

## Mary Fulbrook

### Dritte Sektion: Arbeiter in sozialen und politischen Konfliktkonstellationen. Einführung

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Peter Hübner/Christoph Kleßmann/  
Klaus Tenfelde (Hg.)

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Mary Fulbrook

## Dritte Sektion: Arbeiter in sozialen und politischen Konfliktkonstellationen

### Einführung

Workers always have something to complain about – even in the ‚workers‘ and peasants‘ states‘ of state socialism. Many of the causes of worker discontent across eastern European states in the period from the late 1940s to 1990 were similar, although varying in level and intensity at different times in different areas. What differed were the ‚hard‘ and ‚soft‘ institutional strategies for dealing with worker discontent; the varying resources, alliances and interests of workers; and the varying forms of protest, in the light of particular historical conditions and distinctive heritages of experience and culture. A comparative approach, paying attention both to changes within the working classes and to wider social changes across time, can yield some potentially very fruitful hypotheses about patterns of worker protest in eastern European communist states.

The contributions to this section address different aspects of the topic of workers in social and political conflict situations. Many papers revolve, if only implicitly, around the curious absence, in general, of the working class from the revolutionary upheavals of 1989–90. Rather, the papers are largely concerned with the industrial conflicts of earlier years which appear – with the notable exception of the *Solidarność* movement in Poland – to peter out in intensity and political significance by the 1980s. The first three papers deal with the GDR from 1945 to the 1980s. Stadtland points out in her paper on conflicts in the German working class from 1945 to 1953 that, while problems remained relatively constant, attempted solutions on the part of authorities varied. The East German ruling party, the SED, reacted to material demands with ‚pacification strategies‘ which could not in the long term be sufficient. Hürtgen shifts the question to that of why there were ever fewer collective conflicts in succeeding decades. She argues that the answer is to be found in a combination of a ‚paternalistischen und repressiven Staat, von Verteilung und Kontrolle‘, in which connection she strongly emphasises the latter. On Hürtgen’s view, the decline in conflicts had more to do with mental changes, and in particular with fear of repression, than with social policy. Gehrke continues the analysis of GDR workers and opposition, combining the history of power (*Herrschaftsgeschichte*) and the history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*) in an attempt to explain why it was that the ‚*Vordenker der Revolution*‘ of 1989 did not originate

from the working class and appeared to be far removed from the problems experienced on the factory floor. In Gehrke's view, this can only be explained in terms of wider social changes occurring in the GDR. Attention then turns, in the subsequent papers, to other eastern European states. Heumos analyses strikes in Czechoslovakia in the period from 1945 to 1963, arguing that the decline in both numbers and scale of strikes had to do with industrial management methods rooted in pre-war experiences, as well as weaknesses of the party basis within factories: briefly, good management, poor party, so good industrial relations. Pittaway demonstrates, with respect to Hungary, that an informal social contract, and a privileging of the male, skilled working class elite in the 1960s led to a 'burgeoning consumerism and a mushrooming shadow economy in the 1970s and 1980s'.

Referring to these (and also where relevant to other papers in this collection), I would like to draw out some of the common themes and issues which need to be addressed more explicitly in a comparative framework.

## Regime responses to worker discontent: 'hard' and 'soft' strategies

The working classes were crucial to the communist project in two fundamental ways. First, they were, in theory, the 'ruling class'; certainly the class of the future, the proletariat in which was invested the historical mission of the overcoming of all alienation and the achievement of the future perfect, classless society. The slight problem was, of course, the transitional phase; that of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or rather, in the Marxist-Leninist variant, that of the dictatorship of the Party who claimed to rule on behalf of the proletariat. Hence the theoretically rather awkward dilemma: a conflict between workers and 'their' party should, in principle, not really exist. So there could be no institutional arrangements – such as genuinely independent trade unions representing workers against local economic management or the central state – which conceded any difference of fundamental interests. Secondly, however, the eastern European states in the latter half of the twentieth century were at the same time modernising industrial states in which a compliant and productive work force was absolutely vital to economic productivity in face of international competition. It was therefore essential to keep them relatively satisfied, and to deal rapidly with (and preferably prevent) undue unrest: thus, in essence, if not quite the 'ruling class' of Marxist theory, workers had at least a degree of 'negative veto power' (Kopstein).<sup>1</sup>

Faced with worker discontent, rulers had essentially two strategies: 'hard' (repressive) and 'soft' (attempting to buy compliance or quiescence); the balance between these strategies varied in each case and shifted over time. 'Hard' strategies of repression are both empirically obvious (particularly in the case of major uprisings and bloodshed), and also perhaps most strongly and frequently emphasised, most notably of course in interpretations which draw on 'totalitarianism' as a useful concept. 'Soft' strategies, by contrast, have to

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1 J. Kopstein, *The Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

date appeared harder to identify with clarity, and have not as yet been subjected to extensive debate. Here, it is possible only to indicate some of the key issues requiring more explicit discussion, particularly within a comparative framework.

