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Soviet Community Spirit and the Fight over the Rural Future of the Baltic Countries*

The Ideological Heritage of State Socialism

Little attention has so far been paid to the ideological heritage of Soviet society in the post-socialism debate. Researchers are slowly beginning to acknowledge the significance of other structural elements of former socialist countries to the formation of the transition process (e.g. Stark and Bruszt, 1998; Yeal, Szelenyi and Townsley, 1998), but the ideological heritage is largely ignored. The only major exceptions to this are local community studies (e.g. Kideckel, 1995; Creed, 1998). This is most likely

* This article is based on data gathered by interviewing hundreds of former kolkhoz and sovkhoz leaders and employees in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Interviews were conducted on 18 former Soviet farms, both prosperous and poor ones. My research group also interviewed the most important local and county agricultural officials. Many of the interviews were lengthy and several people were re-interviewed. A few individuals were interviewed for a total time of over ten hours (for details on methodology, see Alanen, 2001b). The interview data was utilized by a multi-national (mostly Finnish and Estonian) group of researchers with the help of local research assistants in two projects. The two largest research projects were 'The Privatisation of Agriculture in the Baltic Countries' (1993–1996) and 'The Decollectivisation of Agriculture in the Baltic Countries from a Psychological and Sociological Point of View' (1998–2000). These projects were financed by the Academy of Finland and I served as their responsible leader. The decollectivization of a single Estonian kolkhoz also provided us with material for an extensive book in English, which has recently been published in the United Kingdom. (Alanen I, Nikula J, Põder H, and Ruutsoo R. (2001), *Decollectivisation, Destruction and Disillusionment — A Community Study in Southern Estonia*, Ashgate, Aldershot.) Paper presented at the XIX Congress of the European Society for Rural Sociology, 2001, Society, Nature, Technology, Dijon, France 3–7 September 2001.

because — based on my own studies in rural areas — the ideological heritage simply cannot be overlooked in any actual field studies.

The ideologies of the socialist era continue to influence people's lives even though the overall legitimacy of the social system often termed the 'real existing socialism' is in other respects denied. In the Baltic countries, i.e. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, socialism was regarded as a manifestation of the tyranny of an unlawful occupier. However, political-ideological disengagement from socialism and Soviet rule is quite a different matter from the everyday norms and values which controlled interpersonal relations at work and in social life. If we assume that state socialism was something entirely different from capitalism — and not just a variation or manifestation of capitalism — the existence of this type of everyday ideology was more than likely. In fact, it was a necessity of life. Henceforth, I will use the term 'soviet community spirit' to describe this conglomeration of everyday values and norms, its central elements and respective cognitive models.

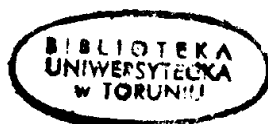
Socialist ideology, or rather its elements, retained their special niche through many stages of the transition process. This fact should be viewed in the broader context of changes taking place in people's overall sphere of activities as well as in the context of the different stages of the transition process itself. Post-socialist transition was not only a radical process, but it was also a very rapid structural change, which caused severe economic hardship and deep economic uncertainty in all population groups. The problems were most acute during the first few years of the transition, when the national economy had collapsed. There were inconsistencies in the new legislation, laws lagged behind changes in society, and they were often in conflict with the values, norms and cognitive models of the population. Post-socialist transition was not eased by a preceding social struggle which would have enabled the population to better perceive the nature of the imminent change. If the development of a lively civil society with interest groups and other associations is an essential prerequisite for the creation of adequate value and norm structures characteristic of fully developed capitalism, this process is barely in its initial stages in the Baltic countryside today, ten years after the start of the transition. It may well be that Dahrendorf's (1990) famous prognosis of a sixty-year transition period is not that far-fetched after all.

In the Baltic countries the most traumatic phase of the transition occurred in 1992–1993 when the kolkhozes and sovkhoses were decollectivized. In a situation of crisis the most viable basis for the valuation of the social interaction (some of it linked to the transition), and attempts to control the immediate social environment was the collective heritage of the Soviet era.

