

## THE LANGUAGE OF LIBERAL ECONOMIC REFORM IN POST-COMMUNIST POLAND, 1989-1999

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One hears everywhere, and all day long--and this is what gives the dominant discourse its strength--that there is nothing to put forward in opposition to the neo-liberal view, that it has succeeded in presenting itself as self-evident, as though stripped of any alternative. If it has this sort of banality, it is the result of a whole project of symbolic inculcation in which journalists and ordinary citizens participate passively and in which, most importantly, a number of intellectuals participate actively. Against this permanent, insidious imposition, which by its permeation produces real belief, it seems to me that researchers have a role to play. First of all, they can analyze the production and circulation of this discourse. There are more and more studies, in Britain, in the U.S., and in France, which very precisely describe the methods by which this worldview is produced, disseminated, and inculcated. Through a whole series of analyses of texts; the journals in which they were published, and which little by little have imposed themselves as legitimate; information about their authors; the seminars in which they meet to produce them, etc.: they have shown how, in Britain and France, there were constant efforts, involving intellectuals, journalists and businessmen, to impose as natural a neo-liberal view which, essentially, dresses up the most classic presuppositions of conservative thought of all times and all countries in economic rationalizations (Bourdieu 1998 :34-35; all translations my own).

One evening in Warsaw in the early 1990s, a friend and I were watching a discussion on television between two elderly men about the possibility of creating a new political party made up of members of the *inteligencja*. One, a journalist, but more a friendly interlocutor, said, "There is no working class." The second, the one who was to form this party, said, "Unfortunately there is. There are people who work hard, who do physical labor, who are less qualified."

Following Bourdieu, this article is a demonstration of the mechanisms by which the worldview of liberalism is "produced, disseminated, and inculcated . . . [by] intellectuals, journalists and businessmen," of the "whole project of symbolic inculcation" attendant on reform and restructuring in Poland, in a moment when liberalism is still being built, as it remakes the world and makes itself true (Bourdieu 1998, 34).<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 1989, Poland's first post-communist minister of finance, Leszek Balcerowicz, designed a reform program--which quickly became known as the Balcerowicz Plan--to create economic liberalism from the institutions of state socialism. I take up the words of officials, consultants, and managers whose task it has been to implement the Balcerowicz Plan, and use these "privileged voices to scrutinize the technologies of Othering" (Fine 1998:149). That is, the ways in which these reformers describe workers, unions, and state industry simultaneously prescribe certain kinds of reforms--identify both the object and nature of reform, what is to be reformed and how. The descriptions of the reformers are echoed and confirmed in the media and in scholarly work, as the discursive work of liberalism is accomplished with the help of those positioned as observers, with claims to objectivity.<sup>2</sup>

It has been in my work over the last ten years on and in the Ursus Works, a large state factory on the outskirts of Warsaw, that I have encountered and come to study the discourse of liberalism. Here, Ursus provides a few instances of the use of the discourse, but for the most part I attend to the general form of the discourse.<sup>3</sup>

Liberalism is both and equally discourse and political economy; there is a whole world implied in and to be created by the Balcerowicz Plan. Embedded in the Plan, too, are assumptions about the political economy it seeks to remake, about the failings of state socialism and of state ownership. According to the Plan, state firms and workers are

inefficient and unproductive because without price and wage information, they cannot decide what and how to produce. They are also inefficient and unproductive because the state protects state industries, and state managers state workers. Firms are efficient if they are dependent on sales income, if sales are not guaranteed, and if they can go out of business; in other words, if they have to compete in open markets for investment capital, for inputs (energy, materials, and labor), and for sales. Workers work hard if they are dependent on their wages, if their wages can be docked, and if they can be fired; and, if they are fired, if they cannot easily find another job or live on unemployment compensation. It is only in conditions of insecurity that firms and workers seek to maximize productivity.