*„Hard‘ strategies: power resources, mentalities, and the routinisation of repression*

The adoption of ‚hard‘ strategies of repression was in part determined by the varying structures, resources and rulers‘ perceptions in different regimes. Thus there were differences with respect to the reliability (or otherwise) of domestic forces of repression, and the likelihood of USSR intervention by force if necessary (or not). In the GDR in 1953, inadequate and (in Ulbricht’s view) also unreliable domestic forces of repression (the KVP, People’s Police in Barracks) had to be augmented by Soviet tanks; Soviet tanks again played a crucial role in the suppression of domestic unrest in Poland and Hungary in 1956 and, alongside other Warsaw Pact forces, in Czechoslovakia in 1968; by the time of the Solidarity struggles in Poland in 1980–81, military rule under General Jaruzelski appeared an acceptable domestic alternative to Soviet intervention; and by 1989 the replacement of the Brezhnev doctrine by what Soviet spokesman Gennady Gerasimov so disarmingly termed the ‚Sinatra doctrine‘ (‚let them do it their way‘) was a crucial precondition for the dismantling of the Soviet empire under Gorbachev. The highly visible and substantial presence of Soviet tanks in the GDR – the frontline of the divided Europe in the Cold War – throughout the forty years of its existence contrasted markedly with the implications of the withdrawal of the Russians from Romania in 1958.

Also of crucial importance here is the question of ‚mental frameworks‘ and collective memories: and particularly the implications of the past, or the lessons learnt from previous experiences, whether in their own particular state, elsewhere in eastern Europe, or indeed in the wider communist world (for example, the Tiananmen Square massacre, to name but one crucial element in the summer of 1989). The first major uprising in the Soviet bloc, that of June 1953 in the GDR, remained a key element in the thinking of the East German leadership right up to the utterances of Stasi chief Erich Mielke in 1989 (‚is this the 17 June breaking out again?‘). It is clear that experience of the repression of and after each major uprising – 1953, 1956, 1968, 1970, 1980–81 – was also crucial to the collective memories and transmitted experiences of workers. The experiences of tanks, deaths, violence, arrests, imprisonment, were sufficiently shattering for many workers to feel that expressions of discontent were likely to lead purely to a worsening of conditions; but such experiences alone are not sufficient to explain variations in patterns of worker unrest.

The implications of repressive strategies are not always easy to evaluate on a comparative basis. For example, we know that the East German security police, the Stasi, constituted the largest such force in the Soviet bloc, even proportionately greatly overshadowing the Soviet KGB; and that the Stasi mushroomed massively in size during the Honecker period of the 1970s and 1980s (ironically, also the time of the greatest expansion of ‚soft‘ strategies, as we shall see). A systematic comparison of the growth of secret security forces across the eastern European communist states would be of great interest. But the question of the implications of mentalities and behaviour goes beyond that of sheer size and patterns of func-

tioning. Perceptions of repression – and indeed active, even willing, participation in the functioning of the security apparatus – are further crucial questions. The growth of Stasi meant not merely the growth of repression, but also the increased numbers of more or less willing ‚unofficial collaborators‘ or IMs.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, members of the ‚ordinary‘ population may have begun to take the presence of the Stasi more for granted, as in the routinisation of reports to Stasi officers by people in particular economic positions. One may thus pose the question – across all cases – of whether there was in fact some form of ‚normalisation‘ of knowledge of the secret security forces, and a ‚routinised expectation‘ of violent repression, leading to what might be called a ‚pre-emptive self-censorship‘ of word and deed, a moderation of behaviour; whether, in short, there were developing assumptions among succeeding generations in eastern European states that a certain (increasing) level of surveillance was ‚normal‘ and to be cooperated with: what might be called, then, a ‚Routinisierung des Bösen‘.