Soviet Community Spirit: Its Nature and Roots

At the core of each Soviet community was the work collective, and in the countryside by far the most important work collectives were those established in kolkhozes and sovkhozes. The prevalent mind-set and the associated moral code can again be called the 'Soviet community spirit'. Viewing it now from a post-socialist perspective we see that it combined two crucial dimensions, patrimonialism (Weber, 1978, 231–232) and a special brand of egalitarianism. By 'patrimonialism' I refer to the fact that many activities on a large collective farm were personified in its chairman both with regard to the internal and external relations of the enterprise. Inside the farm patrimonialism was manifest in the personal care displayed by the kolkhoz chairman. Of course, collective democracy did not imply that decision-making on a socialist collective farm would have followed any specific rules of democracy or that the employees would in fact have been able to elect their leaders (everyone knew it was the Party that determined such matters). Instead, the chairman was expected to care for the needs of the people in an egalitarian way, which made him a representative of the workers and kolkhoz members — i.e. 'a representative of the people' — from an ideological viewpoint. This idea symbolized the social cohesion of Soviet times. Most kolkhoz leaders performed quite well in the role of a patrimonial bureaucrat (Alanen, 2001a, 81–82). However, the leaders of Soviet farms were not always loved, since many of them were authoritarian or quick-tempered, but they were in general highly respected all the same, and they also felt a sense of responsibility for their employees. E.g. old people and the underprivileged were well taken care of. In the twenty or so kolkhozes and sovkhozes where I have studied decollectivization, only one sovkhoz leader had lost the respect of his employees.

An additional element in the community spirit (reflecting the relative autonomy of ordinary workers in the Soviet mode of production, which was ultimately due to the shortage of labour) of Soviet citizens was the ironic expression of 'the dictatorship of workers and military seamen', which implied the idea that ordinary people are the true holders of power. This was not an entirely fictional fabrication either, since skilled employees in particular (technicians, machine operators, mechanics and milkers) enjoyed a high degree of independence, and often their earnings were higher than those of the better educated 'specialists' (agronomists, zoologists, veterinarians, engineers, economists, etc. with university or college degrees), or even kolkhoz chairmen. This is why 'the dictatorship of workers and military seamen' was paraphrased in the countryside to 'the dictatorship of milkers and tractor drivers'.



The Soviet patrimonial system (in its structural context) was not generally conducive to the creation of active workers, instead, it had a passivating effect on the employees since their real chances of influencing their working conditions were very limited (cf. Clarke, 1993). As a general rule the common people were always taken care of by someone else, ultimately by the kolkhoz chairman. On account of this, the people never learned to look after their own affairs; instead, as one former kolkhoz chairman put it from his patrimonial viewpoint, they remained where they were and in a way 'demanded' that someone above them should act on their behalf even during the kolkhoz reform. This opinion is a fitting description of especially the least skilled employees, which were mostly found in the more remote villages.

The Soviet Community Spirit

However, the Soviet Union was not a wonderland workplace democracy by any means. Although many of the workers expressed their opinions very energetically and were not afraid of clashing with the chairman, if necessary, these conflicts (cf. aberrations described above) did not shake the hierarchical authority structure personified in the chairman.

When the Soviet Union broke up, its political machinery was relatively quickly replaced by parliamentary institutions (parliament, free press, freedom of assembly, political parties, etc.) Meanwhile, establishing private ownership (including the abolition of price controls, the breaking up of monopolies, bankruptcy legislation, etc.) characteristic of a capitalist market economy took somewhat longer.

Methods of Privatization and Interest Groups

Two methods dominated the privatization of collective farms. In principle, the primary method should have been the restitution of former ownership relations (e.g. land and livestock) either in kind or with compensation vouchers. The workshare voucher method was usually applied to the greater part of total collective assets, which included cowsheds, piggeries and other production complexes, such as the sawmill, wood processing workshop, tractor depot, plus offices and other non-production facilities, as well as the majority of the machinery and livestock. In Estonia and Latvia, these assets were only offered for sale to those entitled to workshare vouchers on each farm, but in Lithuania anyone who had privatization vouchers could purchase these assets. The vouchers were handed out to kolkhoz members and employees on the basis of time served on the collective farm or on the basis of wages paid (some farms used a combination of these two methods) — the law allowed for a variety of procedures. People were offered the oppor-

tunity to realize their workshares and compensation vouchers by purchasing collective assets at book value or by bidding for them at an auction (or any combination of these two methods). Especially in Estonia, there were huge problems in synchronizing the processes of restitution and purchasing with vouchers, which resulted in a great deal of unnecessary material destruction and human suffering (Alanen, 1999 & b; Alanen, 2001a).

