

1978. Autumn - **The roots of the socialist emulation movement in Hungary go back to the post Second World War period of economic reconstruction.**

The earliest possible starting of production and its stepping up in the most important sectors of the economy were highly important. In the shaping of the movement a decisive role was played by the years 1950 to 1954 which are described by economists as years of forced industrialization. Labour emulation in that first period was determined by the quantitative approach. The start of the second phase of the emulation movement fell in the time of consolidation following the events of 1956. At the end of 1958 a few factory workers' teams assumed the title "socialist brigade", and in March 1959 the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the trade unions and the youth association issued an appeal for a socialist emulation movement in honour of the 7th Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Congress.

The movement in this form promised a great deal. The aims included, beyond work, also a striving for a full life. The slogan of the movement—"to work, to study and to live in a socialist way"—outlined at the same time the triple requirement that the teams should produce results not only in work but also in study, in culture, as well as in the formation of the socialist life style, and of the socialist man and woman.

In the seventies the scope of socialist emulation was comprehensively regulated by government decisions on several occasions. The conditions of participation in the movement and the way of evaluation are fixed, on the basis of ministerial directives, in rules of competition defined separately for individual firms. Every year the firms issue a call for labour emulation. The pledges made on the basis of the rules and the call are laid down in contracts between the brigades, the management and the trades unions. After the first years the work teams joining in the movement can earn the title "socialist brigade", later the brigade pennant, the bronze, silver and gold brigade-medals, and can obtain the titles "outstanding brigade" of the firm, of the trade, and of the Hungarian People's Republic in succession. The brigades are granted, together with the recognitions and distinctions, various sums in cash defined in the collective agreement if the firm.

During the second phase of the movement there were uptrends and declines related to economic and political events: for example, in connection with Party Congresses and important anniversaries, propaganda campaigns were conducted stimulating workers to form brigades and make pledges, while the movement was eclipsed in the years following the introduction of the reform of economic management (1968). In spite of this Party, government and trades unions assigned a major role to the movement from the very start. In the economic field they expected the improvement of production results and of quality, and in the cultural field a rise of educational standards and a growing zeal to acquire knowledge. In addition, the movement could be reckoned as an important system of tools from the political and ideological point of view, and as an experimental institution for the prevention of alienation and the shaping of a socialist life-style. Managers thought they could discover in the cohesive force of socialist brigades also an antidote to growing fluctuation in manpower and a decide to improve human relations on the job.

The sample

In what follows we shall, on the basis of a sociological survey, examine how for the above aims and expectations have been realised. We carried out the survey on behalf of one of the

Írta: Adminisztrátor
2010. október 05. kedd -

specialized industry ministries among the socialist brigades of three firms in Budapest and ten in the provinces. The survey covered only brigades with manual worker members. 1/ In the first stage of the survey we established the replies of 834 persons to a questionnaire containing 67 questions. In the second stage we carried out case studies of thirteen brigades.^{2/} These days newspaper articles, sociological surveys and even the firms' calls for socialist emulation in Hungary indicate that formal aspects are well represented in the movement. Also according to our preliminary hypothesis the importance of aspects offering something new compared to what there had been earlier has diminished by now. In our view the brigades cannot participate in the emulation movement with equal chances, also because of the dissimilarities of trades and the differences in the places occupied in the technological sequence. Besides all this; other objective factors determine the chances of the brigades as well. We supposed that the firms insisted on the fulfilment of economic pledges in the first place and contented themselves with sham fulfilment in cultural and other fields. We thought that spontaneity, the circumstances and the time of the formation of a given brigade, the election of the brigade leader, and the numerical strength of the brigade all had a role in the success of the collective. Since the majority of the brigades work in different job environments and have different sociological characteristics, they cannot be compared in an objective manner when it comes to evaluation. Under such conditions the clash of interests between the management and the interests of the brigades leads to a com-promise which manifests itself in formal pledges and sham fulfilment.

