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World View, Political Behaviour
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Post-Communist Transition

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Money Without Culture, Culture Without Money: Eastern Europe's Nouveaux Riches

Introduction: New classes and new cultures

A spectre is haunting Eastern Europe. It is the spectre of unbridled capitalism, class struggle and vulgar wealth; it is a spectre of mafia, speculators, kitch and bad taste. It is the world of the new rich, of those who create Millionaires' Clubs in Moscow and who deal in false passports in Warsaw. They are the restaurateurs of Bucharest and the self-taught computer consultants in Prague. They are former party bosses, technocratic managers, and Gypsy gold dealers. The new rich are the ones buying magazines like "Elita" or "Beautiful Home" (Hungary), employing landscape architects for their gardens and installing swimming pools in their yards. They have their own restaurants, clubs, casinos and even charity balls. They are building elaborate vacation homes and buying up antique furniture. They are sending their children to private schools and their wives to special beauty salons. They have acquired money and are now trying to spend it. Sometimes they make mistakes. Rich become vulgar rich. Taste becomes kitch. When this happens, the New Rich become objects of derision by the Old Rich, are laughed at by the cultured intelligentsia, and become objects of hatred of the New Poor.

It is these new entrepreneurs and their cultural manifestations which are the subject of this paper. These shopkeepers, traders, free-lancers and private businessmen are not just a new economic class. They are a class in formation, a new social stratum which is consolidating itself partly via cultural forms, what we may call "lifestyle". We will call these people the nouveaux riches in order to distinguish them from the cultured intelligentsia or remnants of aristocracy of pre-1989 Eastern Europe.

The emergence of nouveaux riches involves both individual and social identity change. Such changes comprise demonstrations of one's new and social position - demonstrations to oneself, to one's fellow nouveaux riches, and to those whom one seeks to impress. By analyzing the nouveaux riches in terms of individual, social and cultural manifestations, it may be possible to utilize them as a vehicle in order to grasp some of the more subtle processes of class formation and cultural redefinition now taking place in Eastern Europe. In the much analyzed "transition to privatization", such processes may have more important long-term consequences than the many spectacular accounts of "mafia" so prevalent in descriptions of Eastern Europe. Insofar as class formation involves changes in identity, and in concepts of identity now governed by relations of consumption, the emergence of the nouveaux riches attains extra importance. For the nouveaux riches are both models and "devils", and as such may be even more important for analyzing identity defining processes than seemingly more pressing ethnic and national conflicts. In other words, the social and cultural redefinition of which the nouveaux riches are a part is one aspect of the real revolution taking place in Eastern Europe, a revolution much more profound than the simple "events" of 1989.

This paper will begin by outlining some of the broader issues in studying new social categories, tying them in with anthropological theories about the role of consumption, lifestyle and the cultural definition of class, what Bourdieu (1986) has called "Distinction". I will then describe some aspects of the East European nouveau riche situation in two countries whose situations reflect a range of contrasts: Romania and Hungary. Finally, I will argue that the nouveaux riches, as both a social category and an object of discourse, contain both system-maintaining and system-threatening elements. As such, the nouveaux riches, and "nouveau riche-ness" is a concept subject to both manipulation and mystification. In short, the nouveaux riches are the perfect object of anthropological inquiry.

The nouveaux riches as a problem

The problem of the nouveaux riches is not new, of course. Basically, it signifies a displacement or even conflict between economic resources and social status. In early capitalism, it was the rising bourgeoisie which challenged the

position of the landed aristocracy. The former had acquired money but no culture, the latter had culture but not money. The problem for any nouveau riche individual is to resolve this dilemma by raising his social status to be commensurate with his economic power. This might be done using methods familiar to any sort of class struggle: marginalizing, replacing, or even exterminating the previous ruling classes. Old fashioned aristocratic culture could be condemned and efforts made to replace it with "modern norms", or as the communists tried, to replace bourgeois with "socialist norms" of morality. In this sense, the nouveaux riches' class struggle is only one kind of class struggle.

What separates the nouveaux riches class struggle from other elite conflicts is the field of battle: the nouveaux riches' struggle takes place in the sphere of culture, of consumption, of lifestyle. Conflicts over taste and discourses about vulgarity are in this sense an example of what Bourdieu (1986) calls "symbolic struggles".

A common strategy for the nouveaux riches, however, is not simply to eliminate its competitors but to appropriate their cultural manifestations. Social science anecdotes, salon stories of the aristocracy and Old Rich, and a considerable body of American novels, films and television shows are filled with tales of upwardly mobile strivers who somehow do not know how to achieve such refinement. For acquiring such cultural capital is often more difficult than generating money capital. It takes careful breeding, a cultural investment, and preferably generations to create such cultural capital.