Meanwhile, Lithuania differed from Estonia and Latvia in that the government offered everyone living in rural areas the chance to obtain a farming plot of about 2–3 hectares. This policy had a visible negative effect on the establishment of the family farm system, which was in other ways promoted by the government. On the whole, methods of privatization in Estonia and Latvia were very similar, i.e. a highly decentralized process. Decisive figures in this process were the chairmen of collective farms, local reform committees and municipal councils which, in principle, were supposed to oversee the process. In this respect, the Lithuanian method of privatization differed greatly from the models applied in the other two countries.

In Lithuania, reform plans for each individual collective farm were drawn up at national level. Furthermore, the temporary large-scale enterprises established in Lithuania were highly vulnerable because any shareholder who had invested his or her vouchers in the enterprise was entitled to reclaim his or her share of the farm within one year either in cash or in kind, e.g. in the form of machinery. The inadequate control of the privatization process at local level, and the fact that people knew the enterprises created as a result of the initial privatization process were just a temporary stage (this is what the legislators intended) in the transition to family farms encouraged a plundering orientation and led to large misappropriations, particularly among kolkhoz and sovkhos leaders. However, it should be remembered that a lot of acts that were either morally reproachable or downright criminal under the current legislation occurred parallel to legally impeccable privatization processes in every country.

The decisive part of the privatization process was (due to the amount and nature of privatized assets) purchasing with vouchers. The interests of the different groups inside the collective farms varied a lot. So did their ability to recognize these interests and to act accordingly. The real power in kolkhozes and sovkhos belonged to (1) the Board of Management: actually its small and exclusive core formed by the chairman and his closest trustees. The other two status classes, much larger in membership than the first, but of nearly equal size when compared with each other, were (2) the 'middle class', and (3) the 'rest'. The struggle for the future of the kolkhoz was largely fought between the core (chairman and his trustees) of the old Board of Management and the new nationalist activists arising mainly from the kolkhoz 'middle class', with both groups trying to appeal to the ordinary workers, since the 'rest' formed about 50 per cent of the total work-

force of the kolkhoz, and the formal approval of the kolkhoz General Assembly was required for all major decisions. The Board of Management had at its disposal all the important data on farms and society at large, including account books, precise information on the continuously changing legislation and the market situation. Some of this information (bookkeeping) was potentially subject to manipulation by the inner circle, which could also to a varying extent monopolize the information (for more information on interest groups, see Alanen, 1999).

The Importance of the Soviet Community Spirit in the Preservation of Kolkhozes and Sovkhozes and the Formation of the New Large-Scale Production System

The ideological framework (various types of unofficial norms and institutional arrangements) people took recourse to during the process and used in interpreting the rapid changes in the surrounding society did not change at the same pace. The understanding that any enterprise manager should be a 'representative of the people' endured, and moreover, the privatization of former kolkhoz or sovkhoz property, even if the transition was carried out in a legally impeccable and morally faultless manner, was often called 'robbing' by ordinary people. The middle class was actually composed of highly specialized employees (agronomists, veterinarians, economists and engineers) and of the most skilled workers (tractor drivers, truck drivers, and persons in charge of technical matters). Even if this 'middle class' consisted of two sub-groups, specialists and skilled workers, the group was rather uniform: e.g. many skilled workers had university degrees. There were more highly educated individuals available than corresponding vacancies for specialists. The fact that their work as well as living quarters were concentrated in the kolkhoz centre eased the formation of a uniform frame of mind, and at the critical phase it evolved into organized opposition activity. The middle class cultivated household plots more seldom and with less intensity than 'ordinary workers'; and they were also younger than the average *kolkhoznik*. Most of the activists in the nationalist movement would rise from among this group of people.

The prospect of breaking the kolkhoz up into smaller units was unappealing and unpopular among the 'middle class'. The idea of replacing the existing system with a new system of pure family farms threatened their privileged position dependent on the large volume of production and highly specialized division of labour. The basic ideology of their opposition activity was to prevent the breaking up of the kolkhoz, although in Estonia and Latvia it was undoubtedly seasoned with suspicion towards the self-centred privatization designs of the kolkhoz leadership. In these countries the plan drawn up by the kolkhoz leadership and the reform committee had to be

validated by the general assembly attended by kolkhoz employees and other people entitled to workshares. This offered the middle class an opportunity to implement changes. In Lithuania, however, they were not offered such an opportunity. Nevertheless, these middle class sentiments were already visible during the Gorbachev era in the highly negative attitude towards employees who desired to set up private farms, now allowed by law. This negative attitude is often attributed to the leadership of collective farms, but based on my interviews these views were in many cases shared by all workers. Together they were able to make the life of a private farmer extremely difficult. New private farmers were sometimes totally excluded from the local community. They were called 'kulaks' or 'enemies of the people', and sometimes even their next-door neighbours stopped greeting them. This reaction was spontaneous — kolkhoz leaders would not have been able to force their employees to adopt such behaviour, let alone force other local people to behave in this manner.