The management and the brigades

We interviewed enterprise managers, department heads and production engineers as well as foremen. It appears that the intensity of the relationship depends on the place of the executive in the managerial hierarchy. From the substantive point of view there is no difference in the relationship between managers on different levels and the brigades. In practice this relationship is con-fined to the promotion of the economic aim, to the direction of production as well as to the official communication of written evaluations. The managers seldom call on the collectives personally, at most they invite the brigade leaders to appear before the "Works quadrangle".^{3/} We have found hardly any case in which a relationship is established between managers and brigades away from the job and after hours. The managers possess information only about favourite brigades. A government decision has made it an official duty of the management to provide for the facilities necessary for the activities of socialist brigades. In the case of production pledges this is implemented, since the mobilisation of socialist brigades makes it possible to assert the interests of production and to en-force the managerial will (expressing also particular interests). What importance the managers attribute to the socialist brigade movement is an essential question. In public, under official circumstances, all managers hold the socialist brigade movement to be good and effective and think highly of it. Some of the managers, it seems, have identified themselves with the movement. This is understandable, since the economic pledges tally with their interests. Another section of the management have not identified themselves with the movement (but fail to express their negative views). They often justify this attitude with a lack of time, but the real reason is mistrust and antipathy towards the movement as such. We think the explanation of the ambivalence is that the production pledges made coincide with the managers' interests, while the cultural and other pledges to be fulfilled "after hours" do not affect them. Accordingly they refuse to regard it as their duty to support cultural and spare-time activities. Similarly the managers take no interest in keeping in

Írta: Adminisztrátor
2010. október 05. kedd -

touch with, and in being concerned about, the brigades. This is first of all the administrative duty of those in charge of the work competition. An institutional form of the relationship between managers and brigades is the production conference. At these talks the majority of the brigade members (63 per cent) display a passive attitude. During our interviews the workers expressed the grievance that at production conferences the managers are loath to deal with wages, labour, social and personnel questions and restrict themselves to production problems proper. The division of labour among the brigade members usually lies within the competence of the person in charge of production regardless of the fact that technological and other facilities enable the brigade leader as well to do the job. The brigade leaders are asked to give only their opinion regarding decisions which affect the work of the brigade.

Decisions affecting income never come within the competence of brigades. In some cases the brigade leaders are heard, but most often the decisions are made over their heads and without their knowledge. On certain occasions the distribution of rewards takes place in accordance with decisions adopted at the level of brigades (brigade leaders), e.g. in the case of rewards handed out under the rules of the brigade movement.

The system of emulation pledges

Pledges are divided into three groups in accordance with the slogan of the movement:

1. economic pledges related to production;
2. study and culture;
3. other activities connected with brigade life (joint recreation, excursions, mutual assistance).

The second and third spheres are difficult to separate in both principle and practice, so they will be discussed together.

1. The economic pledges related to production can be formulated only in keeping with enterprise plans and possibilities, for this very reason the brigades gladly accept and even expect proposals from the management. The possibility of independent pledges of that sort is limited, so that the pledges do not depend on the initiative of brigade members. Objective circumstances – the place occupied in the organization of production, and in the technological sequence – play a decisive role. Most often the brigades cannot decide on the overfulfilment of plans, that depends on outside factors, such as the possibility of the use of materials and energy. As a department head said: "... The extent of overfulfilment is determined by a number of technical and economic factors, whether there is need for substantial overfulfilment, or whether any such overfulfilment is technically possible. Deviation from the plan involves changes in other respects, too." Marketing also does not depend on the brigades: "... The production of certain goods has to be stopped, while twice as great quantity or even more of others are demanded. This varies, and therefore the brigade leaders cannot plan the pledges", said a shop manager. Independent pledges are unreal also because it is the task of the management to secure the conditions necessary for the fulfilment of economic pledges. It even happens that brigades cannot fulfil one pledge or another. Such a situation is created – almost without exception – by some-thing over which the brigade has no control. Lack of organisation is to blame, as a rule, but it often happens also that in the course of the year a situation arises in consequence of which the management does not think it worth insisting on the fulfilment of the pledges made. The independence and freedom of action of the individual brigades may be considerably hindered by the extent to which their work depends on the performances of other brigades: "Not all brigades work as units. It is impossible to make

Írta: Adminisztrátor
2010. október 05. kedd -

separate pledges and impossible to measure the performances separately. The works management issues a guide number and tells us what the plan target is, and we pledge accordingly... Costing is a function of the plan, the percentage of waste is given. The use of materials is also determined by a guide number. All we can do is insist on observance. Any plus pledge is useless, I have no way of fulfilling it", a brigade leader said.

It seems that planned production and flexible adaptation to (market) conditions sometimes upset the stable pledging system of the brigades, since they conflict with their interests. On the other hand, a fixed pledging system, one more convenient to the brigades, works against effectiveness and adaptability.

The question arises whether the tasks for mulated as pledges surpass, and if so how far, the normal duty of brigade members. The brigades often make pledges which mingle with the official duties or are in agreement with the plan targets. In many places brigade leaders and members describe production pledges as duties within the normal scope of work.

A difficulty in evaluation is that the normally assigned duties are not clearly out-lined: "There are pledges of which I cannot say whether they are part of our duties or of those of others", acknowledged a brigade member. "If everyone worked as they should, and work were in fact organised, then pledges would be superfluous", said another.