The problem of new classes, especially nouveaux riches, is therefore not new, and has in fact been the object of social science speculation ever since Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*. Nor is it simply a problem of Western consumer societies. Incongruous hierarchies, where those who have only culture or sacred knowledge lie higher than those who exert political or economic power, are known to us from other societies, of which Dumont's (1972) study of the Indian caste system is simply a foremost example. Bourdieu's work on symbolic struggles in France, the British school of Cultural Studies, and the recent interest in the anthropology of consumption and material objects, on the meaning of money as such, all these aspects speak of a consistent interest in the cultural components of economic resources (McKracken 1988; Douglas & Isherwood 1978; Appadurai 1988).

... does, not end with the acquisition of cultural capital. The process capital can be a resource with which to develop new kinds of social resources, which can subsequently generate real increases in material wealth and political power. The nouveaux riches problem, then, comes back to this discontinuity between material, social, political and cultural status. Here the problem for the nouveaux riches is also a problem (for us) of the nouveaux riches.

McCracken's work (1988) on culture and consumption is relevant here. If, following McCracken, culture is understood as both a filter for understanding the world and as a blueprint for human practice on the world, then we might see three "locations of meaning" in the area of culture and consumption. These would be the culturally constituted world, the consumer good itself, and the individual consumer. Moreover, we might trace processes of "meaning transfer": According to McCracken, transfer may take place from the world to the good and from the good to the individual. Meanings, in this sense, are in transit and reconstituted. Processes, such as advertising, fashion, consumption rituals are in this sense modes by which meanings are transferred from one sphere to another. Such processes would occur in numerous cultural settings. They are part of the "globalization" trend, both out there in the world, and in the study of these processes in anthropology (Featherstone 1991; Hannerz 1992), which attests to the widespread nature of these processes of cultural redefinition. In this context, several factors make the East European case especially significant here.

Eastern Europe and the transition to consumerism

The transition to capitalism in Eastern Europe, the emergence of a truly consumption-oriented society, entails new process of meaning transfer. What is transferred are not just new cultural categories but the basic principles for constructing these categories.

This last transfer process is typified by the East European reconstitution of the "us"/"them" distinction. In Eastern Europe, the old "them" comprised those who had access to resources by virtue of their position in the state apparatus, the "nomenclatura". Most East Europeans talked about this group as simply

in em [Onu] (Toranska 1988), to use a book title, while it was typical of Poles to denote one of their own social circle as "one of us". The transition to privatization has not eliminated the distinction between "us" and "them". Rather it simply reformulates the principles behind these categories. "Them" have now become those with money and privilege who flout it openly. The use of the term "mafia" to denote virtually any network of which oneself is not a member has been extended to cover this "them". The former bureaucrats have now acquired an "us" feeling, when they have seen both their salaries drop and their chances to draw on informal resources disappear as market mechanisms take the place of bureaucratic corruption.

"Them" are endowed with diabolical traits and intrigues which explain their prosperity. They are derided for being without talent. They are accused of deriving their wealth by cynically using their connections, corruption and ruthlessness.

The transition to privatization in Eastern Europe thus accords special significance to the field of personal or household consumption. Objects and goods are now used in a privatizing world whose culture is changing in two ways: in terms of markers of identity, and in terms of basic principles behind these categories. In Eastern Europe, we are witnessing a transformation at both levels. People are not simply redefining their identities and re-evaluating their life chances. They are also redefining the yardsticks by which identities are measured, including basic ideas about how individuals fit into the social world, into geographical space (to travel) and even their perception of time (where time has become money, investment in career, etc.).

Some groups in Eastern Europe, due to either outside pressures or internal momentum, seem more affected by these redefinitional processes than others: the nouveaux riches, the new poor, ethnic and regional minorities, old party bureaucracies and intellectuals

Eastern Europe's nouveaux riches: the structural context

While the transition to a consumer society and emergence of a nouveaux riches group is certainly not restricted to Eastern Europe, the East European experience is certainly distinguished by a number of structural factors influencing their emergence. These include: 1) the speed of the transition;

2) the sharpness of the gap between old and new classes and 3) the means by which the nouveaux riches utilize outside (Western) models in trying to assert their social and cultural status. In short, what occurred over decades in the West and over at least several years in the Third World, is happening in a few short months in most of the East European countries. Hence, the Eastern Europe experience can provide a test of how anthropologists might examine the cultural components of social mobility.

Replacement of elites was a central part of the rise to power of communist parties. After 1917 in the USSR, and after 1945 in Eastern Europe, the old ruling classes, both aristocracy and bourgeois, were replaced by a party-state bureaucracy whose cultural forms of life aspired to cultural refinement, but whose members often came from worker and peasant classes. While some of the early socialist leaders were intellectuals (having "Kultur" without money), the bureaucratic ruling class recruited often from peasants and workers who often without either culture or money. They could obtain a degree of privilege, even wealth, by maintaining their position in the bureaucracy. The new elites who came to power in Eastern Europe were so uncultivated that Konrad and Szelenski (1974) wrote that "they wore shirts with open collars". The integration of the older elites and intellectuals partly entailed an enculturation process, such that those with culture "taught them how to tie their ties".

The communist elites could convert some of their material resources into cultural capital: one could pay for private tutoring for oneself; invite prominent cultural personalities into one's privileged circles, or ensure that one's children had the best tutors or schools. This cultural capital could be retained by the children even after the parents lost their elite status, a not infrequent occurrence in view of the many purges and reforms carried out in Eastern Europe.

