁸⁸ the practices of the ideology in “May 1st” Oil Equipment Enterprise reveal stoppages, negotiations and reshuffling.¹⁸⁹

3.2. The Socialist Shop-Floor Contests

Among the effects of I.V. Stalin’s change of course in the Soviet Union and the commencement of the first Five-Year Plan was the reappearance in the factories of “traditional characteristics of production and social organization” that would “shape industrial reconstruction in ways the state could neither overcome nor entirely control.”¹⁹⁰ Shearer sees the shop-floor contests as “pre-revolutionary practices of shop contracting.”¹⁹¹ Put briefly, Socialist contests consisted of agreements – often arrived at after ‘challenges’ from the workers of one factory or shop to the workers of another – between enterprises, shops, brigades or individual workers to improve on various production indicators such as gross output, production price reductions or quality of

¹⁸⁷ Janet Newman, John Clarke. *Publics, Politics, Power: Remaking the Public in Public Services*. (London: SAGE Publications, 2009), p. 20.

¹⁸⁸ The factory-scale strike of July 1951 and the larger-scale strikes of February 1952 (after the monetary reform) in the refineries and rigs around the enterprise. I did not find enough information on either of these events.

¹⁸⁹ See Douglas Haynes, Gyal Prakash. “Introduction: The Entanglement of Power and Resistance”, in Douglas Haynes, Gyal Prakash (eds.). *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South-East Asia*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992 [1991]), p. 1-23, especially p. 2-4 and 15-16.

¹⁹⁰ David Shearer. “Factories within Factories: Changes in the Structure of Work and Management in Soviet Machine Building Factories, 1926-34”, in William G. Rosenberg and Lewis H. Siegelbaum (eds.). *Social Dimensions of Soviet Industrialization*. (Indianapolis: Indiana Univ. Press, 1993), p. 194.

¹⁹¹ Shearer, “Factories...”, p. 194.

parts.¹⁹² But the mobilization for the fulfillment of these plan indicators during these contests went beyond economic aspects and played a key role in the propaganda effort. Individual workers, as well as shop-floors, were encouraged to “make commitments” to fulfill and pass the planned norm, which resulted in the rewarding of the most skilled of them (the so-called Stakhanovites). However, the rewards (financial and social bonuses) were not always distributed, in spite of the normative provisions set up by the party. As we will see, either the various decision-levels within the enterprise would decide on the form of those bonuses or on the possibility of actually offering them, or the center would interfere in the final standings of the contests in order to favor certain industries.

In 1930, during the building of the dam that would supply the famous Magnitogorsk steelworks, Socialist contests were meant to mobilize workers allegedly to improve poor performances by “racing” with the construction of the dam towards the middle of the river; whoever reached the middle first would be declared the “winner.”¹⁹³ The idea of working faster and risking a faulty construction dissatisfied both the American consultants in charge of overseeing the building of the dam and the workers themselves. The former “protested vehemently (to no avail) that there would be serious consequences if the two sides [of the dam] did not meet properly.” The latter (both “new brigades” and older “peasants”) expressed their discontent by mocking the competition with one of their own: who could eat the most bread.¹⁹⁴ Kotkin writes that one Soviet official reported talking about the competition with the leader of an *artel*¹⁹⁵ – “a strong tough old guy.” He

¹⁹² Donald Filtzer. *Soviet Workers and Stalinist Industrialization*. (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p. 70.

¹⁹³ More on the difficult working conditions in Magnitostroi and the political involvement in the project in Stephen Kotkin. “Peopling Magnitostroi: The Politics of Demography,” in Rosenberg and Siegelbaum, *Social Dimensions...*, p. 63-105.

¹⁹⁴ Kotkin, “Peopling...”, p. 79.

¹⁹⁵ In Russia and the Ukraine, *artels* were traditionally semi-formal associations of workers that often worked far from their homes and lived as a commune. Kotkin mentions that “their leaders were generally

“listened to us with a reserved expression on his face. It seemed that he understood everything, and was agreed... and then the old carpenter exclaimed: ‘It’s not your business to teach me how to work faster. With my axe I’ve brought forth dozens of churches and no one hurried me, nor told me that I worked slowly.’¹⁹⁶

In the contest occasioned by the celebration of May 1st 1949, the “May 1st” enterprise passed the factory planned target by 13%.¹⁹⁷ The shortage of materials is already felt, being cited as one of the main issues in impeding the unfolding of the contests: “The raw and auxiliary materials needed did not reach the workplaces on time, we needed more special steel, welding electrodes, axels, tin iron [...]”¹⁹⁸ Many enterprises did not even take part in the contests because of the lack of raw materials.¹⁹⁹ Another hindrance was the number of holidays in April. It is mentioned that “the third day after Easter, roughly 60% of the employees did not turn up for work, even though it was a working day [...] and in areas where there are other ethnicities, Easter was held twice.”²⁰⁰ The evaluation of the information in the report on the contests reveals that there were tensions even after the awards were given, when the central authority (The General Confederation of Labor – CGM) tried to intervene in favor of the heavy industry. “Comrade” Stoica of the central office of Propaganda and Agitation said that