In many cases the pledges related to bridging a gap, for instance when a piece of work cannot be done within the planned time, then the socialist brigades provide the reserve which the management can exploit.

Finally one should mention voluntary work pledges. Such work without pay is undertaken by all brigades which do not want to go down in the competition. All our subjects declared that work without pay should be performed "after working hours". Experience shows, however, that whenever possible, it is done in part within regular hours. This may be due to unpaid work done inside the works being in many cases related to the tasks performed in the main line of activity. To quote an emulation secretary: "Part of the unpaid work done inside the factory can be conceived as illegal overtime." There is ample opportunity to do unpaid work both in and outside the factory. "We are asked to do unpaid work", said a brigade member, "by so many sides that we don't know which to give priority, which will prove best when our performance is judged."

2 Pledges of a non-economie character. There is much more opportunity for independent initiatives in the case of pledges related to education and community life. First among the educational pledges is study, which is encouraged by the management to different degrees, sometimes immoderately. "Studying is in vogue", said a shop manager, "the number of pledges concerning study is pretty high. From the point of view of management the problems involved are not always plain sailing. Some have to be solved by the brigades themselves, members absent attending courses have to be replaced."

More than one-third of the industrial workers in Hungary have not completed the eight-grades of the General School during the compulsory eight years of school attendance. In Hungary even young children who do not "pass" at the end of the year have to repeat. Recent legislation on "General access to and participation in culture" insists that working men and women be given a chance to complete their elementary education at evening courses. Such pledges are therefore welcomed by the management, for this requires little investment, is easy to administer and the results, expressible in figures, are spectacular. This is more advantageous to brigades where several members attend school than to those whose members have already finished their elementary education. In our sample the ratio of those who had not finished general school was 14 per cent, while at the same time only 2.3 per cent attended at evening courses. Study

Írta: Adminisztrátor
2010. október 05. kedd -

pledges are fulfilled mostly by attending vocational training and finishing continuation courses organised within the works.

A common pledge is collective theatre-going, our data show however that 40 per cent of the brigades in 1975 saw no theatrical performance; 28 per cent did not go to the cinema, and 23 per cent did so only once a month. The pledge of collective theatre-going is fulfilled in many places by purchasing two or three season-tickets for the brigade, whose members then go to the theatre by turns.

A typical pledge is membership of a library or the reading of a specific number of books. It is a time-honoured practice for every brigade member to take home ten to fifteen books a year and then to return them unread, while accepting acknowledgement of the fulfilment of his pledge. Thirty-five per cent of the responders resort to factory or district libraries. They usually read several newspapers, but only those having higher qualifications mentioned periodicals. The pledges mentioned so far cannot be considered substantive criteria of socialist brigade membership, but forms of collective education providing something additional could not yet be found or made effective. Industrial workers are not sufficiently motivated to look for collective cultural experience away from the job or to internalize it by thematic analysis. The question arises whether collective cultural improvement is a sound option and how long this will remain the Achilles heel of cultural policy.

A works excursion is a good chance to boost the collective spirit but most firms offer relatively few opportunities. According to our data 70 per cent of the brigades do not organize any sports or games, the figure being 84 per cent for unskilled workers and females. Such sport as there is disproportionately consists of making it possible for some top competitors to train full time, rather than in the provision of facilities for ordinary members.

45 per cent of subjects spend their time off working. The ratio of commuters in our sample was 43 per cent, and 40 per cent declared commercial gardening and farming to be their most time consuming time off activity.^{4/}

According to our experience the collective programmes are always somewhat forced, and this is manifested in the difficulties of organisation. We found no significant connection between the frequency of the collective spending of leisure and other factors (size of the collective, distance between home and place of work, age, or qualifications). Organised community life can be regarded also as an extension of control over employees to the sphere of leisure, beyond working hours. It is arguable that the difficulties of organizations arise from insistence on freedom of action.

The brigades receive far less assistance in the fulfilment of pledges related to education and collective programmes, and they often express their discontent. (There is a factory bus, but they are not allowed to use it; they are informed belatedly on cultural programmes.) The executives know little about the problems concerning education and take an "it's-none-of-my-business" attitude, because workers' culture appears to be out-side their sphere of interest.

Beyond the instances mentioned one often reads about many kinds of – sometimes respect-inspiring or else meaningless – pledges. Acting as blood donors, for instance, or formal participation at official celebrations and brigade meetings. There are places where the holding of a brigade conference is considered a pledge. Frequent pledges concern being late and absenteeism. Accident free work is included in the pledges of practically all brigades. In our view such pledges are questionable since no one wants accidents and since a part is played by a number of unforeseeable and uncontrollable factors. "Accident-free work is a normal duty, but if it is among the pledges, we would not delete it", explained an emulation secretary.