In those cases in Estonia and Latvia where the sovkhos or kolkhoz leadership attempted to preserve the farm as an integral unit in the middle of conflicting interests, active resistance most often failed to arise from among the 'middle class', at least in the sense that a pro-dissolution group would have had its support as a social group. In such cases criticism usually arose from among ordinary employees, who were generally more eager than the other status groups to establish small-farms of their own. But even the 'rest' as a status group was predominantly disinclined to break up the large production units of kolkhozes and sovkhos. However, in the end only four out of the approximately 350 collective farms in Estonia remained undivided and continued agricultural production. In Estonia the defenders were more active and more successful than their colleagues in Latvia. The small number of undivided collective farms was partially due to the anti-collective mentality that predominated the first few governments after the re-establishment of independence. Governments also utilized indirect legislative means in an effort to enforce the division of kolkhozes and sovkhos into smaller units, e.g. by imposing punitive taxes on collective farms. The small number of surviving collective farms (albeit under a different legal guise) is also the result of the extremely difficult economic conditions during the first years of independence. The ramifications of these problems came to a head in the sector of agriculture: producer prices collapsed, at one point markets for farm produce were almost entirely blocked, prices of production inputs skyrocketed, and there was a shortage of many vital raw materials.

With regard to the role of the 'middle class' in Estonia and Latvia, in the attempt to preserve the unity of the kolkhoz, or (as a lesser evil) in the attempt to divide it into technological units as large and viable as possible, their representatives resorted to various tactics, which were partly political

and partly demagogical (political accusations against the 'red barons', charges of misconduct, etc.). These tactics also served a purpose in the power struggle within the collective farms, but my attention is focused on the element of Soviet community spirit in this battle.

When the Estonian and Latvian 'middle classes' mobilized resistance against the then kolkhoz leadership, it was often accused of attempting to 'privatize' some parts of the kolkhoz 'for themselves'. From the perspective of Soviet ideology this was tantamount to 'robbing'. The word robbing was indeed often used as a synonym for privatization, even in such cases where privatization was carried out according to the regulations prescribed by the law without any sign of foul play or deceit. The ones who claimed the 'middle class' was robbing pleaded that collective farm units were the result of hard work by sovkhos or kolkhoz workers (to a large degree they were), and their underlying conviction was that kolkhozes and sovkhos should also under capitalism remain in the collective ownership of working people.

Often the 'middle class' succeeded (especially in Estonia) in organizing a 'little revolution' inside the collective farm, replacing the former 'red barons' with representatives of the 'middle class'. Paradoxically, the political line of the new leadership frequently bore close resemblance to the rightist policy of the government, which at national level was very hostile towards large-scale agricultural production. In a few cases the 'revolution' may in fact have been a 'coup', a plot by a small group of people, who benefited from the fears many 'middle class' members felt for their future. No matter how sincere were the political programmes and promises set forth in the heat of the battle, after a successful 'revolution' the new guard was offered with a wide variety of opportunities to 'privatize for themselves' — such was the moral climate in Estonia at the time.

While the preservation of an entire collective farm was successful in only a handful of cases, there were numerous cases where large-scale production units continued operation on a more modest scale. Usually a new enterprise was established on the basis of one or more production units (cowshed, piggeries, etc.) of the former collective farm. The founders of these new enterprises, which were co-operatives in legal terms, appealed to the workers' Soviet community spirit and consequently established a great number of these co-operatives, where the one man, one vote principle prevails. The establishment of such large-scale farms was made possible by new laws formulated by the Estonian and Latvian governments with an altogether different goal in mind. It was the governments' intention to create a legal foundation for the recreation of co-operative dairies and other processing and service industries that had proliferated in the 'peasants' republic' during Estonia and Latvia's first independence in the 1920s and 1930s. However, the 'middle class' of the collective farms made use of this law to

bring their own ideological project — the preservation of large-scale collective enterprises — to a satisfying conclusion. Many right-wing persons disparagingly call these new co-operative enterprises 'kolkhozes'. Since the opportunities available for the middle class in Lithuania were more limited, they were much more likely to set up new family farms during the most intensive decollectivization phase. Naturally, this speeded up the disintegration of the large-scale production units that had been established from above by a government decree.