### *‚Soft‘ strategies: cynical manipulation or genuine intentions?*

Repression of unrest through ‚hard‘ strategies, whether visibly violent (tanks, arrests) or the less visible but no less insidious means of surveillance and veiled intervention by security forces, was by no means the sole regime strategy deployed for dealing with workers‘ discontent. ‚Soft‘ strategies were always also deployed, and arguably increasingly so in the 1970s and 1980s. Sometimes such strategies consisted of instant concessions (the retraction of increased work norms) or relatively short-term sops to consumerism which required some deviation from an underlying emphasis on heavy industrial production. Increasingly there appears to have been a longer-term policy of ‚buying off‘ potential discontent. This is evidenced, for example, in the so-called ‚Kadarism‘ of Hungary after 1956; the ‚Normalisierung‘ in Czechoslovakia and Poland after the suppressions of 1968 and 1970; or the ‚Einheit der Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik‘ in the GDR under Honecker in the 1970s and 1980s. Often such ‚soft strategies‘ are seen as a form of ‚integration politics‘, or ‚implicit social contract‘, as described by Mark Pittaway with respect to Hungary.

Such an interpretation should not go un-debated, however. Underlying notions of the ‚social contract‘ there is, if only implicitly, the essentially functionalist view that rulers adopted such consumerist policies in an attempt to buy off discontent. One could perhaps suggest an alternative, and arguably less cynical, interpretation. Adopting or adapting terms from debates over the Third Reich (where of course both the substance and implications of the debates are very different), one could propose an alternative ‚intentionalist‘ view: namely, that ‚soft strategies‘ were genuinely the result of the (in this instance good) ‚intentions‘ of rulers. Moreover, such intentions were in the context of a wider set of cultural shifts in a changing global environment (on which more in a moment).

What would be evidence either way on this? Of course the *effects* of consumerist policies were important – as we shall see again in a moment when looking at workers‘ responses to regime policies. But we have to distinguish between intended short-term effects and actual

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2 For an excellent brief overview of the development and functioning of the Stasi, see Jens Gieseke, Mielke-Konzern. Die Geschichte der Stasi 1945–1990 (München: DVA, 2001).

long-term consequences, and ask two further sets of questions. First, are the expected effects on workers' attitudes an adequate or sufficient explanation of the initial adoption of such policies? And secondly, given the increasingly obvious self-contradictory consequences of consumerist policies under deteriorating economic circumstances, why were such policies continuously adhered to? In the light of these questions, an alternative approach to that of the 'implicit social contract' or 'pacification' must be considered seriously.

Thus, there would be much to be gained from a systematic comparative analysis of the values, aspirations and professed motives of particular rulers, which is at least in part – although not merely – a generational issue. Those leaders of communist parties who were born before the First World War had personally experienced the miseries and disruption of family homes and livelihoods during the war and in the long aftermath through the 1920s and 1930s of political upheavals and economic depression. The communism of the early post-war leaders was deeply informed by a desire to create improved conditions for ordinary people: paradise on earth did in many cases reduce to a roof over one's head and a full stomach. The authenticity of many utopian visions after the experiences of Depression and fascism should not be discounted by the cynicism of more privileged later observers in their affluent ivory towers. Such personal experiences of political and economic crises might also go some way to answering, for example, the curious 'sacred cow' question of Erich Honecker's social policies in the 1980s, namely: why was Honecker so determined NOT to amend unaffordable social policies and reduce economic subsidies for housing, basic food-stuffs and transport in the 1980s, despite urgent and yet unheeded warnings of the imminent economic slide into inevitable bankruptcy? Was it because, on the functionalist notions of 'implicit social contract' and 'pacification', he feared unrest from below – which was almost certain to develop in the deteriorating economic situation in any event? Or, from the perspective of an analysis of intentions and motives, was Honecker not only responding to an admittedly often well-founded fear of popular unrest but also genuinely wedded to some essentially petty bourgeois set of aspirations to a modest home and guaranteed daily bread? And how do the adoption of and dogged adherence to such policies in the GDR under Honecker compare with similar strategies in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and – very much less successfully – Poland?