Írta: Adminisztrátor
2010. október 05. kedd -

Accident-free work is also an important managerial interest, so it will continue to be among the pledges undertaken, especially where, because of poor working conditions, workers have to take considerable risks in order to increase their income.

Frequent pledges of a social character are assistance to persons under state care and to those in need of help, helping day-nurseries, kindergartens and schools (house-cleaning, fitting work, repairs). We have met a brigade which takes care of an orphan, the members have deposited a bank-book for the child whom they take on holidays. Another brigade has undertaken to patronise kennels breeding and training guide dogs for the blind. Such pledges make sense up to the time that needs of this kind are institutionally satisfied.

We think mutual assistance of brigade members also belongs here: "Both in and outside the place of work we shall assist and support one another", many brigade contracts state. The possibility of assistance away from the job presents itself for the most part in the case of building family homes. (In Hungary 60 per cent of homes are built out of private funds.) Helping to build a house is a good example of traditional workers' solidarity.

3 Evaluation of the activities of brigades. Evaluation takes place on the basis of the contract and the brigade diary. This latter serves to document pledge fulfilments. Evaluation is usually made as follows: at the end of the year the brigade leader (with a couple of brigade members) prepares a report of self-evaluation and presents it to the works quadrangle. In most places evaluation is based on a pre-established point system. A useful innovation is that brigade leaders are invited to take part in the final evaluation in some places. The members (managers, trades union and Party officials) of the committee evaluating the record of the brigades attaining good results have no immediate knowledge of the actual activities of the brigades. The pledges related to production are controlled relatively frequently, but non-economic pledges only formally, with the help of the brigade diary. Most problems are caused by the evaluation of cultural and other pledges. The general experience is that the quantitative approach prevails in these two fields, the idea of qualitative evaluation does not even come up. This of course stimulates the brigades to pledges and formal performances easy "to tick off". "What is not documented is usually not taken account of in the evaluation", said a shop manager. The usual practice is that the brigades – in so far as they meet formal requirements – are automatically awarded the higher title year after year without being compared on their merit with either their earlier performance or other brigades. To compare brigades engaged in different activities is a mistake. Being aware of this some enterprises have decided to evaluate separately the one-shift brigades from those working in several shifts, and the brigades of technicians from those composed of clerks. Depending on the goods they produce, and on their role in production, the particular brigades can show outstanding results in the competition or, on the contrary, have no possibility of achieving excellent results. A brigade member complained: "A brigade functioning for ten years now, which has been fated to put out the same product ever since, is unable to improve anything in its work. It works much more and has invested effectively more labour, but savings can be measured only by a few thousands. Thus according to the present evaluating system it is at a disadvantage. The higher management say that the brigade which brings in money deserves to be among the first. But he who, here in the brigade, sees day after day what problems have to be tackled may be discouraged. He has much more work, gains less by it, and is less appreciated.

It is however far from certain that according to the value system of the movement the best brigades are those which produce the most profitable and most sought-after products and thereby score spectacular successes. "I have heard of an outstanding brigade whose members

Írta: Adminisztrátor
2010. október 05. kedd -

have certainly never been at the cinema together. They prefer to hoe their own gardens. They are an outstanding brigade, because they have put out a product which brings in lots of money, and this has contributed to the profits", said a fore-man. The brigades which play a less essential part in production, but offer the maximum as far as possible, very seldom figure among the best.

The management are interested in "face-lifting" the performances of the brigades in their charge. Units can improve their position, e.g. in working for the title "best workshop of the firm", when their socialist brigades attain the highest possible degrees. The title "best workshop of the factory", means a bonus for the shop manager.

Favouring one or another brigade is frequent. Every enterprise has brigades—first of all, holders of and candidates to the title "outstanding brigade"—which hallmark the enterprise so that outsiders should think of the enterprise and the activities of the brigades in their terms. Such brigades become famous through the mass media. These brigades usually work in a field of key importance, experiment on technologies, produce for export, etc. The decisive thing in the efficiency of a brigade is not only, and not primarily, the fulfilment of pledges, a great role is played also by factors independent of the movement and the brigade. Thus the efforts of the brigades are not reflected in the various degrees of distinction obtained.

The brigade – a primary job unit and small group

A small job group is defined as the small-est unit of the workshop organisation which has an aim, a (sometimes declared) function and place in the whole works. Close human relations can develop between members if the size of the group and the frequency make this possible. These teams become socialist brigades by responding, unambiguously as a majority, to the enterprise's call for emulation and by concluding a brigade contract.