[i]n what regards the handing of the Red Flags to the performing enterprises, I think there have been some mishaps [...] that must be corrected in the future. When we calculated

older peasants, men who commanded absolute loyalty from other members and brooked no incursions into their authority.” See p. 77.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁹⁷ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 21/1949, 4. The numbers in these reports are based on information from the local organizations. While the numbers sometimes contain exaggerations, details about work methods and about how those numbers were reached were more likely to be given as a result of on-site inspections.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.* The reference is to the customary one-week gap between Catholic and Orthodox Easter.

who would get the Red Flags, we noticed the heavy industry was not represented. [...] I don't believe we'll be able to make any concrete changes in favor of the heavy industry now, since the C.G.M. has already tried to take two flags away from the textile industry and failed, because [they] somehow found out about it and sent a delegation to C.G.M. to protest.²⁰¹

“Comrade” Vass disagreed and claimed that there was “a big difference between cotton, wool or silk filing and oil extraction equipment, for example, and the textiles should give up two flags to the heavy industry in order to correct the mistake.”²⁰² Compromise is eventually reached with everyone in the meeting agreeing to the manufacturing of more Red Flags and to the fact that, despite all the issues, these Socialist contests constitute a solid base on which agitators can build on in their mobilizations for future contests.²⁰³ A difficult task for the 30 agitators assigned to Prahova County for 1950 to coordinate the work of the base organizations, out of which only 21 were active and out of these 21, 7 were just attending their first Marxism-Leninism night classes.

Subsequent Socialist contests in “May 1st” enterprise are reported to have gone well – in the generalist fashion that Miron Constantinescu had warned against – and to have engaged “a considerable number of workers.”²⁰⁴ It becomes specific when it mentions the number of unjustified absences that prevented a better performance in the contests. For January 1951 they amounted to 5,676 and for February they totaled an impressive 10,616.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁰⁴ NAR (PCO), fond 58, file 14/1951, 80.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Individual commitments and achievements were highly valued during this period²⁰⁶ and these performers were considered the most valuable agitators of the workforce. For instance, comrade D.C. took the commitment to “make the bronze parts required for the globular cast-iron prototype pumps that are in the commitment of the enterprise outside his planned work program and also do maintenance work on his machine, while comrade I.N. has committed to passing his norm by 50% and so far he has managed to do it by 70% and there are many comrades like them.”²⁰⁷ Notwithstanding the likely exaggerations, for the skilled workers who also engaged in agitation work the party had more than just eternal gratitude and individual Red Flags; it had economic and social incentives. A “leader in production” (*fruntaș în producție*) who maintained his/her achievements for six months would officially receive a deduction of 25-75% for a vacation in a villa of the C.G.M., a reduction of school taxes for his/her children enrolled in any form of middle or higher education and 50% deduction on tickets for nine theater performances, films or sporting events for the next semester.²⁰⁸

3.3. The Wall Newspaper

The wall newspaper (*gazeta de perete*) was meant to be the grass-roots press organ for each shop-floor in every enterprise. Workers were constantly mobilized to write about factory innovators, “leaders in production” or point out improper conduct noticed in other colleagues’ work behavior. The institution of the wall newspaper is perhaps a good example of Kharkhordin’s second aspect of individualization, namely “individualization

²⁰⁶ A trait also present in the German Democratic Republic. See Sandrine Kott. *Le communisme au quotidien. L’entreprise d’État dans la société est-allemande*. (Paris: Belin, 2001), p. 119-126.

²⁰⁷ NAR (PCO), fond 58, file 14/1951, 73.

²⁰⁸ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 43/1951, 1.

proper.” There are instances of the worker engaging in self-perfection and self-training – “working on oneself” (*rabota nad soboi* being the original term in Russian).²⁰⁹

In 1948, Leonte Răutu elaborated on the propagandistic purpose of the newspaper and its potential misuse:

We must use the wall newspaper, but it will not play that [agitation] role if it handles issues that are completely cut off from current problems. Most wall newspapers are in the habit of dealing with ‘planetary’ issues, general articles concerning a national or international matter, but of little or no concern for the respective enterprise. It should also have small poems, workers like that and it may attract them. But it has to be placed in an appropriate place, since more often than not people don’t even know it’s there. The task of the agitator is to use the wall newspaper like in the Soviet Union, where they even have special issues. Someone been singled out for his good work? Put out a special issue and it’s of great influence.²¹⁰