The Balcerowicz Plan requires that the state's role in the economy be reduced--that it no longer provide production plans, investment, or subsidies to the state sector; instead, markets are to determine the supply, demand, and price of goods and labor. The state limits the degree to which it compensates for the effects of markets on both firms and workers by limiting support to firms and by limiting social spending, including unemployment benefits and consumer subsidies. To the extent possible, state firms are to be privatized since private firms respond to markets and discipline their workforces better than state or employee-owned firms. Private firms also force even state- and employee-owned firms to become more efficient and to lay off workers in order to compete. And unemployment disciplines workers in the same way that markets discipline firms, by making them compete against each other. Western capital and products are given favorable conditions for entry into Poland--including low import duties, a weak *zloty*, and low wages--since they also make Polish firms and Polish workers--in both the public and private sector--more competitive.

The Balcerowicz Plan must remake not just the political economy of state socialism, but the workers that socialism made; they share the failings of workers everywhere, but these were exacerbated by state socialism. According to the discourse of reform, then, workers are conservative, authoritarian, and statist, afraid of risk and lacking

the entrepreneurial spirit. They are by their nature egalitarian, and communism reinforced this trait. And it is their culture of shared poverty and their communist mentality which causes them to protest against the reforms and keeps them from entering the modernity of capitalism.<sup>4</sup> Ewa Balcerowicz, an economist and Leszek Balcerowicz's spouse, told me,

There should be a revolution in attitudes, and that's very difficult. Forty years changed the pattern of thinking. This is a big problem. There are traditions at the workplace and outside which need time and a lot of learning, as well as pressure and tough policies, to change.

Communism made workers, spoiled them, and taught them that they had a right to "everything." It also taught them that they need not work hard; Krzysztof Konaszewski, the Agency for Industrial Development (AID) official responsible for Ursus, said,

because of socialist training, people think that they have a right to everything, regardless of what they do. And it's part of human nature that people want to earn as much as possible while doing as little as possible.

Communism as a system appropriated all initiative and created a passive, dependent labor force, while the reforms require people to take responsibility for their own futures. Walesa exhorted workers to take their futures into their own hands instead of depending on the state sector to provide them with their livelihoods. Their attempts to keep their jobs are senseless, since they would be better off elsewhere. Prime Minister Suchocka was quoted in *The New York Times* during the strike wave of the summer of 1992:

There exists in society a certain barrier in social consciousness--society is somehow unable to free itself from the previous way of thinking. . . . So far, they believe that . . . losing . . . a badly-paid job in some state company or government office is a defeat for them, instead of realizing that it is a certain challenge to begin new work which will be more satisfying and better paid (6 September 1992; Lexis/Nexis).

Another reason workers cling to their jobs is their egalitarianism, which is also why they distrust elites and resent increasing inequality. They do not understand that there are objective reasons why some people are richer and more powerful than they are and they especially distrust those who have risen out of their own ranks. "New people [in power] are watched and abused by other people because people are very much for equality from forty years' experience." (Ewa Balcerowicz) And it is this distrust which lies behind their protests.

The unceasing efforts of neo-liberal "thinkers" [is to] discredit and disqualify the heritage of words, traditions, and representations associated with the historical conquests of the social movements of the past and present; . . . to consign [the corresponding institutions, labor law, social welfare, social security, etc.] to the archaism of an outmoded past or, worse, to redefine them, against all appearances, as unnecessary and unacceptable privileges. . . . [T]he revolutionary conservatives define resistance as reactionary . . . ; and . . . condemn as an archaic and retrograde defense of "privileges" revindications or revolts that appeal to established rights, to a past threatened with degradation or destruction by their regressive measures (Bourdieu, 1998 :118).

When workers protest, when they try to defend themselves as a group, they are depicted as refusing to adapt to the new conditions, as demanding that they be protected from the effects of the reforms, and as ignoring the consequences of their demands for the nation and their workplaces. Workers, then, do not understand economic limitations or the objective relationship between their work and the wages they receive. And because they do not acknowledge that economic facts must take precedence, workers do not belong in management and should not own their workplaces. In his book on the Polish reforms, *Poland's jump to the market economy*, Jeffrey Sachs writes that the longer it takes to privatize a plant, the harder management and workers will resist and the more likely they will take it over themselves. "For . . . economic and

political reasons, privatization should proceed with dispatch, but in a way that creates ownership in addition to the incumbent workers and management" (Sachs 1993:83). Investors distrust worker-owned enterprises, which is why they are so rare in the West.