1. The history of the brigades and their numerical strength. The formation of the brigades is as a rule difficult to reconstruct. The membership often changes in number, and this is forgotten with the passing of years. Brigades generally do not form spontaneously but are set up by the management in conformity with the technological requirements of work organisation.

Looking back over the history of the movement, we can state that campaigns to set up (socialist) brigades were conducted at certain intervals. At times of major propaganda campaigns socialist brigades were formed also in fields where both the organizational and the socio-psychological conditions were absent (e.g. drivers working alone or in couples, petrol station attendants working in twos, or twin fitters of the electricity works). 5/

According to one of the subjects it happened once late in the 1960's that a proposal for the formation of a brigade was rejected on the grounds that brigade organization had been stopped by superior authority. A few years later the brigade movement again was again given stressed importance. At that time the personnel manager called on the workshop unit and proposed the formation of a socialist brigade. The brigade was set up and headed by a worker he had picked. Brigades are frequently reorganised (e.g. because of conversion to production in several shifts), and the teams then have to join in the movement in an entirely new composition. These arrangements opened democracy on the job. Brigade interests are pushed into the background and the workers are informed of the decisions through a transfer order.

Here is a typical managerial declaration on the circumstances of brigade formation: "The brigade is in every case formed according to a demand coming from below, i.e. a team decides to form a brigade. The brigade meeting is called and the constitutive minutes are drawn up." Another manager formulated thus: "We press for the formation of a brigade if it is absolutely

Írta: Adminisztrátor
2010. október 05. kedd -

necessary in the interest of the factory aims, and if a collective has already developed even without a brigade being formed. Then the subject is raised by the trades union etc, and they can democratically elect a brigade leader".

One of the main springs for setting up brigades on internal initiative is an energetic and politically active person among prospective members, (mostly a Party member or office holder) who plays an opinion-shaping role. The oldest brigades, which took part in launching the movement, are of this type. At other times the impelling force is a realisation that keeping out of the movement may be described as "deviationism". At such times, first of all under pressure from conformist members, it is decided to compete for the "socialist brigade" title. The majority of these brigades were set up with the aim of gaining the advantages derived from participation in the movement. The brigades formed under outside pressure are a result of agitation by trades union and Party officials. The greater part of these brigades were set up in the course of some nationwide campaign.

The size of the brigade membership is also determined by organizational aspects and technological facilities. 6/ No case is known where the number of members is categorically fixed, but managers almost always make known that "this job (or shift) needs so and so many men." Workers are not allowed to select members for personal reasons. Wherever possible, brigades of less than ten members are encouraged to unite with another team. Brigades of about thirty members tending to break up into cliques often dissolve, and divide into smaller brigades based on the realisation of the conflicting interests.

This is possible only where the sections of the main technological process are separated in space, or where there is some essential complementary process beside the main one. As has already been pointed out, there is no connection between the size of brigades and the frequency of meetings away from the job. Collective actions of both small and large brigades are few and far between.

2. Fluctuation within the brigades. Brigade members change almost continuously, and every new member means a potential new experience for the team. Two factors are considered to be essential in the admission of new members: how the new member influences the interest relations of the group, and what change he effects on the established structure of sympathies and on the dynamics of the group. In some places the newcomer automatically becomes a member of the socialist brigade, too. In other places there is a shorter or longer term of "probation", which is fixed also in the rules of emulation of certain enterprises. But in most cases admission depends only on the time needed to know him or her. None of the brigades we covered would have refused to take new members. The term of probation is taken seriously by brigades to which a collective piece work system applies or where the members are technicians with special qualifications. 7/

More than 40 per cent of subjects automatically became brigade members through transfer or employment by the firm. Most of them did not regard the circumstances of their employment or their admission to the socialist brigades as a memorable event.

Withdrawal from the brigade implies for the most part also leaving the job. At such times there may be a conflict of interests at a higher level than clash of interests between the individual and the small group. Another cause of withdrawal is intra-factory transfer in the interests of the works or at the brigade member's request. The latter is a frequent way of resolving a conflict between a worker and the brigade leader or the collective. Expulsion from the brigade is rare, but if someone becomes persona non grata, then the group exerts pressure upon the "unseemly" member, trying to make its displeasure known, and to induce him to withdraw. The

Írta: Adminisztrátor
2010. október 05. kedd -

leader, with the same end in view, begins by treating the worker with disfavour, which usually manifests itself in financial disadvantages, primarily where the brigade leader is at the same time a lower-level executive and where the relationship between the brigade and its leader involves personal dependence. Expulsion as a sanction is not applied in the practice of such collectives.