Nowadays, the most common legal enterprise form in Estonian and Latvian large-scale production is not a co-operative, but a limited liability company or direct private ownership by one person. In the beginning, limited liability companies shared many characteristics with co-operatives, since these companies were often set up by collecting the amount of vouchers necessary for the purchase of a cowshed, for example, from collective farm members and employees, and the charter of the company prohibited the sale of company stocks to outsiders. In this sense the companies remained in the ownership of the workers. However, in a limited liability company the vote of each owner is based on his number of stocks, which has made the acquisition of a large number of the stocks or the controlling majority easy for the enterprise directors. All across the countries these neo-collectivist enterprises are gradually transformed into ordinary, capitalist enterprises. An increasing number of their workers do not own a single stock in the company today.

However, Estonia and Latvia differ greatly from each other in one respect: large-scale enterprises have almost entirely disappeared in Latvia, while in Estonia they constitute the foundation of the agricultural production system. It is difficult to explain the causes of this difference. The middle class was clearly more active in Estonia, which may have resulted from the larger average size and higher technological level of enterprises in Estonia. Perhaps Estonian entrepreneurs were also better skilled and more prepared for the market economy. Estonian agricultural enterprises had already been granted more autonomy compared to other republics during Soviet times. Moreover, many interviewees testified that Finnish television broadcasts received over the Gulf of Finland increased motivation and may even have created the knowledge base for entrepreneurship.

In Lithuania, large-scale production units have ceased operation partly for legislative reasons. It is believed, however, that some large-scale farms do have the requirements necessary for survival.

As surprising as it may appear, purely capitalist large-scale enterprises were founded in Estonia and Latvia with the help of the Soviet ideology. The vouchers of individual people or families were insufficient to purchase one of the larger kolkhoz production units. Therefore, the purchasers had to acquire vouchers from other local people on loan. Specialized credit insti-

tutions were often established for this purpose. These Savings and Loan Associations operated like banks, loaning money (i.e. the nominal value of unrealized vouchers) deposited in their savings accounts to entrepreneurs, whose own workshare or compensation vouchers did not suffice for the purchase of a required object or complex.

Many private persons (they were often already active businessmen at that time) hoping to purchase an ex-collective production complex went around collecting vouchers from local people (particularly from former employees of the complex and inhabitants at the village where the complex was located) and many businessmen managed to amass large amounts. Formally, these vouchers were given on loan to the entrepreneur, but the legal status of many transactions remains in doubt. Some entrepreneurs have said they received the vouchers as presents. Why was that? The reason might be that the villagers perceived the role of the prospective buyer in the light of Soviet ideology: They may have believed that the new owner would be the 'representative of the people', i.e. a leader vested with patrimonial power and responsibility for his community members. Naturally, there were also those who believed the invested vouchers would enable them to keep their jobs, but there were many pensioners, who must have been well aware that the enterprise would not be able to offer them employment. It is widely known that many promises were made by businessmen collecting vouchers from villagers, most of which they have not been able or willing to keep.

For example, a typical businessman pledged help to a pensioner in ploughing and cultivating the field plot surrounding his modest hut (the pensioner hoped he would be able to set up a family farm on the land he would receive in restitution). The villagers were in fact expecting even more than this from the businessman — they expected all-round care from their new farm owner. The interviews in Estonia clearly show that people who had handed over their vouchers to the new entrepreneur, plus the majority of other villagers, were totally perplexed, when they realized that the new farm owner would no longer cultivate their plots or supply pensioners with firewood for the winter, etc.

Hence, the cultural tradition of Soviet community spirit indirectly contributed to the creation of a large-scale agricultural system based on direct private ownership particularly in Estonia. The moral code originating from the pre-decollectivization 'communal order' no longer determined the 'moral subject' of all its members. However, in the final part of this paper I will demonstrate that the community is capable of re-interpreting this cultural tradition in the post-collective context.