A 1949 analysis of several such newspapers underlined the improvements they had made, in line with the approach outlined above. “The fictitious editorial boards of the wall newspapers have been replaced with actual ones, and they are beginning to come to life.”²¹¹ Although praised for its focus on the local aspects of the Socialist contests²¹², the case of “May 1st” enterprise, with 24 wall newspapers and one factory-scale central newspaper would only accomplish that two years later, when the situation was assessed to be “relatively poor.”²¹³ The 1951 report of the Central Gazette (the factory-scale newspaper) for the first trimester of 1951 mentioned nine major themes that needed to be tackled by June 15 and they all cover the agitation themes that were meant to get people to be more actively involved in the building of socialism in the enterprise: popularizing

²⁰⁹ See Kharkhordin, *The Collective...*, p. 231, and chapter 2 of this thesis.

²¹⁰ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 9/1948, 261.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, file 28/1949, 1.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹³ NAR (PCO), fond 58, file 14/1951, 61.

party schools, literacy schools and education in general; mobilizing workers for the fulfillment of the production plan; innovations, inventions and rationing; popularizing the activity of the Committee for the Struggle for Peace; handling the wall newspapers in each department during the Socialist contests between departments; drawing critical cartoons; popularizing June 1st, International Children's Day.²¹⁴

Articles and cartoons ranged from singling out leaders in production to "critical and self-critical" pieces on inebriated workers. A piece by 'comrade' N.S. praised "comrade" R.S.'s smelting brigade from the Cast Iron department, who had made the commitment to produce

three extra tons in addition to the planned seven in honor of the Youth Days. Similarly, the brigade of comrade E.N. from printing and comrade. M.P. from cores made the commitment to pass the norm assigned to them for work in the villages. The brigade of comrade D.I. in Mechanics 3 made the commitment to apply the Nina Nezarova Soviet method in building the roller drills. All this is the living expression of our working people fighting for a better life [...] and for the building of socialism in our country.²¹⁵

The cartoons were an integral part of the effort to "work on the self." "Comrade" N.C. was shown manufacturing reject spare parts and then tossing them away in a hole "so that no one might know about it."²¹⁶ Two days later, the "comrade" wrote a "self-critical piece" and placed it next to the cartoon, "showing where his mistake might lead to now that we are at the beginning of the five-year plan."²¹⁷ The commitment he subsequently made was followed-up by his fellow colleagues, who testified that "he has made good on his commitment and is now indeed an example, since his is the cleanest machine in the

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

department and he is also tutoring 2 comrades for qualification. After the scheduled eight hours, he is cleaning his machine and oiling it.”²¹⁸

However, mobilization was hardly an easy task. On the one hand, the rationing system in place at the time made paper a rare commodity outside the official network of newspapers, and on the other, many “comrades” were reluctant to offer their support to the wall newspapers. The report mentions that some workers asked to write about issues in their department would constantly postpone their piece and would then become annoyed when pressed with a deadline. This happened in the case of comrade I.G., who “even though [he] promised to write about the results of the Socialist contests, to this day he hasn’t sent anything. I even put an empty page in the wall newspaper saying it was the place of comrade I.’s article and called on Comrade Secretary S. from the party organization to plead with him, but he just said: ‘Leave me the hell alone, I got loads of work to do.’”²¹⁹

3.4. Workers’ Clubs and Red Corners

The workers’ clubs and the red corners – the latter functioned in enterprises where there were no clubs and would be subsequently integrated into a club after it was established – were spaces that hosted work-related activities as well as leisurely ones. Agitation work was carried out by leaders in production disseminating Soviet methods related to production improvement and “building socialism,” doing book reviews in order to popularize Soviet and socialist realist literature and holding brigade or shop meetings.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

At the meeting of the central office of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation held in June 1948, Leonte Răutu revealed the propagandistic and educational relevance of such institutions:

There is a relatively high number of clubs, but in certain enterprises there are none. [...] What do we do where there's no club? A Red Corner must be created. There the worker should find a newspaper, a record player and stuff. A guidance worker must be there to make a good atmosphere. They should read *Scînteia* there. [...] Reading the paper is so important, that Kalinin showed how during [the Bolsheviks'] underground days, intense guidance work was done by collectively reading newspapers.²²⁰

Similarly, a report from 1952 outlining measures for the improvement of agitation work in the enterprises stressed the importance of these institutions in the translation of decisions into practice at a local level:

In the area of mass cultural work, we must control cultural work in clubs and Red Corners in large enterprises to ensure the application of the Party's and Government's decision regarding the popularization of Stakhanovites and leaders in production. We will analyze the deficiencies in the clubs' work in large metallurgical and oil enterprises and help organize them, the Red Corners and union libraries. We will consider issuing of a magazine that would guide the activities of clubs and Red Corners, something like the Soviet magazine *Klub*. We will organize a contest between all union artistic bands.²²¹

This outreach, however, did not always find itself translated into practice at a local level. A report of the Ploiești office of Propaganda and Agitation from 1950 mentioned that "workers' clubs in enterprises throughout the city are visited by 15% of the workers."²²² In the leading refineries around the city, the situation was hardly any better. An inspection from the center criticized the state of affairs at Băicoi-Țintea oil rig

²²⁰ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 9/1948, 261.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, file 1/1952, 40.