Western nouveaux riches have traditionally acquired and displayed their tastes in a relatively open consumer market. While private fora existed, they also had to be a public sphere of bourgeois display. Information had to be diffused about trends and patterns, celebrities were created and arbiters of good taste were everpresent. Acquiring taste could be done by consulting magazines, entering a department store or shopping center, or utilizing an expert, a cultural pedagogue such as a home decorator to do the job for them.

In Eastern Europe, the older classes were well hidden from the rest of the society, as their privileges and consumption possibilities were stigmatized.

Even where they could emerge in public, consumption possibilities were limited. Everyone had the same car, the number of restaurants were few, officials styles were staid and too much individuality was simply not politically correct or prudent from a career point of view. The leaders of these Eastern countries were notorious for their mediocrity, their wives and children were unknown. Without trend setters there could be no trends, and without trends no style, nor markers of style. The old elites may have lived well, certainly better than the general population. But they also lived privately, often in walled-in compounds. When they did try to improve themselves they tended to be extremely conservative culturally. Examining the luxury homes of Honnecker, Ceausescu, and other East European elites, one is struck not by their extravagance but their total lack of imagination in taste. At best, the homes of the old communist elite, as the protected sphere of consumption, were large but kitsch. They had simply too much of standard petty bourgeois taste. Otherwise they tended to be rather boring. Ceausescu, we now know, was fascinated by "The Great Gatsby".

To call these societies colourless would be exaggerated, but there was a distinct lack of means to distinguish one's individuality and status. This may not be important for the masses, but for a class in ascent such channels were an absolute necessity.

The 1989 revolutions

The 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe not only changed the political leadership of these countries and destroyed the Soviet bloc. They were suddenly opened up to two-way influences from the West at a level far above what had previously been the case. Western ideas and goods could now enter these countries relatively uncensored, but they were certainly not taken in without being culturally "filtered" by the inhabitants. Furthermore, millions of East Europeans could now enter the West, as tourists, illegal workers or emigrants and obtain a view of life which they then tried to actualize either in the West, or for a few returnees, a lifestyle which they tried to bring back home.

The political opening of Eastern Europe thus affected people's economic and personal horizons. Suddenly, at least with the proliferation of certain

formerly scarce consumer goods, there evolved a problem of consumer choice. Inflation, prices, and money came to be something to reckon with as East European currencies suddenly lost value. The comparison of what "we" in the East had versus what "they" in the West had grew even more compelling. Internally, a new us/them distinction arose, in which those with money replaced those with political power. Possession of money was more important than access to the bureaucracy. As is the case with derision of those above, there is also a certain degree of envy. Not everyone wants to have power, but just about everyone would like to have money. The fact that those with money could now display their wealth certainly contributed to the social frictions which characterize Eastern Europe today. When those displaying it also happened to be of another ethnic group - Gypsies, Hungarians (in Romania), Georgians (in Russia), Wessies (in former East Germany), the social frictions certainly took on ethnic overtones.

Of equal importance with the economic status effects, the revolutions opened up new personal perspectives: Hungarian researchers, for example, have pointed out an increased positive view of entrepreneurial intentions: from 25% in 1988 to 44% of Hungarians today expressing a positive desire to become entrepreneurs (Lengyel & Toth 1993; Lengyel, Offe & Tholen 1992). Words like *spekulant* or *biznitsa*, once spread throughout Eastern Europe, are now being replaced by the positively characterized "businessman" and the negative "mafiosi".

This being said, let us proceed with some case material about new entrepreneurs and their problems in acquiring culture.

First, some definitions are in order. For any of the East European states, we might designate several categories of nouveaux riches. The categories resemble "real people"; however, in terms of human practice we may find much movement in and out of them during the course of a day, week or month (e.g., from legal to illegal entrepreneur, or from struggling shopkeeper to well-off businessmen, or the reverse).

Five distinct categories of new rich can be designated.

1. Former party or state apparatchiks who use social relations to establish themselves as private businessmen or managers of newly privatized state firms. These individuals have been referred to as parachutists (Stark 1990) because of their having made the jump from the political to the economic sphere. The popular folklore regarding the nouveaux riches is that the old

elite have become rich businessmen. Like all such stereotypes, it is not without some truth.

2. Former "players" in the second economy whose activities (legal, semi-legal, illegal) are now permitted as legitimate. Dealing in currency exchange and import-export are examples. Many of these individuals tend to combine legitimate and illegitimate activities, especially because the legal framework for so much private business (shopkeeping, for example) is vague or complicated.
3. Former state employees, many of them with higher technical or professional training and "culture", who leave state employment to start their own small firms, often in services where their skills can be better remunerated, or into completely different fields in order to temporarily earn cash. Such individuals may be free-lance architects, computer consultants, or open small restaurants in the home of their parents.
4. Former wage workers who lose their jobs and are forced to open small shops, kiosks, video rentals or grills in order to survive. Here we may speak not so much of entrepreneurship as desperation. Some of these individuals who start small shops or sell their services as mechanics, may momentarily earn much money; however, recent observations suggest that in a later phase many will fail due to a saturation of the market.
5. "Traditional" members of the professional classes or craftsmen who in various East European countries were allowed to practice their trades. With the liberalization of the market, such individuals may now become more wealthy than before, especially insofar as they offer desirable services to other nouveaux riches.