3. Securing the office of brigade leader. We quote from a set of rules of emulation: "The leader of the brigade is a worker whom the collective of the brigade finds fit and competent and elects to this office." Practically all managements declare that the leaders of the small groups are elected by the workers themselves. In practice, however, the election often takes place in other ways. The leaders of the brigades set up through reorganisation or on higher initiative are generally appointed by the management, or their ideas prevail with the help of the representatives of the trades-union or Party organs. If this does not agree with the opinion of the members, and if the brigade leader is forced upon the collective, then this institutionally imposes, for a long time, a bad atmosphere, and mistrust within the brigade, and possibly a sort of rivalry between the officially appointed person and another person looked upon with sympathy by the members. This is what happened in one of the brigades under review, where a foreman became the new brigade leader after reorganisation. The ensuing adverse situation could not be helped either by the appointment of the former brigade leader, by way of compensation, to be a gang foreman, without, however, being given powers to use, or a gang to be in charge of. The only "amends" he received consisted in the gang leader's bonus. Proposals coming from higher up were frequent chiefly during the campaigns for brigádé organization, and in the cases we came to know, the proposed persons were duly elected. The circumstances of the election of brigade leaders have in many instances been difficult to elucidate, since our interlocutors were unwilling to speak openly. Similarly we could not elucidate the causes and circumstances of cases in which brigade leaders held to be unfit resigned or were relieved of their office. More than 50 per cent of the brigade leaders are executives of some sort at the same time, while only 8.5 per cent of the brigade members hold higher posts. The brigade leaders are usually not natural leaders elected from below, and their appointment most often means an accumulation of offices.

4. The collective structure of the brigades. We have used several methods to look into the socio-psychological organisation of the brigades. 8/ According to a sociometric survey among thirteen brigades there was only one which integrated all its members, and there was no isolated member in any. Inequality is characteristic of the collective structure of the brigades: the central set-up, the proportion of the sphere of influence to the periphery, shifted towards the preponderance of either the centre or the periphery. This structural proportion is unfavourable to the spread of information, the opinions formed in the central set-up are not as effective as they should be. Brigade cohesion was low in seven brigades. We explored the cause of the peripheral situation of the isolated persons and tried to trace the origin of antipathies. We found out, for example, why an unseemly brigade member was pushed to the fringe of the brigade owing to his drinking habits, although the other members were also drinking men. At table he always endeavoured to "expropriate" as much of the drinking jointly paid for as "to be even". We tried to find out why one or another brigade leader got to the fringe or outside the close structure. In several cases their situation was due to the fact that they had been placed at the head of the brigade following reorganization from above. Performance-oriented production organization leaves its mark on the motivation of members and the norm system of the brigade, and also the low-level organization of the team structure is unfavourable to individuality. This is

Írta: Adminisztrátor
2010. október 05. kedd -

what manifests itself in the fact that the cultural activities of the brigades are formal and superficial. More profound education, a permanent exchange and intensive discussion of experience would call for relationships with a greater emotional burden, and the wholly performance-oriented small groups cannot, or can only occasionally, create such a situation. According to our experience the brigades seldom fill the role of reference groups. This is conspicuous mainly in those in which there are many commuters from rural areas. The system of norms is much more adjusted to the village as their primary residential community.

Some problems of mental attitude

In practice the fulfilment of expectations depends largely on what participants are interested in and what they regard as valuable. We endeavoured to explore the value orientation of brigade members from three aspects:

- views of the objectives of the socialist brigade movement and on its role in the works;
- what the slogan "to live in a socialist way" is understood to mean;
- and finally, attitudes concerned to social property.

One of the questions concerned what participation in the socialist brigade movement meant to them. Almost half (45.5 per cent) replied that "their production results improved and their incomes increased", to nearly one-third it meant "easier accommodation". Merely eight per cent mentioned that the movement encouraged them to study, although according to our data 45 per cent attended some sort of course. The movement offered nothing to 4 per cent.

According to 43 per cent the most important objective is to increase production, and 25 per cent hold the shaping of attitudes and ways of thinking to be the most important. Very few (1.8 per cent) mentioned the raising of educational standards.

Within the works the most important objective, according to subjects, is increasing production, improving quality and economizing (40 per cent); an improvement of the community spirit and growing rise in skills and a strengthening of sound political attitudes were mentioned by 13 per cent each; 12 per cent hold the view that the primary aim is to facilitate the organization of unpaid work.