²²² NAR (PCO), fond 58, file 3/1950, 14.

complex, reporting that at Băicoi, “even though they had the material means to do it for a long time,” the “comrades” there had only just thought it necessary to start a workers’ club,²²³ while at Țintea, “even though they have a club, it barely has any activity. This is proven by the fact that on average, only 50 workers per month - out of the 3000 – read books from the club library.”²²⁴ Emphasizing the importance of education, the reporting agitator also decried the lack of reading groups or conferences, claiming that all cultural activity there was “limited to the choir and the dancing team.”²²⁵ There was no knowledge of the national contests between clubs and Red Corners, “and in this matter, Băicoi only has one Red Corner. It is well furnished, but there’s no book on the shelves. Țintea has no such Red Corner.”²²⁶

The fact that these institutions had not yet managed to penetrate the workplace reveals the problems of policy translation. The agitator coupled this issue with that of worker discontent due to economic hardships. He reported that “the two base organizations were not actively supported in their party work by the county and regional committees”²²⁷ and because Băicoi held the Red Flag of national leader in production, the “political atmosphere” was very tense. “In all meetings, workers ask if theirs is the home of oil and they’re the ones extracting it, why is there nothing for them and they still have to raise their children to torch or candlelight.”²²⁸

²²³ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 44/1950, 105.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.* The artistic sections of the workers’ clubs part of the Sovrompetrol would engage in performances that contained a mixture of traditional and ideologically-charged works. In July 1950, the artistic club of the union of the first regional office performed in Stăncești village songs such as “Holy Flag,” “Song of Stalin,” “Transylvanian Girl,” “Labor,” “Around the New Village,” “Boloboc the Prophet,” “Nothing is Better than Peace” or “The Sorrow of the Kulak.” NAR (PCO), fond “Sovrompetrol Regional Office I Ploiești”, file 12/1949, 85.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

Larger than the rig sites – both spatially and workforce-wise - and located within the city limits, by 1950 the “May 1st” enterprise benefited from a workers’ club consisting of: a reading room, comprising books and magazines, a conference hall for meetings and discussions held by foremen and leaders in production where they present their work methods, the library, the model planes room, the children’s room and the table-tennis room.²²⁹ The multi-functionality of the space allowed agitation to penetrate an increasing number of realms of socialization and institutionalizing them, enabling further direct exposure to state ideology.

The work done in this regard at the clubs and Red Corners is visible in several base organizations’ reports. The goal was to “raise the cultural level of the workers” and to that effect, a 1951 report points out that “the Party Committee, the Union and the management organized conferences in our enterprise club and they bought books every month and distributed them to every Red Corner.”²³⁰ But even if by October 1951 the number of books in enterprise libraries reached 19.461, the number of books actually read circled around 1200-1300, with the number of readers roughly the same.²³¹ The agitator in charge of cultural issues made sure to write reviews of the books to be discussed in the meetings with the leaders in production.

Most of the knowledge produced in such meetings was disseminated from technical literature with ideological layers and the number of employees in attendance was usually not spectacular. At the Central Tool Workshop, after discussions on books such as “Quick Metal-Cutting,” “The Foreman’s Word” and “The Workshop of Fire,” led by leaders in production, innovators and agitators over a period of 3 months in the presence

²²⁹ NAR (PCO), fond 58, file 14/1950, 11.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, file 14/1951, 161.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, file 34/1951, 3.

of roughly two hundred workers, “a few of the comrades took these books from our club library for further study.”²³² Further books planned for review and discussion were ‘The Socialist Contest,’ ‘Machine-building’ and ‘The Soviet Experience Lights the Road to Socialism for Us’. At the beginning of July 1950, “comrade D.D., head-foreman in the Mechanics 1 Department, discussed at the workers’ club with the leaders in production and mechanics the book ‘Quick Metal-Cutting.’ Ninety comrades were present.”²³³ After several other similar meetings, the agitator reported that “for the first time in our enterprise, the Soviet quick metal-cutting technique was applied, leading to an average 90% increase in norms above the planned target.”²³⁴ The production issues in this department for 1951, detailed at a Red Corner meeting that I discuss below, make the number seem exaggerated.