Anomie and Protest

Although the newly emerged society is undoubtedly capitalistic, its final form is still imperfect and the enterprise system is still taking shape in the countryside of all three countries. The shape of things to come is also influenced by the moral state of the community, which could nowadays be characterized in Durkheimian terms as anomic, but which on the other hand still displays the remains of the community spirit of Soviet times. The reverse side of anomie is robber capitalism — the arrogant and shortsighted pursuit of self-interest. In the following treatment it is linked with Durkheimian thinking, as presented in his works *The Division of Labor* (English translation 1964, Chapter 7) and *Suicide* (English translation 1951), although the term as such is not actually used in these books. According to *the Division of Labor*, social circumstances analogous to robber capitalism are characterized by the incompleteness of the moral foundation of society. Although the foundation of new social relations may have already been laid qualitatively, time is also required for the development of a new kind of 'authority' on the basis of 'experience'. Only that will create a moral order as a prerequisite for everyday social exchange between individuals. Hence, we are primarily dealing with a moral principle, although legislation in line with this principle is also being developed.

The moral order is not grounded on explicit interpersonal interests, but on a system, and — in Durkheimian functionalist terms — 'the supra-individual sphere of transcendent values', which is ultimately rooted in every society. By contrast, in robber capitalism people are only connected by immediate interests; moreover, the association is only 'temporary', since ever-changing circumstances divide and pull individual interests in different directions. Thus, in the countryside of the post-decollectivization era, robber capitalism effectively consisted of everyone being at war with everyone and many new businessmen acted without scruples for their own benefit. Corruption was rampant and even positions of trust were viewed in terms of personal benefit. However, widespread social helplessness (people's inability to defend themselves) has been the reverse side of this selfishness. A large part, perhaps even the majority, of the rural population belongs to this group of powerless, often unemployed and destitute people, who are easily deprived of their petty assets by unscrupulous businessmen. Heavy use of alcohol (heavier than ever before, claimed the interviewees), physical violence and suicides are only some of its manifestation.

Adhering to the terminology used in *Suicide*, these phenomena are manifestations of an *anomic* social condition. But Durkheim underlines the 'organic' nature of highly developed capitalism, and the Estonian countryside has a long way to go before reaching a comparable structure of solidarity. All in all, these concepts of classical sociology (organic solidarity,

and anomie as a disturbed state of solidarity) portray the post-socialist crisis remarkably well, although they were originally formulated to describe the birth processes of an industrial and partly capitalist society. However, we may presume that the current situation is transitional, which is difficult to avoid because of the nature of the process, but which will eventually produce a normative structure characteristic of a developed capitalist society (cf. Raiser, 1997).

Another feature of the state of affairs is that the powerless people described above cannot resort to the formidable support that in western societies arises from various organizational forms of civil society, such as trade unions, political parties, religious communities or charitable organizations. The powerless also appear to be incapable of organizing any collective or public actions, such as a demonstration or strike. The only source where people go in search of help and where they are rewarded is relatives, particularly the closest relatives.

These people who lost out in the privatization process and are stuck in the countryside are powerless in relation to private enterprises and the formal institutions of society (e.g. municipal administration). Paradoxically these same people still actively influence the way society is being restructured, but in their powerlessness they have to utilize unorthodox means. These means may not be recognized without fully understanding Soviet ideology, which is still welling up from the former Soviet community spirit, and the re-interpretations of which provide these activities with the necessary moral code and an invisible yet tangible social support among the group of powerless who share the same community spirit. Half of these activities are called resistance, while the other half are called protest.

For one thing, the atmosphere of resistance is reflected in people's language. People felt that the breaking up of Soviet farms was a socially irrational and unfair act, almost regardless of other opinions they might have had of the kolkhoz system. The people of the Estonian countryside described the dissolution process with negatively charged expressions — just as the Bulgarian rural population did in a study carried out on a local community (Creed, 1995).

In the countries above the expressions used originated from the days of forced collectivization, some fifty years ago. Hence, the breaking up of a kolkhoz is consistently called its 'liquidation', and its last chairman is usually nicknamed the 'liquidator'. The use of the term indicates that ordinary people considered privatization analogous to the liquidation of 'enemies of the people' in the kulaks.