These figures clearly show that the triple objective of the movement does not prevail in practice. We asked subjects to tell what they understood by "living in the socialist way". Not only brigade members but the majority of brigade leaders, had hardly anything to say on this question. "I see the socialist way of living rather in the way conditions in the country have changed, in the last analysis one carries these like a hump on one's back. . .", opined a technician-foreman who is at the same time a brigade leader and attends courses of secondary school standard at a Marxist-Leninist political academy. A shop engineer in charge of socialist emulation who has graduated after attending night-classes at the university of Marxism-Leninism said: "The socialist type of man... (a pause for thought) this notion is one which I take rather seriously. Socialist morality is one of the most essential criteria for becoming a socialist type of man. . . (pause). To be able to live and work in a socialist way, in order for this to be attained by as many people as possible, one has to be trained to maintain the standards the age demands. This cannot be achieved without the former two."

During our survey we did not encounter any brigade leading a community life going beyond being employed on the same job. Accordingly the movement has not compensated for the alienating effect of production organization.

In a few brigades we experienced a maximum of human kindness in thought and practice. In other cases, however, we saw that, contrary to the vaguely outlined system of objectives of the

Írta: Adminisztrátor

2010. október 05. kedd -

socialist way of living and order of values, rational regularisation (e.g. recreation in common, excursions) turned into irrationality. Brigade excursions had to be stopped because they always ended in drinking sessions.

In investigating the proprietary outlook it must be taken into account that there are disagreements on the interpretation of social property just as on the socialist way of living. 9/ One question directly asked, and another indirectly, whether the workers were the proprietors now. The first question showed that a high proportion (40 per cent) feel so attached to enterprise property that they are irritated by irresponsibility", and an additional 15 per cent also feel that their "opinions are heeded". Either a single question, or contrary experience offer insufficient proof. A "passive" outlook characterises those who feel they are proprietors because "there are no capitalists" (7 per cent) and that constitution guarantees it" to them (16 per cent).

10/

Twelve per cent of brigades members replied that they do not consider themselves proprietors, because "their opinion is left out of account" (4 per cent), or they think that the enterprise is state property (8 per cent). Six per cent are "don't knows".

Indirectly we asked for opinions on the protection and handling of social (enterprise) property. Seventy-five per cent of brigade members replied that "nothing should be taken away", but one must bear in mind that they gave what they thought was the expect-ed answer. 11/ Seventeen per cent resolved the contradictions between principles and practice by rationalising: "abandoned things can safely be taken away", "why not, since they all do it in their own way", "it is admissible with less valuable things". Irresponsible subjects amount to 2.6 per cent: "why shouldn't I take it home if I am not noticed", "if I am not hurt, I don't mind".

We do not know whether the collective of the brigade and the movement have any part to play in the shaping of proprietary conscious-ness, although brigade members often discuss their related experiences among themselves.

A further aspect are fringe elements of everyday culture which have so far escaped the attention of those in charge of directing the socialist brigade movement. The alienation observed in the forms of partnership and within the framework of sexual relations (estrangement in the relation between management and subordinates, the dependence of man-woman contacts on subordination at the place of employment) is an important warning. Low standards of hygiene on the job and at home are similarly considerable.

We think the general feeling on the job and the attitude to work greatly deteriorate as a result of the absence of civilised conditions in the working environment: dark and run-down workshops, shaking-clattering machines in disrepair, disorder and filth on the premises. As long as neglected machinery and material are lying about in confusion, and as long as managers, to everybody's knowledge, have week-end homes built out of factory-owned materials and using the labour force of their firm, proprietorship attitudes will show themselves in attitudes that "we remove everything that is not chained to the floor, not on fire, and more substantial than thin air".

Official decorations point to the aim of propaganda designed to shape attitudes, while the decorations put up by workers indicate the actual attitudes, desires and frustrations. A cavalcade of out-of-date political posters, mottoes, pin-ups and placards is pre-sent in the environment of almost all workers' collectives. Decorations of their own make are made sympathetic by the workers' efforts to change their bleak environment into something fit for humans nature.

Enforced cultural pledges do not give cultural activities a human meaning but change them into

Írta: Adminisztrátor
2010. október 05. kedd -

mere window-dressing. Experience shows that cultural pledges are, for brigade members, the same sort of un-avoidable unpleasantness which is described by Marx as alienated labour. 12/ This process of alienation is promoted by the narrow idea of culture entertained by public opinion, and by the formalities of the pledging system, and this phenomenon is manifest also in the quantitative approach to culture-pledges, as well as in their sham fulfilment.

Summary

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1917 Russian October Revolution a new large-scale socialist emulation campaign was once again launched in Hungary. The various mass media again stressed pledges related to production, and the sphere outside work was hardly considered. This also shows that as regards shaping a socialist life style, many consider the relationship concerning consciousness and ideology, and education and culture becoming an inner necessity and interest, to be of secondary importance beside financial and economic processes. For the time being, the management consider culture to be a problem for specialists alone, although the cultural and educational functions also ought to be established beside the economic function in producing organizations.