. . . *the methodical destruction of collectives* .  
(Bourdieu, 1998 :109; emphases in original).

According to the discourse of reform, workers' interests are opposed to the interests of the nation as a whole; acceding to their demands, then, compromises the reforms. When unions defend workers' interests, they also stand in opposition to the reforms--and the stronger the union, the more able it is to protect workers and to work against the reforms. Ewa Balcerowicz said, "I'm afraid that we are suffering now because we have such a strong union which has to be against reforms." Workers and unions are portrayed as a reactionary force, as a brake on the process of reform. Workers' protests against the loss of their former rights are taken as proof that they will not or cannot adapt to new circumstances; that, if given the choice, they would revert to the paternalistic relationship they enjoyed with the communist state; and that the reforms are necessary.<sup>5</sup> Only if their demands are not met will unions and workers learn their place in the new polity and economy.

At least early on, Solidarity itself was persuaded that the existence of a strong and organized working class would impede the building of a market economy, and so agreed not to protest against the reforms. In an 1989 interview with Lech Walesa, then chair of national Solidarity, he said, "We will never catch up with the rest of Europe if we build a strong union that strongly opposes reform. Solidarity itself started these reforms, and it must now help reconstruct the economy" (in Kramer 1995:95). In any case, the union--and workers--assumed that powerful labor organizations would not be needed, since market processes would both create wealth and distribute it equitably.

There is no place for representatives of labor in the economic reforms or in the restructuring of

industry. When workers' councils and unions do participate in management,<sup>6</sup> they increase their own power but interfere with the rational functioning and restructuring of their workplaces. A senator and former Solidarity activist told a group of Americans, which included me, "We [in Solidarity] were fighting to strengthen the workers' councils in the factories, which was from the point of view of administration nonsense." This is because workers' interests are social and subjective, and those of industry and the nation economic and objective. Laurence Doyle, head of a consortium of consultancy groups working in Ursus, told me of the "social problems of redundancy." Krzysztof Konaszewski, the AID official responsible for Ursus, told me, "My interest is almost entirely financial, not social, not labor. We just deal with money, with production." Tomasz Boguslawski, director of the Department of Liquidation Restructuring of the AID, appeared on a television program on Ursus in May 1992 and said, "the social aspect is at the moment very important, but on the other hand, the rational, shall we say, economic aspect, must at a certain moment be taken into account." Leszek Balcerowicz spoke at a conference at the University of Warsaw in March 1993; when asked about the social effects of the reforms, he answered that as an economist, social questions were not his bailiwick.<sup>7</sup>

"De-politicize the workplace" is one of the slogans of the reforms. Workers, Solidarity, and state industry are all portrayed as having been in the past too political, and the reforms as an attempt to define, separate, and bound the economic and political spheres. A journalist asked then-president Lech Walesa if it were no longer necessary for him to meet with workers in factories, as he had in the past. He answered, "Times have changed. This public strength must be channeled into various groups and organizations. A democratic play of forces must begin . . ." (11 October 1991 *Zycie Warszawy*) Similarly, the workplace no longer belongs in politics.

Unions can represent a particular set of interests and so can make demands and organize protests, but because they cannot recognize the limits of what is possible and cannot compromise, there is no place in a democracy for unionists as

politicians or unions as a political force. After the September 1993 parliamentary elections in which the two reformed communist parties were returned to power, and in which the communist union won 63 seats, Donald Tusk, one of the leaders of the Liberal Democratic Congress, said, "The presence of trade unions in parliament is comparable to the mix we had when the communist party maintained a presence in places of work . . . We didn't fight to have party circles eliminated from factories just to see today's Polish Republic change into a Trade Union Republic." (10 October 1993 *Warsaw Voice*; Lexis/Nexis).