The Red Corners were occasionally the sites for official shop-floor meetings where factory issues were discussed. During one of these meetings in January 1952, the achievements and failures of the Mechanics 1 department were mulled over and labor discipline (or lack thereof) was the main issue. The secretary of the party base organization explained that “the department managed to reach and even pass the plan target for November, even though there were delays in the supplies from the Drills department. [...] We worked well, but we noticed shortcomings in the behavior of people from management and even in workers, many of whom refuse to process the urgently-needed parts and work as they are paid or as they see fit.”²³⁵ In all likelihood, many workers simply chose to dedicate more time to work that they were most skilled at while

²³² *Ibid.*, file 14/1951, 3.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, file 5/1951, 246.

having to adapt to shortages and “shock work” during Socialist contests. This approach would lead them to a quicker fulfillment of their individual norm.

In the report of an engineer, shortages and absenteeism combined to make adequate work almost impossible: “Comrade Engineer A. also showed that he is missing caliber-parts in the department and work is sloppy. People are often absent from work and they often work without any stencils.”²³⁶

The norm forms – the official sheets on which individual norms were mentioned and where workers would write down the amount of work performed – were also of high significance to the party agitators, since on the one hand they would reflect which individual worker, brigade or department were eligible for praise or reprimand, and on the other, control output norms. “Comrade Foreman C. says he doesn’t get along with his men from the drilling machines, but he fails to mention that he doesn’t assign them any norm forms. He also complains about the lack of bonuses, even though the department passed the plan every month.”²³⁷ This subterfuge of avoiding the norm form in order to bypass controls was one of many informal understandings between foremen and shop-floor workers.²³⁸

3.5. The Dissemination of Legislation:

The Monetary Reform and the Constitution in the Enterprise

The infrastructural power of the early Romanian Socialist state relied on “the act of will” that had to be constantly renewed, as I previously pointed out. Subscribing to

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ See chapter 2.3.

Bourdieu's line of thought, the social relations in the enterprise were at a point where they had to be kept up by a process of continuous creation wherein dominant agents had to "work directly, daily, personally, to produce and reproduce conditions of domination."²³⁹ The political and the economic being intertwined in their action on the social space of the enterprise, tracing the dissemination of legislation to the level of the individual worker– the Constitution of 1952 and the monetary reform of January that same year – would be revealing for mapping the issues of translation of ideas to the local level and their transformation in the process.

In November 1952, an article in the party monthly *Lupta de clasă* outlined the approach to the translation into practice of party decisions by the local and regional committees. After the plenary of January 23-24 1950 had allegedly "cleared the air in what concerns the attributions of the party apparatus,"²⁴⁰ Gheorghe Roșu stated that "the task of the party activist is to apply the line of the party when solving all practical problems arising in everyday work."²⁴¹ Considering that party decisions were supposed to be "very specific" and their carrying out "based on the concrete situation on the ground," decisions that were "general," "lacked precision" and "mostly remained only on paper" were seen as serious flaws.²⁴² Roșu gave the example of the regional committee of Bârlad, where the meeting discussing the organization of the Constitution debate by local party organizations concluded with the remark that "members of the regional committee should receive concrete tasks that will help them in their support for local party

²³⁹ Ssorin-Chaikov, *The Social...*, p. 10.

²⁴⁰ Gheorghe Roșu. "Organizarea și controlul executării hotărârilor de partid" [The Organization and Control Over the Carrying Out of Party Decisions], in *Lupta de clasă* [The Class Struggle], series V, no. 11 (Nov. 1952), p. 53-54. See also the information from Raia Vidrașcu's article mentioned earlier with regards to the "clearing of the air" around party attributions (footnote 27).

²⁴¹ Roșu, "Organizarea...", p. 54.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

organizations in the debate of the constitutional project.’ Instead of taking concrete steps to ensure a proper organization of the debate, the committee made a vague decision, whose translation into life could not be traced in practice.”²⁴³

It was such a “translation into life”²⁴⁴ that was the main objective of the party when it came to the dissemination of far-reaching legislation. In the matter of “consolidating the success of the monetary reform,” the instructions for the Agitprop organs are laid out in a memo from January 1952. “In the large enterprises,” stated the guidelines, “agitators are instructed to focus on the broadening of the Socialist contests, the application of the advanced Soviet work methods, as well as those of our Stakhanovites, increasing the savings and reducing production costs.”²⁴⁵ Furthermore, in the fifteen largest industrial centers (which included the “May 1st” enterprise), agitators were supposed to take part in three sessions of instructions during which they would receive lessons on, among other things, “the beneficial effects of the monetary reform for the working masses, the need for a strict savings regime to reduce production costs” or “organizing conversations with workers on issues of work productivity and doing away with *temps morts*.”²⁴⁶

Judging from the reactions documented in the union newspaper, the agitation work might appear to have gone smoothly. The pages of the daily *Viața sindicală* (Union Life) abounded in accounts of workers praising the monetary reform. “Workers all over the country praised the decision to enact the monetary reform and lower prices,” titled the newspaper on its front page the day after the adoption of the law.²⁴⁷ At Timpuri Noi

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Literal translation of the wooden-tongue concept of *traducerea în viață*. I chose not to adapt it in my translation because I see it as suggestive for the authorities’ desired approach to state policies.