Not all private business people are rich, of course. Many are just staying above water and will also go under, especially these described by the fourth category.

Regardless of their category, however, all conduct a search for cultural capital and seek to demonstrate good taste. Good taste must be recognized: it demands authorities and confirmation. Hence, taste is not an individual property but a social phenomenon, reflecting the proper manipulation of key cultural principles so as to denote that one is a member of that category of individuals who *can* spend tastefully. This is far from easy. It is not just a question of imitation. The nouveaux riches, even though they may be economically innovative, are culturally conservative. They do not seek to

replace the cultured behavior of the old rich, but to imitate it. When imitation becomes too much like parody, it becomes vulgar.

It would be an oversimplification, however, to say that Eastern Europe has become simply vulgar, kitsch and tasteless. Nor would it be accurate to say that inadequate acquisition of cultural refinement is peculiar only to Eastern Europe. Within Eastern Europe, we might distinguish between different mechanisms of acquiring taste and demonstrating status. Here Hungary and Romania provide several important contrasts in the structural factors which determine nouveaux riches behavior and the discourse about them.

Structural factors behind nouveaux riches in Hungary and Romania

Romania under Ceausescu was one of the most economically and politically rigid of the East European states. Its private sector was the smallest in Eastern Europe and its living standard so low that even the highest communist elite lived modestly by East European standards. If there were wealthy Romanians they were largely hidden from public view, and by East European standards a wealthy Romanian lived comparably like a normal Hungarian functionary. Hungary, in contrast, had early on evolved a private sector, comprising legal, semi-legal and illegal spheres. The domestic liberal regime permitted, or even encouraged channelling of political discontent into individual consumerism.

Hence, Hungarians had experience with nouveaux riches whereas Romania had not. Hungarians had developed an image of nouveaux riches; they were the subject of gossip and scandal, and insofar as they were also successful business people, objects of admiration before and after the transformations of 1989.

Second, Hungary had never totally eliminated its old rich or cultured aristocracy. Models of refined behavior - Hungarian, Central European, bourgeois, cosmopolitan, urban - continued in the socialist period and were revived if not strengthened through the 1970s and 1980s. To be cultured, intellectual, to travel, to appreciate culture, to laugh at the uncultured (including President Kadar), to invest in the cultural refinement of one's children via private tutoring, travel, and getting the right friends for them, private teaching, travel, educational opportunities, homes, and friends in a relatively secure atmosphere, all these were part of Hungarian liberal society in the 1970s and 1980s.

Romania, by contrast, had had a small cultured aristocracy before the Ceausescu period and these people barely survived, struggling to pass on what cultural capital they could to their children. (A Romanian ethnographic project is presently undertaking a study of children of urban intellectuals who, two decades ago, attended private language classes in the homes of impoverished aristocrats. At these private tutoring sessions one not only learned French, English or German. The salon of Madam X brought together those with like-minded views of the world, youths whose parents were investing in the cultural capital of their children in a private, elite setting. Ironically, this study of urban elites is being conducted by someone at the "village museum" in Bucharest). In sum, the Hungarian aristocracy, the old bourgeoisie and the urban Jewish elites survived the socialist period in much better shape. They were able to protect, and project their cultural models easier, and they remained more visible than their Romanian counterparts. Romanian proletarian culture, the mass migration of peasants and workers into the towns and mobility of workers and functionaries in the apparatus simply immobilized the aristocracy and those intellectuals who could set alternative cultural models. The desperation of these individuals is typified by the many antique shops in Bucharest, in which the material culture of the old elite is now being sold to the highest bidder, inevitably the nouveaux riches.

A third difference between Hungary and Romania lies in the possibilities of Hungarian nouveaux riches to convert money into culture, to transfer the acquisition of objects into symbolic struggles. Hungary's relation to the West, as a source of inspiration for new cultural forms had built up over a longer period of time, whereas Romania's meeting with the West following the demise of Ceausescu was more of a shock treatment. In this sense, the West was hailed as the source of all things good, and feared as the source of moral pollution and decadence. Romanians had never had the relatively easy access to the West that Hungarians had had: Hungarians could travel practically freely. In Romania, travel or even communication with the West was practically ruled out, and it was illegal for a Romanian to speak to a foreigner without filing a police report.