When unions organize strikes and protests, they seek to obviate market and economic processes. The discourse of reform calls a strike either economic or political, and either is a rebuke. If its goal is to increase wages, a strike is economic-economically motivated, but not economically rational, since workers do not understand or respect the objective economic realities which determine their wages, and since their short-term goals endanger the firm's and their own long-term interests. Strikes are also depicted as endangering the future of the plant by frightening off potential clients and investors.

A strike is political if it seeks to change government personnel or policy, and if political, it is also undemocratic, since it seeks to circumvent the democratic political process. In the midst of the strike wave of July and August 1991, Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki resigned his government, giving as his main reason the strikes, which, he said, had as their target "the state and its reforms. One can see . . . that declarations of a love of democracy, the law, and a market economy do not mesh with actual behavior" (30 August 1991 Polish Radio; Lexis/Nexis). During the strikes of the summer of 1992, Deputy Prime Minister Pawel Laczowski said that these strikes were more "political" than earlier strikes had been, and that the government approached the strike negotiations with "resolve": "Our resolve is based in economic rationality and in the legal framework which governs labor disputes. Thus understood, our resolve is certainly not a sign of arrogance, but is a method of building a state of law and of providing examples of mentalities adapted to a market

economy" (Channel 1 television news 19:30, 3 September 1992). New and more restrictive laws regulating labor disputes were passed in 1991 and when strikes and strikers do not comply with those regulations, they also demonstrate their disrespect for the law. The purpose of the reforms is to build capitalism and democracy, and economic and political strikes violate the laws of both the market and of the state.

According to the discourse of reform, state socialism as an economic system was irrational because it politicized what should have been economic. State industry remains inefficient because of the ties between and power of workers, management, unions inherited from state socialism, and it is these ties and this power which the reforms are to break. State plants are to be privatized or closed, since as long as the state is vulnerable to pressure from state industry, and state industry to pressure from labor, the sector will not respond rationally to economic forces. In a talk I heard her give at Northwestern University in 1994, Hanna Suchocka said, "one goal of privatization was to combat special interest groups in state enterprises." That is, privatizing state industries would undermine cooperation between management and labor by forcing management to respond to market forces and to exert control over labor. Ewa Balcerowicz told me, "We have to close some of the very large enterprises to put pressure on other enterprises, because directors are chosen by workers and trade unions [and are] so afraid of them that they won't do anything to hurt them. . . . Towns developed around factories, so you can't really close a plant there. It is easier in Warsaw because they can find work elsewhere." Senator Jerzy Dietl said that shutting down plants is an absolute necessity, and when I suggested that shutting down the largest plants would be hard, he admitted the difficulties, but said that because it was absolutely necessary, it would happen. The Minister of Industry Henryka Bochniarz said in a press conference that two-thirds of state enterprises might be closed.

Because the reforms are to separate the political and economic spheres, to extract the state from the economy, there is no legitimate role for the state in the industrial sector. Before its dissolution

in 1996,<sup>8</sup> the Ministry of Industry was itself discredited, and hesitated or was unable to intervene. In 1991, an American consultant working in the Ministry of Privatization told me, "The best people from the Ministry of Industry and Trade have left, and as far as the Ministry of Privatization is concerned, it doesn't exist."

In the discourse of reform, blame moves downwards. Failures are never attributed to the Balcerowicz Plan in general, to the mistakes of those higher up, or to one's own mistakes; rarely to macro-level causes outside one's control; and almost always to those below. Charges of constitutional inability, then, descend and denote hierarchies. Krzysztof Konaszewski, the AID official responsible for Ursus, told me that state managers in general "are simply bad; they are not trained, and they cannot act independently."

Many state firms are burdened with outdated technology, over-capacity, and debts that are ballooning with high interest rates. They have lost most of their domestic and foreign markets, trying to develop new markets in the midst of a domestic recession and a global economic slowdown. But the discourse of reform does not acknowledge that the Polish economy does not operate independently of international institutions and global processes; that the Balcerowicz Plan is at least in part responsible for the recession, high interest rates, and loss of Eastern bloc markets; and that state firms have little or no influence over these things. Instead, consultants blame government officials, officials blame managers, and managers blame workers.