²⁴⁵ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 5/1952, 36.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

²⁴⁷ *Viața sindicală*, series II, no. 1339, January 29 1952, p. 1.

plant, workers were caught in a moment of “proletarian rage” against the kulaks and the speculators, “the shrews that had collected heaps of money at our expense. No more!”²⁴⁸ Stakhanovite agitator N.V. reassured them that “the government’s and the party’s decision gives a lethal blow to the class enemy. Certain temporary sacrifices will be rewarded with lower prices.”²⁴⁹

In the “May 1st” enterprise, the monetary reform is reported to have been “inspirational” for the way “comrade” D.I. built socialism. Together with “comrade” V.M., he developed a device for the drilling pumps that would “considerably reduce work-time” and passed their plan by over 100%.²⁵⁰

Constant mobilization for the “consolidation of the reform” required the continuous Durkheimian renewal of the message. The “Grivița” can factory in Bucharest was criticized for not having done so and for passively expecting instructions “from above.”²⁵¹

The president of the enterprise committee answered very calmly: ‘Well, we did do something about it, still. When the decision was published, we disseminated it among our workers the very next day, we pointed out its relevance and then people went about their business...’ ‘But it’s been more than two weeks ever since,’ we replied. ‘In other enterprises, workers have made concrete commitments in support of the reform and we’ve already had worthy accomplishments.’ ‘That may well be,’ the comrade retorted, ‘but you see, we didn’t receive any instructions, so...’ ‘...you did nothing!’ we completed the sentence.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 1343, February 2 1952, p. 1.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, no. 1353, February 14 1952, p. 3.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

Bringing the decision and its provisions to the attention of the workers was not enough; the process was meant to mobilize all the institutions in the enterprise: “Nothing has changed in the schedule of the Red Corner. The comrades in the cultural sector did not feel the need to act and neither did the wall newspaper have any articles to point out concrete commitments.”²⁵³

Party reports painted a different picture of agitation work in enterprises, revealing the “temporary sacrifices” that “comrade” N.V. had mentioned. In Prahova, certain enterprises were late with the paychecks due to the fact that the bills had to be exchanged and there was discontent amongst workers. In the “May 1st” enterprise, wages were paid only on January 26²⁵⁴ when the customary date was the 15th of each month. On January 28, most of the agitators are reported to be at the exchange centers maintaining order instead of performing guidance work.²⁵⁵ Workers were said to have had a low attendance rate at the brief guidance meetings held in enterprises due to the fact that they left immediately after working hours to exchange the money.²⁵⁶

An inspection report for the month of February mentions that at all enterprises in the city, workers are reported to have begun labor according to the new norms.²⁵⁷ However, at the “May 1st” enterprise, Atelierele Centrale and Refinery no. 1, “part of the workers” requested the revision of the norms before proceeding any further with work and 150 workers from the Tools workshop at the “May 1st” enterprise requested to proceed with

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 1/1952, 20.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, file 35/1952, 49.

the new norms only from March 20 onwards.²⁵⁸ At the same time, several lathe operators were reported to have passed the new norms by 150%.²⁵⁹ The same report assessed that the Agitprop departments in enterprises did not consider as a central preoccupation “measures for the consolidation of the monetary reform.”²⁶⁰

In Grivița Roșie neighborhood in Bucharest, a Communist stronghold, tensions were reportedly high. At an exchange center, agitator D.S. caused an uproar after telling people that “if they didn’t quiet down, he would use other methods.”²⁶¹ At the neighborhood grocery store, there were “hoards of people and there was a high demand for cooking oil and when the supplies ran out, the crowd shouted that because of this reform, soon there will be nothing left to buy.”²⁶² Visual agitation had also been poorly organized in the area, since there were very few posters with the reform in the neighborhood.²⁶³

The dissemination of the constitutional project entailed a slightly different approach to agitation than that of the monetary reform, due to the fact that it was a project and the state authorities mandated the organization of debates on its provisions in enterprises.²⁶⁴ In spite of this difference, the reports reveal that the goal of the action was similar: the

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Besides the stoppages, in this period several norm-related, small-scale strikes about which I have little detailed information took place in the oil refineries around Ploiești and in “May 1st” enterprise. See also Petrescu, “A Threat...”, p. 99-100.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, file 1/1952, 40.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ None of the proposals put forward by local agitators or workers during these debates is likely to have influenced the Constitution in any way, even though what was considered one of its most important provisions stated that the People’s Republic of Romania was “the state of the working people from the cities and villages.” Indeed, even before the “debating” process got under way and the “working people” were informed of the existence of a constitutional project, an editorial from *Lupta de clasă* affirmed that “the project of the new Constitution [...] has been received with joy, enthusiasm and deep patriotic pride by the masses of working people.” See Editorial. “Constituția construirii socialismului” [The Constitution of the Building of Socialism], in *Lupta de clasă*, series V, no. 7 (July 1952), p. 54-55.

dissemination of legislation that theoretically benefited the “working people” in order for the state to “penetrate” the workplace ideologically and economically.