To summarize the structural differences between the two countries, we can say that Hungary had had a longer more gradual entry into the economy and consumerism of private entrepreneurs whereas Romania had been isolated until 1990, only to receive a kind of shock treatment. Hungary's indigenous cultural

elite and more urbanized society was able to influence the values and cultural refinement of the nouveaux riches to a much greater extent than Romania, such that in Hungary one finds cultured nouveaux riches whereas in Romania it is more the case of those with culture not having money and those with money not having culture. Finally, Hungary had prolonged and widespread access to alternative cultural models from the West than did Romania, and knew how to exploit these cultural elements in a more neutral fashion: they were neither grabbed up wholesale nor rejected outright. It is quite possible that more cultural vulgarity and bad taste had occurred in Hungary in the 1970s, and in this sense the Hungarian pattern may be reappearing in the Romania of the 1990s. The difference is that in Hungary today, good and bad taste coexist, while in Romania the situation seems more "frontier"-like. There are few or no established arbiters of good taste because the consumer structures, and authorities of taste simply have not been built up.

With these structural factors in mind, let us describe some specific aspects about nouveaux riches life in the two countries.

Romania's new rich

As stated, Romania's economy and society was dominated by a high degree of oppression and homogenization. The remains of a cultural elite dwelled in a few large cities, chiefly Bucharest. The prominent bourgeois families had become impoverished and many of the cultural elite and aristocracy had left the country. No significant privatization occurred until 1990, and even then, privatization of the retail sector did not begin to extend itself until mid-1991 (by contrast, Hungarian moves of this kind began in 1968). The low standard of living and spartan attitude of the Ceausescu had kept Romania at a consumer standstill. Being rich meant having basic necessities like meat, sugar and coffee.

Immediately following the December 1989 revolution there was an upsurge of economic activity. Romanians started to revitalize their traditional small-time wheeling and dealing: travelling to nearby countries buying up simple consumer goods like blue jeans, cigarettes or electronic goods and returning to sell their merchandise on street corners or flea markets. At the same time, there was a surge among local citizens to purchase items long denied them by

the Ceausescu regime, from color TVs to bananas. Since there were few laws which could be applied in this sphere, and since the possession of hard currency had been illegal, it goes without saying that many quasi-criminal or outright illegal acts were committed. Establishment of small shops or enterprises occurred in a virtual legal vacuum, as state property was appropriated to private hands under dubious regulations. Romanians remember this initial period as one where those who acted quickly became rich, but spoiled it for the rest. From here began the image of the businessman as criminal, as mafioso and speculator. It was an image perfectly in line with traditional Stalinist thinking about unproductive work or parasitism. Since so many street pedlars were Gypsies, and since it was now entirely legitimate to be xenophobic, chauvinist and racist, popular jealousy of private street-sellers and black (or grey) marketers could combine with anti-Gypsy feeling. Today, three and a half years after the revolution, such attitudes still prevail, as Gypsies are accused of parasitic commerce or outright crime in contrast to ethnic Romanian "business men".

For most Romanians, the image of the nouveaux riches was that any private entrepreneur who was not a Gypsy smuggler or criminal was simply assumed to be a holdover from the former repressive apparatus, the *securitate*. Moreover, the political situation was such that any Romanians who had start-up capital or foreign contacts was assumed to be either a criminal or most likely a holdover from the former regime of securitate folk. Who else could have had such money or connections during the Ceausescu regime, which made it illegal for normal people. Here began the myth of the securitate as "they all became rich", or as "mafia".

By late 1990 there existed public fora in which these groups could display their wealth without fear of arrest or persecution. Romania's new rich came out of the closet, so to speak. Here in Europe's poorest country (except for Albania), the Mercedes and the expensive restaurant outings became the big status symbols.

Other groups of entrepreneur were also born in this period; however, they had more problems. The lower level state functionaries, despite their professional skills or cultured background, found it hard to establish small professional services or enterprises. They lacked capital, did not have the right connections in the bureaucracy to obtain permits, or did not know how to use these connections to skirt around the many vague laws and regulations for

rewarded with economic resources. When socializing among themselves, the culturally refined professionals, their children and parents, criticize these new rich for their vulgarity, their money, and their bad taste.

The problem, of course, is that the culturally refined and the nouveaux riches *actually share the view that economic status and cultural refinement ought to overlap*. Hence, whereas those with culture complain that the ought to have money, the nouveaux riches do what they can to bring their cultural level up to that of their economic resources, by attempting to convert money into cultural capital, that is by acquiring refinement.

Hence, when I interviewed "parachutist" entrepreneurs about how they would like to spend their money, none of them would talk about making purchases of material objects. None talked about building a new home, buying a new car, or travelling around the world. Rather, they talked about establishing a "foundation", about starting an association to restore old buildings, about building a museum or monument to Romanian heroes. Several parachutists are linked to new private universities, which provide educational certificates and even Ph.D. degrees to former officials of the old regime who attended the party institutes of higher education and now want their credentials recognized. Next to being a doctor or university professor, having a Ph.D. of some kind is still a cultural capital in Romania (Mrs. Ceausescu and all three of their children all had Ph.D.'s - in the natural sciences).

The nouveaux riches in Romania are still faced with elevating themselves from the category of "mafiosi" or "uncultured". Some have chosen to enter politics; others have retreated from politics completely. Yet these strategies still revolve around two basic problems: 1) marking the status of this social group, and 2) individual efforts to acquire the accoutrements of a "refined", "cultivate" life style.