Alongside a re-evaluation of the aspirations of rulers, we also need recognition of at least some possible genuine 'congruence of aims' between people and regime on domestic social policies, rather than the implicitly oppositional paradigm embodied in notions of 'social contract', 'social integration', 'pacification', and 'buying off'. While post-1990 apologetics by many former functionaries have to be treated with appropriate caution, the pre-1990 records in many domestic areas such as health and housing nevertheless provide considerable evidence of genuine and widespread common concerns between functionaries and 'ordinary people'. Loss of working time through ill-health, or inadequate transport, or lack of appropriate child care, was as much of a problem for those managing the economy as it was for those personally affected by such misfortunes. A key feature of the developments of the 1970s and 1980s was the recognition not merely on the part of the vast majority of 'ordinary people', but also of the functionaries of many communist regimes (not least Gorbachev himself from 1985) that mounting economic difficulties required rethinking of priorities and strategies. Frustrations over the failure to realise shared goals in terms of a basic

standard of living, decent housing and a decent environment, were common to people across a wide political spectrum: attempts to achieve a liveable society with a degree of social security, adequate leisure facilities, and a functioning health service cannot be simply written off as an ‚implicit social contract‘ or ‚pacification‘ attempts. Nor can attempts to involve people in processes of decision-making on domestic social policies be seen purely or always as a populist fig-leaf of ‚democratic centralism‘, making sops to popular input where it did not matter. When one considers some of the key social policies of the 1970s and 1980s, it can be seen that there was considerable ‚input from below‘, as for example in the background to the 1972 Abortion Law in the GDR.<sup>3</sup>

### *The balance between ‚hard‘ and ‚soft‘ strategies*

The relationships between policies of repression and consumerist consensus varied over time: ‚hard‘ and ‚soft‘ strategies were far from mutually exclusive, and it is indeed a notable feature of the 1970s and 1980s that both appeared to increase simultaneously. There was arguably both a routinisation of repression and a normalisation of the desire for improvements in living standards which cannot be seen in isolation from one another. Indeed, there is possibly even some thing of a vicious circle involved. After the initially raised hopes and expectations of the early 1970s, subsequent dramatic and visible deteriorations in environmental conditions and living standards in the 1980s, in the context of the oil crises and renewed arms race, provoked new challenges from the growing minority of groups of political activists, in turn provoking the growth of security and repressive forces.

While the ‚hard‘ strategies of repression were clearly brutal in their immediate effects, the longer-term consequences for collective memories, mentalities and patterns of behaviour of experienced repression, as well as continuous surveillance and intervention require further comparative analysis; and the ‚soft‘ strategies often encapsulated in notions of the implicit social contract require perhaps more fundamental rethinking. Neither of these strategies can, however, be considered from purely one side of a complex equation: it is essential too to look at the changing characteristics of the working classes with whom regimes were interacting.

## The resources and interests of workers

As the papers in this section make very clear, there were major differences in the character and context of the ‚working class‘ in each case, and important changes over time.

Everywhere, there were differences between male and female workers; between workers on higher or lower wages; between workers in different segments of industry; between skilled and unskilled workers; between ‚peasant workers‘ or ‚commuter workers‘ who had only recently been drawn into industrial society from a rural hinterland, and those who had been

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3 Cf. Donna Harsch, ‚Society, the State and Abortion in East Germany, 1950–1972‘, *American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 1, Feb. 1997, pp. 53–84.

rooted in urban industrial life over a longer period of time. Given different patterns and timings of industrial development across different areas of central and eastern Europe, the working classes of each state varied in degree of internal differentiation, with significant consequences for both the likelihood and the strength of collective action: different fissures and alignments led to differing interests and capacities for collective protest, and resources for weathering particular periods of economic difficulty.

While the GDR and western Czechoslovakia (and urban pockets within Hungary) were already well-developed industrial societies in the first half of the twentieth century, elsewhere in eastern Europe largely peasant populations faced relatively rapid processes of late industrialisation in the latter half of the century. More important in some areas of eastern Europe than others, therefore, was the proportion of ‚peasant workers‘, of ‚new workers‘, and of ‚commuter workers‘. In Bulgaria, as Georgiev points out, as many as 80% of workers in the 1960s had themselves formerly been peasants. In Romania, as Petrescu argues, the increasing number of rurally based ‚commuter-workers‘ in the 1960s and 1970s, and a corresponding ‚dilution‘ of the ever-expanding working class, contributed to a decline in collective protest action during this period. The ‚egoism of small groups‘, as Petrescu terms it, meant that families or local networks, rather than class, constituted the basic collective units around which survival strategies were organised; and ‚commuter workers‘ – with their rural hinterlands – were less likely to be severely affected by the economic crises of the 1980s than were ‚genuine workers‘ with no additional resources to which to resort in a period of growing shortages in the urban context. And while there were always differences between younger and older workers, there were notable variations on this theme in the German case, as described by Stadtland and Hürtgen: while older workers (generally those born before the First World War) shared a tradition of collective protest and strong trade unions, as well as the experience of the suppression of workers‘ rights under Nazism, the atomisation and individualisation of the German working class had already set in during the 1930s.