In the Ploiești region, the instructions sessions preparing the agitators for the dissemination of the constitutional project were reported to have begun on July 27 1952 and were claimed to be of low quality.²⁶⁵ “Comrade” Beu of the Regional Committee went on to say that the visual agitation in several enterprises (including “May 1st”) was well organized: “[t]exts of the Constitution are posted in visible places and there are also mobilizing banners that popularize the Constitution.”²⁶⁶ The general atmosphere surrounding the dissemination of the project was characterized as “unsatisfactory”; the majority of the people “have not read the project and do not know what it contains, while political work in this regard is not well organized.”²⁶⁷

For the month of August, however, the same “comrade” Beu had a more soothing report.²⁶⁸ Twelve activists from the City Committee and from the base organizations had organized agitation spots in the city where the people could come ask questions and discuss the Constitution project. The consultants “are well prepared and give good answers.”²⁶⁹ Agitators were said to have begun political work with the citizens on the streets and in the enterprises. In “May 1st” the project was read in all the union groups, after which “workers asked questions and made commitments.”²⁷⁰ Throughout the city, most of the issues people raised were either of an economic nature or related to the poor activity of the deputies they elected: “[d]eputies do not talk to them about the hardships

²⁶⁵ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 5/1952, 64.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ I exclude guidance work performed in the countryside.

²⁶⁹ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 5/1952, 90.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 123. This is one example of the generalities in party reports that Gheorghe Roșu was lamenting.

they face everyday and they propose that the Constitution is drafted in such a way to make sure the deputies do their job.”²⁷¹

The agitators had queries of their own. 350 of them (from “May 1st”, Refinery no. 1 and Atelierele CFR Ploiești) took part in one of the above-mentioned instructions sessions which took place at Refinery no. 1 and put forward questions about, and proposals for, the constitutional project. Many of the questions inquired about the newly-established Hungarian Autonomous Region.²⁷² The agitators asked, among other things, whether the region abided by its own laws or by those of the People’s Republic of Romania, whether Romanian judicial authorities had jurisdiction in the region in case a crime was committed within its boundaries or whether there were any special formalities a Romanian citizen might need in order to enter this territory.²⁷³ However, most of the questions and proposals revolved around social and political issues: for instance,

- if the wife of an employee works only around the household, will she have to earn a living by entering production?
- If an employee who retired cannot live on his pension, is he allowed to have an extra income?
- If an employee falls ill, does he receive free medication?
- If the masses disagree with a law that is adopted by the Grand National Assembly, can it be changed?²⁷⁴

“Comrade” G.S. from Atelierele CFR suggested that article 79 should include the right to social services for those crippled at birth, while “comrade” M.I. from “May 1st” proposed

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁷² The Hungarian Autonomous Region roughly corresponded to what is now known as Szekélyföld/Tinutul Secuiesc (“Land of the Szeklers”) – the counties of Harghita and Covasna and parts of Mures county.

²⁷³ NAR, fond CC of the P.C.R., Propaganda and Agitation, file 35/1952, 174-175.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.

that article 78 mention the number of years an industrial worker is required to be active in production.²⁷⁵

Confusions and mistakes were also part of the process of translation. To give just two examples, at “Macazul” enterprise in Ploiești, the secretary of the base organization in charge with handling the dissemination of the constitutional project was reported to have very little knowledge about the provisions. During one of the instructions sessions, he was asked by a worker-agitator what the Hungarian Autonomous Region entailed and he answered: “[t]his means that the Hungarian population in the region will build socialism according to the customs of their own language.”²⁷⁶ The official writing the report went on to criticize the same “comrade” for having implied that the provisions regarding the freedom of religion were a pure formality, “and in time, churches will be abolished.”²⁷⁷

3.6. Conclusions

The totalitarian aspiration to be “everywhere” and mobilize the workers for the building of socialism translated, at the level of the enterprise, into the development of institutions which did not result in the transformation of the workers according to some fixed ideological precepts, regardless of initial directives from the center. Every worker was supposed to be mobilized to work for the building of socialism, but every worker “built” it in a different way. The infrastructural power of the Romanian state did facilitate the development of the “civilization of the enterprise” that Barbu theorized as having instituted “the field of labor” as the sole area for the social validation of the individual