Let us discuss these in turn. The nouveaux riches are starting to consolidate themselves geographically: the old area of homes built for the party elite, also where Ceausescu lived, is now increasingly populated by nouveaux riches. Ceausescu's own compound has been turned into an elite club/restaurant - Club Ilie Nastase on Boulevard Mircea Eliade! - where the only cuisine available is French. This area of the nouveaux riches varies from the neighborhood of the old bourgeoisie, the doctors, professors and architects who live in the pre-communist elite neighborhood. Here the names of the streets remain with famous Romanian medical doctors.

The individual marking of status must derive from a lifestyle which is both different and somehow above the rest. This necessitates a common frame of reference; vulgarity or bad taste usually occurs when the person tries to copy the framework directly and in doing so parodies it; when the copying is so exaggerated that it adds on existing elements. There may be individuals parodying the outfits and Mercedes of Western TV personalities from "Dallas" or "Schwarzwald Klinik". Or it may be the quaint peasant summer house now overburdened with so much quasi-rustic elements that it has become kitsch. Vulgarity and kitsch are examples of the difficulty of obtaining cultural refinement.

Nouveaux riches' efforts to obtain refinement will invariably evolve into a search for people who will teach the new rich how to consume properly, that is "cultural pedagogues". In classic European aristocracy or bourgeois families, these pedagogues existed primarily within the family, or via quasi-family members like the nanny, along with the proper teachers, schools, friends, clubs; and in investments in the parents' and children's cultural capital in the form of private lessons in arts, bridge, sport, and so forth. In Eastern Europe, such processes took place on a far smaller scale, with the exception of private lessons, privatized social life and real or informal "salons". Today, in the West it is the market economy, mass media, advertising and the fashion industry which have taken on the function of the cultural pedagogue. In particular, we have salespeople in stores such as fashion consultants, wine merchants, interior decorators, gallery owners, and beauty salons, who help us learn proper, refined behavior, that is good taste. Such individuals and institutions have not yet emerged in Romania. However, several antique and art galleries have opened, the intention of which is clearly to cater to this new monetized elite. The galleries contain combinations of "good" and "bad" works, often at inflated prices. The nouveaux riches are practically defined by their inability to distinguish the type of art and estimate a fair price. One wonders how this refinement will be learned in such a short time. Those who have money do not have the cultural capital to acquire their taste, those who have culture have not yet figured out how to market it. Gallery owners and restaurateurs are still acting for the most part as businessmen.

Yet it is not simply in the area of material objects that cultural refinement is put to the test. Interpersonal relations are also challenged by the new possibilities for social display. Hence, in Bucharest's train station one can

purchase a brochure about etiquette, telling the reader what kinds of eating utensils to use when eating shellfish, how to welcome guests and foreign guests in their homes, and when to kiss a woman's hand. These efforts to popularize cultural refinement begin with the words, "the transition to a market economy connotes new kinds of forms of social interaction..." Those who benefit from privatization must therefore acquire new forms of etiquette.

Models of cultural refinement, therefore are difficult to pick up indigenously in Romania. Instead they come from the West in the form of elements borrowed or adapted. The Mercedes (even older models will do) the Sue Ellen hairdo from "Dallas", certain clothing styles which are copied incorrectly from Paris are examples. Absolutely no cultural borrowing seems to take place from neighboring East European states. "Moda" and "taste" come from Hollywood or Paris.

How do the nouveaux riches attempt to obtain refinement? Their women can go to expensive beauty salons, their children to foreign language schools, or to soon-to-open private schools. They can go on foreign trips. And in December, Bucharest held its first society ball, the "Crystal Ball", with an entry fee about the same as a minister's monthly salary (75000 lei/100 US\$).

Public consumption is also present in the form of restaurants and even casinos. Here the nouveaux riches can conduct both social status presentation and business, especially with foreign clients. The problem here is that restaurants are open to anyone who has money; the cultured and the uncultured. One strategy has been to establish restaurants which are increasingly more elegant and more expensive (names like "Velvet" and "Select" speak for themselves). The level of cultivation can be indicated by the service level - three waiters for a table at the "Vienna" - or by the cuisine - "we do not serve Romanian food here, only French" says the head waiter at the Club Nastase (named after the tennis player and located in Ceausescu's former private compound). To indicate its level of good taste, the "Vienna" restaurant, makes a point of advertising that its floor show does *not* include nudity, making it a virtual exception in the Bucharest scene where nude dancing has now reached what is called the "contact" stage.

However, more expensive restaurants are not the solution to preventing strong categories of nouveaux riches from entering. Of more importance are the number of quasi-private clubs, which attempt to restrict membership to people of culture and breeding. In other words, no Gypsies, no locally resident

Arab money track or other undesirables. One man sought to establish a club in which not only business people could come, but also actors, actresses, poets, and of course Western businessmen and diplomats.