Resistance is not limited to the verbal level. A woman who had bought a cowshed complex said in an interview that her employees experienced their transformation to the role of wage earners under her as a shock, which led to a number of unfortunate incidents. At one point some of her employ-

ees simply refused to obey her orders, went berry picking and left her alone with a large herd of cattle. That cowshed owner felt powerless. In the same manner the employees at the wood processing workshop occasionally walk out and leave work 'to get drunk', as the action is simply described. In both of the cases above the formally non-public collective actions may be interpreted as a denial of the legitimacy of the new private ownership — or at least the denial of the legitimacy of the present form of private ownership. However, collective reactions such as those above are not typical. A more typical manifestation of resistance might be the following case: an entrepreneur who runs a privatized enterprise asked about ten skilled electricians — who had formerly been employed at the kolkhoz department now owned by the entrepreneur — whether they would be interested in working under contract for the privatized enterprise, but according to the manager of the enterprise their answer was: "A little hunger is better than hard work."

These types of protest could be interpreted simply as negative representations, signs of total denial without any prospects for the future. However, research has shown that it is entirely possible to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the employees with a specific kind of treatment. Instead of brutal robber capitalism it might be thinkable to discover alternatives that would bridge the gap between the old patrimonial and the modern capitalist industrial relations. The cowshed mentioned above was sold and now the milkers are back at work. As a part of his skilful psychological approach the new owner is offering his employees better wages and long-term employment.

The empirical data gathered in Estonia also included more direct approaches by the powerless, such as anonymous phone calls to enterprise managers, threats of arson and even murder. Such threats have not remained just talk, since a few cases of murder and arson have been documented. For example, one owner of a cowshed complex decided to move elsewhere, so he sold his livestock and paid his debts. However, right after the cattle had been moved out the cowshed was set on fire. It has never been established who the culprit was, but the general opinion is that the arson was revenge by a former employee or employees. Of course, violence or violent threats do not always embody a social element. However, some employees may believe that concrete violent threats will have an effect on the behaviour of their employers. The end result is that matters related to the enterprise are no longer the entrepreneur's private affairs although he is not yet facing organized labour and industrial legislation enforced by government officials.

The interpretation presented above is in essence Durkheimian, but my primary source was the theory of the moral economy of peasantry formulated by James C. Scott (1986) for somewhat different circumstances (primarily for the study of the peasant communities of the Middle Ages and in developing countries). Resistance and protest of this type is a reaction

against proletarianization and marginalization, and the loss of previous respect — which had been shown towards ordinary kolkhoz workers, but especially to such vocational specialists as a milker or tractor driver in the patrimonial and other *Gemeinschaft* societal structures of the kolkhozes (cf. old villages). Scott emphasizes the everyday character of resistance. Relations within the peasantry (including relations between classes) and relations between the peasantry and the external elite are to some degree questioned every day, and therefore reproduced as they are or transformed gradually into other forms in the social processes of interaction in everyday life. This resistance is highly personal both in form and intentional content. At first sight it is also without any collective elements (e.g. thieving from the rich for the use of the thief's own family, which is also common in the Baltic countryside), but this does not exclude collective cultural conditions and consequences of these actions, nor their culturally determined nature overall.

Just as Scott's peasants, the poor and powerless of the Estonian countryside are also characterized by the lack of institutional instruments for organized activity, although its absence has a different explanation: in Estonia former *kolkhozniks* have not yet been able to create such instruments but eventually they will (despite the open hostility displayed by entrepreneurs towards trade unions, etc.), whilst in developing countries portrayed by Scott, the creation of such instruments may not even be possible in principle, since their development is blocked by the governing elite with violence.

However, both in the Baltic countryside and in Scott's villages each act of resistance and protest is indicative of something that is not anomic in nature, and in the conditions furnished by Estonia's turbulent transition these acts may contribute to the creation of a bridge between the community spirit of Soviet patrimonialism and organic solidarity characteristic of developed capitalism.

Conclusion

Empirical material gathered from the countryside suggests that the collective consciousness of the actors in rural areas still largely originates from the work collectives of the Soviet era, which physically disappeared years ago. If alternative institutions and ideologies, such as independent trade unions (there were no signs of trade union activity in any of the rural communities studied) do not replace the socialist collective consciousness, the ideology of the socialist era may continue to thrive. However, if new trade unions and other forms of independent civil organization and participation are created in the future, the old ideology could lose its social import at a rapid pace. Of course, it is also possible that the value and norm struc-

ture characteristic of capitalism is developed through the modification of the ideological elements of the socialist era. Perhaps these elements can be modified to function adequately in a new environment.

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