The wider economic and political context provides a further set of factors to be taken into consideration when assessing the strength of different working classes. The character of the labour market was of particular importance, particularly with respect to the potential alternatives open to discontented workers: thus whether or not there were shortages of skilled labour, and whether or not there were possibilities for migration or emigration, played an important role in the extent of even the ‚passive strength‘ or ‚veto power‘ of workers in different contexts. This is one reason why the closure of the Berlin Wall in 1961 marked such an important, if totally ambiguous and multi-faceted cesura in GDR history; sufficient, on some views, to justify the label of a ‚refoundation‘ of the GDR in the 1960s. While on the one hand the closure of any final loophole for the escape of workers to the more affluent West radically curtailed workers‘ choices, on the other hand the structural opportunities for the upward mobility of those who remained – and particularly for those whose careers were actively fostered by regime policies for further qualification, as was the case with women as well as workers and peasants – led many to experience unprecedented opportunities for upward mobility and a (limited) degree of self-fulfilment within (well-defined political as well as physical) limits. For many East Germans, however, ‚the West‘ as a real alternative was mentally more strongly present than it was for populations of other eastern European states.



Crucial, too is the fact that the working classes cannot be viewed in isolation from other social groups. Their strength, or otherwise, related in no small measure to the question of whether or not they formed alliances with other social groups; and most particularly, to the question of whether or not the working classes formed a close relationship with the respective groups among the intelligentsia of each state. Here, one has to look at more than (merely) the material bases of discontent of workers, and analyse the degree to which, and the respects in which, such discontent was exacerbated by political, religious, cultural, or nationalist sources of discontent.

The key question here has to do with whether or not different sources of discontent are shared, overlap or coincide across a broad social spectrum. Perhaps somewhat controversially, Gehrke argues that, in the GDR, a small section of the working class – particularly younger members – participated in the alternative music scene of the 1960s, linked up with Christian youth and some strands of the intelligentsia in the later 1960s, and subsequently coalesced in the protest movements of 1989. More generally, however, a notable feature of East German history is arguably the lack of serious political alliances between the different groups which formed the new socialist intelligentsia, on the one hand, and the decreasingly homogenous working classes on the other.<sup>4</sup> Oppositional intellectuals (Harich, Havemann, Bahro) were relatively easily isolated, commanding little support among the wider population; and, while their concerns were widely shared, the emergent dissident movements of the 1980s – peace, environmental, human rights, gay rights and women's movements – were actively supported by only a tiny minority of the population. This situation contrasted markedly with the varying forms of alliance between workers and intelligentsia in both Czechoslovakia and Poland at different times in their histories, from 1968 through the 1980s. In the case of Poland, the role of the Catholic Church and Polish nationalism were additional ingredients in the equation.

Thus the character of the working classes within particular state boundaries must be set in the wider context of class alliances and collective mentalities, where questions of culture, religion and national identity also play an important role.

## Strategies and forms of worker protest

It is possible to develop a relative abstract typology of forms of labour protest as follows. First, there are collective, proactive protests which seek to demand an improvement in conditions. Secondly, there are collective, defensive forms of protest against deterioration in actual or expected conditions. Thirdly, there are essentially individualistic attempts to improve one's personal situation, such as the 'citizen's petitions' (*Eingaben*) which were a feature of life in the GDR (and indeed over many previous German regimes going right back to eighteenth-century Prussia). And finally, there is a widespread form of apathetic, depoliti-

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4 It is in any event arguable that there was a process of social atomisation, with the disintegration of 'classes' (which are themselves difficult to define with any precision) as bases of collective consciousness in the GDR; an argument which cannot be pursued in any further detail here.

cised grumbling which may, if appropriate conditions are present, turn into ‚exit‘ – removal from an unsatisfactory situation – rather than ‚voice‘, or attempts to change it.