In the West, of course, such a club would seem incongruous. In Romania, however, we might explain it in terms of nouveaux riches who have money but are trying to acquire the cultural capital which artists and Westerners clearly represent. We might talk of it in terms of "magic". The culture of the artists, even those who ostensibly look down on the nouveaux riches, would rub off on them.

Westerners also have a kind of magic in Romania: contact with foreigners under Ceausescu was both enriching and threatening. One could be arrested for not reporting such contacts. Today it is common belief, both privately and in the rhetoric of Government development programs, that without foreign connections or aid one can accomplish nothing. The fact that Romanian money is basically worthless against Western currencies is further confirmation. Bowing or not bowing down to foreigners, "selling Romania to foreigners", earning the "respect of foreigners", "entering Europe", "not being compared to Africa" are all ways in which Romanians articulate their relationship to the West (Kideckel 1991). With their "magical" powers and being possessors of cultural competence, foreigners are thus welcome in such clubs.

One may thus expect these clubs to fulfill dual functions: consolidating the nouveaux riches as a social group in which former networks are expanded, and providing them with new cultural capital in which they learn to modulate and articulate cultural refinement.

In short, we can expect to find new forms of distinction to arise as the various groups consolidate themselves. There will come a time when businessmen's clubs may decide not to admit actors, actresses and poets. This will be when the businessmen have figured out that they have enough "culture" or when they discover that the message of these artists is more derogatory than flattering.

At the moment, however, Romania's entrepreneurs, while benefiting from the uncertainties of frontier capitalism, suffer from it as well. Culturally speaking, this means a curious mixture of good taste from those without money, and vulgarity from those who are rich. Let us compare the Romanian situation with a very brief look at Hungary.

Hungary

Hungary, as stated, has a longer tradition of entrepreneurship, beginning with economic reforms in the late 1960s. At the same time the old aristocratic as well as urban bourgeois cultural norms were allowed to persist to a much greater extent than in Romania. This permitted interaction between the "refined" and the "uncultured" and allowed articulation of refined cultural norms in limited spheres of public life (intellectual, café society) and in certain dissident or critical circles. There existed more systematic interaction between Hungarian cultural elites and the political-economic strata of the party-state bureaucracy.

Furthermore, the Hungarian political elite comprised more professionally competent people, and culturally refined elites were permitted to move into positions of political and economic power, making the gap between the refined and the uncultured less significant. There was a degree of intermarriage between uncultured party secretaries and famous actresses or celebrities.

These factors have given Hungary a more sophisticated, culturally refined *nouveaux riches* class, plus cultural elites who perhaps have more talent and tolerance for entrepreneurship. Cultural refinement is not simply a given, but is something which can and *ought to be* acquired, bought, sold and transmitted. This means a place for "cultural pedagogues."

Hungarian intellectuals and people of culture traditionally gathered in small select groups in their "salons", while the ruling political strata had their own private areas. Dissident movements throughout Eastern Europe were born in the intimate surroundings of friends and colleagues of the salon, inasmuch as the café life of the West was somewhat more risky and less glamorous.

Just as important, the ability to acquire cultural refinement was more open. Hungarians could travel to the West, the West could filter into Hungarian life, and *nouveaux riches* had more and better access to Hungarian cultural models within the country, and to cultural pedagogues. This does not mean, of course, that there were no symbolic struggles. Budapest has always had extensive cultural divides between inward-looking nationalists and cosmopolitan Hungarians (a large number of whom were also Jewish). At the same time, Hungary was full of "businessmen", some of whom were operating on the fringes of the law.

Unlike Romanians, Hungarians' attempts to acquire culture took place at another level, just like efforts at imitation and status marking or trend setting were also sharper. Hence, Hungarians do not simply derive their models of cultural refinement from the Western mass media or a quick trip to Germany. Competing with the Hungarian edition of "Playboy" (which besides the models of naked women offers "models" of modern, refined male behavior in areas such as food, wine, fashion, cars), Hungary has its indigenous magazines like "Elite" and various "Beautiful Home"-type magazines.

Hungarians seeking cultural refinement can find interior decorators, landscape architects, gallery owners and other craftsmen and professional connoisseurs to help them create a personal lifestyle commensurate with their wealth. Certain wealthy zones of Budapest (in the Buda Hills) have experienced several waves of elites - from the precommunist to the Stalinist to the party bosses, and now to the new businessmen. House styles reflected these waves, but some borrowing also took place between them. Life style based on a "country home" in the city is a preferred option for the *nouveaux riches*. Elaborate gardens walled in behind the home are now an extension of home furnishes, providing *nouveaux riches* with a piece of nature to display to selected guests, many of whom are from the old cultured (but relatively impoverished) elite. Hungarians even now compete over the kinds of dogs they have. The problem of making money is right behind the problem of spending money prudently.

Budapest is clearly a place where the *nouveaux riches* have no problem exhibiting their life style. It is a city where there are not one but several "grand balls", places where various groups of elites may meet. Unlike Romania, Hungary has evolved a system of local celebrities, and its cultural pedagogues and arbiters of taste seem more sophisticated. A woman who writes food and etiquette books is a returned Hungarian from the United States. Moreover, status markers change more quickly. IKEA, the giant Swedish furniture store which was once the pinnacle of high taste for young urban Hungarians, has now receded to one of several alternatives. Obtaining "old" things from the Hungarian countryside or from the Hungarian area in Romania is now as fashionable as modern objects from the high-tech West.