This is a "strong discourse" which is so strong and so hard to fight because it has behind it all the powers of a world of power relations which it helps to make as it is, in particular by guiding the economic choices of those who dominate economic relations and so adding its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations. (Bourdieu 1998 :109).

The discourse of reform in Poland is embedded in "a world of power relations" according to which

Poland lacks markets, private property, and capital, as well as the ability to create these on its own, because it lacks both the expertise and the culture or mentality of capitalism. The Western consultants I know describe Polish managers and workers as suffering from this communist mentality, and as unable or unwilling to take the initiative and to accept responsibility. An American acquaintance, a consultant working in Warsaw, complained bitterly about the impossibility of finding people in plants who would act, market, sell. I met the head of a small American consulting firm who was working on a project which would take Polish businesspeople to the United States for three months to work alongside people in similar positions. She told me that workers in Eastern Europe had learned to be passive and must now be taught to take initiative, and that workers were powerless under communism and could be empowered with new management techniques such as total quality control and work groups. The West portrays itself as having the expertise and culture of capitalism in abundance, and as well suited to be exemplar, sponsor, and emissary of liberalism.

Western consultants working in Poland portray themselves as having valuable expertise which those whom they advise lack. Their advice is credible because they are Westerners, valuable because they are capitalists, and objective because they are immune to social and political pressure, and take into account only economic and financial considerations. Their recommendations, then, carry with them all the prestige and power of the West, capitalism, and economics. But the consultants do not represent the West as a whole; of the foreign businesspeople working as advisors and consultants in government offices and plants whom I have met--and there are many--all are American or British. I have met no one from any other Western European country, even though these have significant foreign aid and investment in Poland.<sup>9</sup> The only language I have heard besides Polish is English, and the language I heard most often in the Ministry of Privatization was not Polish but English.<sup>10</sup>

Western consultants, and Americans perhaps more than the British, tend to be quite optimistic about the future of the state industries they advise; at least in Ursus, their forecasts have at every point

proved incorrect. But their conclusion is never that they had been too optimistic, and always that their advice had not been followed. They blame the government for not intervening, state industry for not restructuring, state managers for not being concerned with making a profit, marketing and sales personnel for not selling, and workers for not producing. Nor is failure ever attributed to external circumstances over which neither they nor anyone they advise has any control, in which case their expertise is useless, nor to the effects of the reforms and the restructuring themselves, in which case their advice is wrong.<sup>11</sup>

Since the end of the communist period, Ursus has been the plant most reported on in the media. Other plants--the Warsaw steelworks, the Gdansk shipyards, the truck plants in Tychy and in Starachowice, the aircraft plant in Mielec, the coal and copper basins--have frequently been in the spotlight, but none as often or for as long as Ursus. The mainstream media report and repeat the works and words of the reformers, of those engaged in drafting and implementing the reforms, and thus take part in--both contribute to and draw upon--the discourse of reform. And the discourse of reform uses Ursus and Ursus Solidarity and Ursus workers to stand for all state industry, all unions, and all workers, and to prove that the assumptions about state industry, unions, and workers implicit in the Balcerowicz Plan are true, that the Balcerowicz Plan is necessary, and that concessions should not be made.

[T]he neo-liberal view . . . has succeeded in presenting itself as self-evident [through] a whole project of symbolic inculcation in which journalists and ordinary citizens participate passively and in which, most importantly, a number of intellectuals participate actively. (Bourdieu 1998 :34).

