



Business Practice in Socialist Hungary, Volume 2

From Chaos to Contradiction, 1957-1972

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Details

This book aims to reconstruct the activities of enterprises and individuals over two decades in one developing country (Hungary), within and across four politico-economic domains (agriculture, infrastructure/construction, commerce, and manufacturing), from the initial Stalinist obsession with heavy industry through later reforms paying greater attention to profitable farming and the provision of abundant consumer goods. It provides hundreds of grounded, granular stories for reflection, as reported by actors and direct observers, ranging from innovation and improvisation to obstruction, failure, and fraud. Further, it offers an otherwise-unobtainable close encounter with another world, familiar in some respects while amazingly peculiar in others. The social history of enterprise and work in postwar Central European nations "building socialism" has long been underdeveloped. Through extensive macro-level research on planning and policy in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other Bloc countries, a grand narrative has been framed: reconstruction and breakneck industrialization under Soviet tutelage; then eventual mismanagement, stagnation and crisis, leading to collapse. This book seeks to explore what socialism actually looked like to those sustaining (or enduring) it as they faced forward into an unknowable future, to assess how and where it did (or didn't) work, and to recount how ordinary people responded to its opportunities and constraints.

This study will appeal to readers interested in a understanding how businesses worked day-to-day in a planned economy, how enterprise practices and technological strategies shifted during the first postwar generation, how novice managers and technicians emerged during rapid industrialization, how peasants learned to farm cooperatively, how organizations improvised and adapted, how political purity and practical expertise contended for control, and how the controversies and convulsions of the postwar decades shaped a deeply flawed project to "build socialism."

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