The question arises of whether this is simply a typology, or whether it is also, to some extent – although different features could coexist and overlap in changing proportions – a characterisation of discernable developmental trends in eastern European states. Certainly in at least some of the states under consideration here there does seem to be a general movement over time in the direction from the first to the fourth form of protest. While Stadtland, for example, sees hunger as a cause of proactive strikes demanding an improvement in conditions, Hürtgen perceives a switch to more defensive forms of protest against deterioration in conditions in later work stoppages in the GDR. Moreover, Hürtgen traces a decline in both total numbers of strikes, and of numbers participating in each strike, in the GDR. There was, possibly, a shift from collective forms of protest to the more individualistic form of *Eingaben*, although there are problems with too literal a chronological connection here.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Heumos demonstrates a great decline in the number of strikes in Czechoslovakia, with 300 strikes involving more than one hundred workers in the early period 1948–1960, and then only a handful in the period 1960–1968. Pittaway traces the increasing apathy, depoliticisation and atomisation of the working class in Hungary. Petrescu points out that there was little or no collective social protest in the period 1958–1977. Again, the clear contrast case and exception to such trends is that of Poland, discussed further by Kleßmann in his contribution below. In virtually all cases, there was – following the relative lull of the 1960s and 1970s – some evidence of a rise again in conflicts during the 1980s, though again with striking regional variations. In Romania after 1977, a crisis in food supplies gave rise to renewed working class protests; in Poland economic, intellectual, religious and nationalist demands coalesced in the broadly-based Solidarity movement of the 1980s; and, while the East German working classes were somewhat cushioned by Honecker’s generous subsidies in the deteriorating economic circumstances of the 1980s, environmental deterioration and heightened Cold War tensions gave rise to political dissidence among groups largely not constituted by the working classes.

## Conclusion

The key to explaining such shifts in the character of collective action thus lies in looking at particular constellations or combinations of factors. Important among these are, as indicated above, the legacies of past experiences, particularly with respect to brutal suppression of unrest; knowledge of what has happened elsewhere in eastern Europe; perceptions and assumptions about the likelihood of successful protest; and questions of cultural repertoire, inherited traditions and political culture. Changes in causes of unrest and demands are im-

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5 Without going into too much detail here, it is necessary to point out that the quantity and character of *Eingaben* fluctuated according to a number of factors, including the ways in which they were officially interpreted and the extent to which they were officially solicited; they were, moreover, written by a wide cross-section of members of East German society, including (perhaps even predominantly) members of the professional intelligentsia, as well as ‚ordinary‘ working class individuals.

portant, with a shift from hunger, through premium and wage disputes, to defensive reactions against deteriorations in conditions, and on to new political demands in changing circumstances. Important too are the ways in which different social classes interact and their various discontents overlap.

Finally, a word must be said about the question of whether it is even possible to talk of the 'working classes' as clearly definable collective class actors within given state boundaries across the whole period. The changing alignments and the 'un-coupling' of official prestige, living standards, and occupation, arguably contributed to an 'un-making' of the eastern European working classes in the sense of class actors imbued with a collective class consciousness in the classic sense. Social inequalities rooted in differential access to 'connections', western currency, and political privilege, no longer mapped neatly onto 'class' differences in the sense of different (manual, non-manual and professional) occupational groups. Crucial too are wider social changes and patterns of individualisation in the developing industrial societies of later twentieth-century eastern Europe. Increasing leisure time, with a decline in total working hours, and growing ownership of radio, television, and private means of transport, allowed greater mobility and more individualistic trends in leisure and entertainment, with increased participation in global cultural developments. The 'normalisation' of channels of protest, and the 'normalisation' of assumptions about the character of the state, particularly among younger generations in the 1970s, led to a degree of routinisation of patterns of conflict resolution at least until the changed international circumstances of the Gorbachev era. All of these wider social changes meant that the collective social actors of the 1980s were very differently constituted than those of the immediate post-war period.

It is worth emphasising, then, that 1989 was not a continuation of 1953 or 1956. The collapse of the communist system in 1989–90 had a great deal to do with economic and military changes in a global context; the political upheavals were complex in character. A range of factors played a key role in the way workers were involved in social and political conflict situations in eastern European states in the period between 1945 and 1990. Analysis of individual case studies, as outlined in the following chapters, will reveal in more detail the ways in which 'hard' and 'soft' strategies on the part of rulers, and different mentalities and experiences of participants, came together under changing historical circumstances and cultural conditions to produce somewhat different patterns in each case.