One day in the halls of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, I met a senior and very well-known Polish sociologist who asked me the topic of my research; when I told him, he said he was sure that in the course of my interviews I had



already observed that workers' vocabulary was limited and their way of thinking symbolic.<sup>12</sup>

This opposition between the long-range perspective of the enlightened "elite" and the short-term impulses of the people or their representatives is typical of reactionary thinking at all times and in all countries; but it now takes a new form, with the nobility of the State, which derives the conviction of its legitimacy from academic qualifications and from scientific authority, especially economics: for these new governors by divine right, not only reason and modernity but also movement and change are on the side of governors, ministers, employers, and "experts"; unreason and archaism, inertia and conservatism are on the side of the people, the trade unions, and the critical intellectuals.(Bourdieu 1998 :30-31).

Like the media, Polish sociology has positioned itself as an observer of the reforms and has taken up the task of studying support for and opposition to the reforms. It has lent its prestige and claims to objectivity to the symbolic work of liberalism, and its descriptions of workers and its analyses of the causes of their protests both advance and legitimate the reforms.

In the U.S. over the last thirty years, the claims of the social sciences to be objective, empirical, and scientific have been challenged, from both within and without. Sociologists and anthropologists have for the most part come to accept the principle that we, like the people we study, are situated and partial observers of social life, and that our descriptions of the people and places we study are similarly situated and partial. These ideas are not, however, integral to the practice of Polish sociology.

After the strikes and riots of the 1970s, reformist party members, looking for more trustworthy information on the mood and situation of the working class, expanded the discipline of sociology and allowed it quite a bit of independence. Given its concern to be scientific, central to its claims to truth, Polish sociology was and is very strongly oriented to large-scale survey research and does not depend much on case studies, even as a supplement to surveys. As it staked out

disciplinary territory for itself, its own truth claims, made in opposition to those of the communist party-state, went and remain unchallenged (Goodwyn 1991, 443). The relationship between the *inteligencja* and the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) was, however, ambiguous. Intellectuals were given a certain amount of freedom to study social questions and to critique the party, but the PZPR used that research and that critique to avoid overt social conflict, to demonstrate its commitment to political liberalization, and to legitimate its exercise of power.

And now, intellectuals' support for the project of economic liberalism is nearly complete, and that support both advances and legitimates that project. To my knowledge, there has been no critique within Poland of the political implications and uses of sociology's portrayal of the origins of Solidarity or of workers, unions, state industry, and state socialism. The claim of sociology to be above and outside politics seems to have so far been accepted at face value.<sup>13</sup>

Workers sense, and sense rightly, that the foundations of their past power are being dismantled as a condition of building capitalism. In an interview which Prime Minister Hanna Suchocka gave in September 1992, in the midst of the largest strike wave of the post-1989 period, she said,

It's extremely difficult to maintain this tough policy toward the unions, toward the working people. It's even more difficult because I . . . understand their predicament, their difficult situation, their desperation. For 40 years they were treated as the most important class, on which the whole system of the state stood. And it is very bitter for them to understand now that the new conditions require them to step down to a very low role (in Kramer 1995:71).

Workers must step down, and they must step down to make room for the middle class which the Balcerowicz Plan is building, almost *de novo*. The middle class belongs to the subspecies *Homo oeconomicus*, and workers to an earlier form, *Homo sovieticus*, which is more homogenous, egalitarian,

conformist, and numerous. It is because of their egalitarianism, their anti-elitism, that workers distrust the reformers as well as the reforms.<sup>14</sup> Workers' natural collectivism was exacerbated in Poland by both communism and Catholicism, and in order for them to take part in the modernity which the Balcerowicz Plan is building, they must adopt the individualism and economic rationality of Protestantism and capitalism. And because a condition for inclusion in modernity is the denial, the shedding of past and collective identities, when workers try to defend themselves as workers, as a class, when they protest their loss of status, they justify their exclusion as a collectivity from the body economic and politic. Their protests against reform are taken as proof of the necessity of reform. The reforms, then, are to modernize not just an economy, but a people.<sup>15</sup>

Labor is simultaneously excluded from and marginalized by the post-1989 economic reforms. That exclusion and marginalization is implied in and justified by the ways in which those who support and implement the reforms characterize workers, unions, union activism, and state industry; and the implementation of the reforms simultaneously causes and requires the exclusion and marginalization of labor. This disenfranchisement is the reason for both the radicalism and the general ineffectiveness of workers' protests. There are groups within the Solidarity political camp which would like to<sup>16</sup> protect labor from the worst of the effects of the reforms and to give labor a limited say in management and a limited share in workplace ownership, but none of these questions the fundamental goals of the Balcerowicz Plan.