The production successes achieved by means of economic pledges are not stimulating from the point of view of the movement. Such fulfilment (or overfulfilment) of plans produces disproportionately greater financial rewards and kudos for the managers than for brigade members who fulfil the pledges.

Propaganda stimulating a rise in the quantity and quality of production often uses expressions like independence, spontaneity and the flowering of creativeness. To a certain extent these clash with planned management and come up against the inertia of organization.

Sound planning and organization would make pledges of overfulfilment, or spontaneous initiatives impossible. However a basic approach prompts underplanning, and low standards of organization practically call for improvisation, so these, among other things, provide options for the movement. It seems that the activities of the socialist brigades indirectly act against efficiency, since they do not prompt the proclaimed intensive development of industry but, e.g. by means of voluntary work pledges, they add to the time-fund, providing resources for extensive growth.

When one reads about the brigade movement, one can often see that social self-knowledge finds its way into a world of illusions, and the desirable is represented as real. Recalling the expectations of the movement, we can sum up as follows. The quantitative results of production have improved somewhat, although the socialist brigades play a part mainly in making up for arrears. The movement has not proved sufficiently stimulating in the improvement of quality. The quantitative approach and a system of formal requirements have made headway in culture. The socialist brigade movement has proved very good as a labour reserve and a mobilising institution. The tendency of alienation and atomization could not be halted either as regards work or culture. A humanitarian attitude is part of the socialist life style. This however, has always been demanded by the Christian moral code as well. Experience shows that the functioning of socialist brigades did not reduce conflicts on the job, or labour fluctuation. The factors influencing the shaping of human relations – the social structure of the team, the social skills of an individual and human morality – have not lost their importance, but we think that the economic and social effect are primary amongst the working conditions. When it comes to the circumstances of the election of brigade leaders and the formation of brigades, and the shaping of the team structure, sociological factors such as the commuter's way of life, the stressed

Írta: Adminisztrátor

2010. október 05. kedd -

material demands of brigade members, management problems, shortcomings in work organization and the divergence of interests proved more important. All this basically determines the options open to the movement. We are of the opinion that the democratization of certain aspects of brigádé life produces no significant change and does not eliminate what is merely formai in the movement's nature.

GABRIELLA BÉKI — ZOLTÁN ZÉTÉNYI

1/ Our sample includes a few non-manual workers who were members of workers' brigades.

2/ There were 30 questions concerning work, 21 concerning learning, culture and leisure, 16 concerning personal data. A Rokeach scale of attitude was attached to the questionnaire. For the case studies we prepared interviews, made sociometric surveys and observations, and analysed documents.

3/ The works quadrangle is an institutionalized form of social control. It is composed of the competent management, Party, trades-union and youth organization officials.

4/ A considerable part of the incomes of the workers who work in town and live in the country, called workers with double incomes, is derived from the sale of agricultural products.

5/ At the time of propaganda campaigns, socialist brigades were organized also among actors, hospital medical staff and university teachers.

6/ A factor determining the size of brigades is the difficulty in the accounting of team performances, which is why, for example, in coal mining the teams of three shifts working on the same mine-face, made up of ten to thirty men each, constitute one brigade. In some places there are also brigades of fifty to ninety men. The numerical strength and the formation of the brigades are basically influenced by the fluctuation of production in the course of the year. Accordingly the brigades are regrouped twice a year. In winter, when the demand for coal is greater, the size of the extracting work brigades is increased as much as possible, while in summer the larger brigades are in part reduced and the developing brigades which do the digging are strengthened, and even new ones are set up.

7/ A particular system of admission to a brigade has been established in coal mining. It is not based on the system of requirements of the socialist brigade movement, but has become a practice owing to the maximization of performance. The brigades receive new members during the autumn season; if these work well and please the brigade leader and the collective, they can become permanent members. If their working ability and zeal do not correspond to the norms established by the brigade and regularly required by the brigade leader, then they will part before long, and the brigade can test new candidates among the reserve.

8/ All members included in the sample were asked to evaluate relations between brigade members. We made sociograms of brigades examined in detail and, during the structured interviews, we carried out sociometric explorations.

9/ It is by and large an accepted notion that property is a relation of appropriation so, in terms of economics, being a proprietor means having the right of disposal over things constituting

Írta: Adminisztrátor
2010. október 05. kedd -

property.

10/ The notions of "active" and "passive" proprietary attitudes has been introduced in Hungarian specialist literature by the economist Otto Purity.

11/ It happened frequently that the subjects returned the card with text "nothing should be taken away" although in words they held another alternative to be true and gave pertinent examples.

12/ Karl Marx: Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. In: K. Marx/Fr. Engels, Collected Works, vol. 3, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, p. 279.