Does this mean that Hungary will be a precursor for Romanian developments? This seems unlikely for several reasons. First, the Hungarian party elite who successfully "parachuted" into the economic sphere were on the whole far

more "cultured" than were the former party bosses and secret police officers in Romania. This only reflects the more liberalized form of Hungarian socialism as it evolved in the 70s and 1980s. Secondly, since Romania was the last to privatize, it is also making Romanian capitalism more ruthless, bringing to the fore different kinds of talents and people. Just like Texas capitalists are different from the Manhattan blue bloods, the more ruthless frontier capitalism of Romania will generate different kinds of lifestyles than the more urbane developments which have taken place gradually in Hungary.

Here the more proper scientific comparison might be in provincial towns in the two countries. It is in the provinces where we might find a more interesting mix of old elites and new, of social clubs which mix the few big businessmen with the few cultural superstars, and where cultural models from broad or the capital will diffuse through more layers. We may also find in the provinces a more ruthless, or desperate capitalism, especially in one-factory towns which have been closed down and their workers forced to become small shopkeepers.

Conclusions

His preliminary report on how distinction is being structured in Eastern Europe has presented a variety of social processes in which class formation and cultural redefinition overlap.

Here the study of "the world of goods" (Douglas & Isherwood 1978) and consumption will take on increasing importance in Eastern Europe. As McCracken states,

"Goods are an opportunity to make culture material. Like any species of material culture, they permit the public, visual discrimination of culturally specified categories by encoding these categories in the form of a set of distinctions of their own. Categories of the person divided into parcels of age, sex, class and occupation can be represented in a set of material distinctions [...] Goods help substantiate the order of culture" (1988, 75). Just as McCracken notes, goods not only communicate cultural categories, but so cultural principles. Vulgarly or bad taste occurs when the social message unsubmitted is based on the wrong principles (expensive clothing may indicate it one is rich, but also that one has not acquired the principles of good taste).

The privatization process in Eastern Europe is thus not simply a transition to a market economy. It is also a transition to a consumer society in the full sense of the term. By this is meant a society in which consumption, taste, and the culture of goods all require the constructing of new meanings, of new principles of organization of "who I am" and who "we" are, and of who we are not.

Eastern Europe is often invoked in the discussion of the emergence of "ethnic" identity. Yet identities are being redefined in other ways as well, in terms of people's relations to their material and social world. Mafiaosi, speculators and businessmen, their spouses and children, will be a part of this transition as individuals, together with a societal "discourse" about mafiaosi, speculators and businessmen, of those who have "talent" versus those who have "connections". Kitch and talent will serve as both principles and social clubs or society balls will serve as ritual fora, defining who of the nouveaux riches is "riches" and who are vulgar.

It would be regrettable if the study of privatization in Eastern Europe was simply left to sociological surveys of stratification, or attitudinal studies of "entrepreneurial predispositions", and certainly not to bottom line calculations of successful versus unsuccessful entrepreneurship. We can already see that some of the nouveaux riches of 1990 have become bankrupt in 1993 as new "talents" and new "connections" replace old ones.

It is ironic that the events of 1989 are called "revolutions", while the post-1989 developments are designated simply as a "transition", to democracy and market economy. Anthropologically speaking, the 1989 revolts in Eastern Europe were just the beginning. In fact, it is during the "transition" period that the real revolutions - cultural revolutions - are occurring. We are witnessing a massive restructuring of cultural principles and practices: the cultural lens for perceiving the world is being re-ground, and the blueprints for acting upon the world are being redrawn by the processes of new class formation and cultural redefinition. Nothing could be more revolutionary than this.

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Dobrinka Kostova

Power Interests of the Elite in Post-Communist Bulgaria

Short-term and long-term observations of the elite in the period of transition, starting with its recruitment, social and demographic features and its interests and possibilities to risk or to adapt to new political, economic and cultural realities could reveal elite transformation and circulation in the changing societies of Central and Eastern Europe. It is worthy to compare these processes internationally, especially when a violent collapse of the old regimes in Central and Eastern Europe is involved. The Bulgarian case will add both a non-western and a comparative Eastern dimension to the study of elite transformation.

Introduction

The extent to which social formulas of universal meaning are employable by one or another country depends on its level of development and on the acceptance by its people. The socialist type of existence bound together millions of people by common memories, interests, and experiences. It was also a phenomenon with differing structures in the separate countries due to their historical and cultural development, economic and social level, political, religious and psychological persistence.

At the end of 1980s, a process of full collapse of the communist political and economic system was taking place. The basis for this process was the incapability of the system to solve its problems within its own framework. The expectations of the population for a change, and the agreement of the newly emerging elite to realize it, further contributed to the process of change. The process of creating a new political, economic and social order is a very painful one. The main reason is that all systems in society are torn down. From these