I gave a paper on my fieldwork at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences at the end of my longest stay in Poland, in the summer of 1993. When I said that workers had not known what the Balcerowicz Plan would do to them, another well-known sociologist replied, "Thank God." For the reforms to succeed, workers could not know how long and difficult they would be, or what or how much they would lose. If they had known, they would not have held their peace for as long as they did. And by the time the Solidarity union withdrew its support for the

reforms, changes in the economy, workplaces, labor regulations, labor markets, and welfare policies were already far enough along to make protest less effective, since the power and legitimacy of labor activism had already been undermined.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup> These are familiar descriptions, and resonate in many other places and moments in time, in descriptions of slaves, minorities, immigrants, lower classes, welfare recipients, women, and so on.

Given the power and ubiquity of these descriptions, a caution is perhaps necessary: my representations of the discourse of liberalism are not to be taken for the representations--of state socialism, state industry, state workers, unions, and so on--embedded within the discourse.

<sup>3</sup> I use no pseudonyms here; Ursus is too well known to be disguised and those whom I quote are scholars and public figures.

<sup>4</sup> Younger workers, because less completely indoctrinated, are seen as more capable than older workers of adapting to the new order.

In much the same way, the Polish communist party early on described younger workers as capable of being molded into a new factory discipline, and older workers as embedded in social relationships and as holders of labor traditions which impeded progress: "only the youth are truly important. No one will cure the old of their habits, traditions, memories or attachments ... " (Quoted in Kenney 1994, 6)

<sup>5</sup> Those who defend any part of the communist past both misremember and remain a prisoner of that past. In September 1993, the reformed communist parties were returned to power. In April 1994, Hanna Suchocka gave a talk at Northwestern University, and attributed the return of the left to a delusive nostalgia, like a prisoner long in prison who when faced with freedom is happy, but waits for his dinner to be brought him.

<sup>6</sup> Under the 1981 laws on workers' councils, councils shared decision-making powers with plant management, and had the right to elect and dismiss the plant director.

<sup>7</sup> Reformers' descriptions of those to be reformed are of course also and equally descriptions of themselves as enlightened and modern, their goals as apolitical and disinterested, and the reforms as an economic and technical process.

<sup>8</sup> In 1996, a state treasury and a ministry of the economy replaced the Ministries of Privatization, Industry and Trade, Foreign Economic Relations, and Construction, and the Central Planning Office.

<sup>9</sup> See Footnote 11, however.

<sup>10</sup> English was by far the language people most wanted to learn; parents worried when their children did not

know English--not German, not Spanish, not Russian--because English was the key to advancement, to the middle class, to modernity.

<sup>11</sup> There was one exception. I attended a series of meetings between Ursus Solidarity representatives and Swedish trade unionists from Volvo. A pattern emerged: the Poles would describe a problem they were confronting; the Swedes would describe a particular strategy they'd used in a similar situation; the Poles would explain the concatenation of political and legal and economic reasons why that was not possible in their situation; and the Swedes would say, Oh. Then we don't know what to do either.

<sup>12</sup> That I said I had not was most probably attributed to the fact that I am not a native speaker of Polish.

<sup>13</sup> I do not mean to imply that the shift in the American social sciences from an understanding of social facts as objective and real to one in which they are socially constructed and real was anything but historical and contingent.

<sup>14</sup> That the two subspecies stand in an evolutionary relationship to each other resonates with Durkheim's distinction between modern and primitive societies, between organic and mechanical solidarities.

<sup>15</sup> These two subspecies are also ranged against and with each other as leader and led, head and body, thought and desire, and workers are feminized and infantilized in comparison with the autonomous rational actor required and created by liberalism.