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 175-176.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 176-177.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

during Romanian state socialism.²⁷⁸ But the “field of labor” for Barbu might be too narrowly understood as merely that of work. Industrial labor did, indeed, impose a discipline of the body until then unknown to “modern Romanian civilization;”²⁷⁹ but the “inflexibility of individual time” that Barbu added in the mix is a questionable notion. As I believe I have shown in this chapter, the field of labor encompasses more than time spent in production (and even this was often irregular and inconsistent, as one might grasp from chapter two of this thesis or from the sub-chapter on Socialist contests). A leader in production did not simply pass the norm during Socialist contests, but also presented books at the workers’ clubs or wrote book reviews for technical journals. Other workers would write for the wall newspaper or join the artistic groups from the workers’ clubs. Many of them would be exposed and react to, the legislation disseminated by local agitators (the Constitution and the monetary reform are just two of the major examples) who, in their turn, would be more or less in possession of the ideas that trickled down from the higher echelons of the state. Therefore, the infrastructural power of the Romanian “people’s democracy” state in the “May 1st” enterprise in the late 1940s and early 1950s widened “the field of labor” to incorporate time outside production, but that was still connected to the enterprise and in this way to the state. Far from creating a collectivist utopia, the ideology of the state and its translation of ideas, embodied in the above-discussed institutions, enabled both an individual participation to power and a rejection of it.

²⁷⁸ See chapter 1.

²⁷⁹ Barbu, *Republica...*, p. 88-89.

Conclusions

The centrally planned economy in Romania involved a great deal of decentralization and “unplannable” aspects of production work.²⁸⁰ One of the party center’s main ideological pillars, namely “scientifically” controlling the state economy to ensure better governance for the “working people,” was actually translated into breaking down the state plan to the level of the individual and establishing a wage system that led to the individualization of the industrial worker’s efforts for better pay. It thus invited “non-scientific” bargaining, understandings between shop-floor workers, foremen and technical intelligentsia, but also prompted the singling out of highly skilled workers as Stakhanovites, half-baked improvisations in the technical process due to the shortage of materials and a struggle between workers and the state for the appropriation of the production process. I would say, as Pittaway pointed out in the case of Hungary, that the implementation of centralized economic planning led to centralization at the level of national institutions, but presupposed considerable individualization of production and remuneration.²⁸¹ Nevertheless, as we have seen in the letters to the leadership of the P.M.R. and in the reports from enterprises, there is increasing demand that the state “solve things.” The more the Romanian people’s democratic state found it difficult to “scientifically and rationally” plan the economy, the more it was requested of it to get involved. Therefore, the ideological presence of the state in the enterprise is still strong.

²⁸⁰ This process has been shown to be more evident in the cases of early state Socialism in Hungary and the GDR, and in the Soviet Union during the 1930s than in Romania during the same period. See Pittaway, Kott and Lewin.

²⁸¹ Pittaway, “The Social...”, p 293.

The totalitarian aspiration to be “everywhere” and mobilize the workers for the building of socialism translated, at the level of the enterprise, into the development of institutions which did not result in the transformation of the workers according to some fixed ideological precepts, regardless of initial directives from the center. Every worker was supposed to be mobilized to work for the building of socialism, but every worker “built” it in a different way. The infrastructural power of the Romanian state did facilitate the development of the “civilization of the enterprise” that Barbu theorized as having instituted “the field of labor” as the sole area for the social validation of the individual during Romanian state socialism.²⁸² But the “field of labor” for Barbu might be too narrowly understood as merely that of work. Industrial labor did, indeed, impose a discipline of the body until then unknown to “modern Romanian civilization;”²⁸³ but the “inflexibility of individual time” that Barbu added in the mix is a questionable notion. As I believe I have shown in this thesis, the field of labor encompasses more than time spent in production (and even this was often irregular and inconsistent, as one might grasp from chapter two of this thesis or from the sub-chapter on Socialist contests). A leader in production did not simply pass the norm during Socialist contests, but also presented books at the workers’ clubs or wrote book reviews for technical journals. Other workers would write for the wall newspaper or join the artistic groups from the workers’ clubs. Many of them would be exposed and react to, the legislation disseminated by local agitators (the Constitution and the monetary reform are just two of the major examples) who, in their turn, would be more or less in possession of the ideas that trickled down from the higher echelons of the state. Therefore, the infrastructural power of the

²⁸² See chapter 1.

²⁸³ Barbu, *Republica...*, p. 88-89.

Romanian “people’s democracy” state in the “May 1st” enterprise in the late 1940s and early 1950s widened “the field of labor” to incorporate time outside production, but that was still connected to the enterprise and in this way to the state. Far from creating a collectivist utopia, the ideology of the state and its translation of ideas, embodied in the above-discussed institutions, enabled both an individual participation to power and a rejection of it.

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