

LABOR ACTIVISM AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
IN THE COAL-MINING INDUSTRIES  
OF THE UNITED STATES, GREAT BRITAIN AND POLAND

by

Anna M. Zajicek

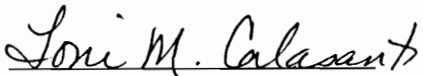
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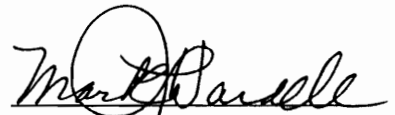
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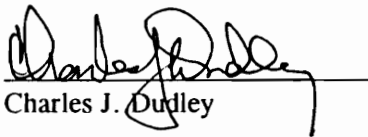
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(ABSTRACT)

This is a historical-comparative case study of labor activism and changes in industrial relations in the coal mining industries of the United States, Great Britain and Poland. This research addresses the debate between system- and action-oriented approaches to social change by analyzing the adequacy of two explanations--structuralist and relational--for processes of centralization and decentralization of industrial organization. More specifically, the present research examines the adequacy of the structuralist's assertion about the structurally predetermined, divergent nature of industrial change occurring in capitalist and socialist systems. Alternatively, I suggest that the relational perspective which focuses on interactions of agency and structure and postulates a bottom-up approach to the transformation of industrial relations provides a more nuanced understanding of the processes of organizational change across national and historical boundaries. Based on this study's findings, I conclude by stating limitations of the structuralist perspective and outlining directions for future research.

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## GLOSSARY

AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
ARB	Arbitration Resolution Board
ATM	Advanced Technology Mining
BC	British Coal
BCOA	Bituminous Coal Operators Association
BSC	British Steel Corporation
CBCM	Central Board of Coal Mining
CBTU	Central Board of Trade Unions
CCB	Central Coal Board
CEGB	Central Electricity Generating Board
CPC	Central Planning Commission
EIA	Energy Information Agency
HDM	Heavy Duty Mechanization
IBCBA	Independent bituminous Coal Bargaining Alliance
IFSC	Inter-Factory Strike Committee
ISTC	Iron and Steel Trades Confederation
KSR	Conferences of Worker's Self-Management
LMPCP	Labor-Management Positive Change Process
MSHA	Mine Safety and Health Administration
NCB	National Coal Board
NEC	National Executive Committee
NACADOS	National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers
NBCWA	National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement
NPLA	National Power Loading Agreement
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
OCAWU	Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union
OPZZ	National Census of Trade Unions
PCG	Pittston Coal Group
PUWP	Polish United Workers' Party
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
UDM	Union of Democratic Miners
UMWA	United Mine Workers of America
TUM	Trade Union of Miners

## INTRODUCTION

### **Basic Issues In The Transformation Of Industrial Relations Debate**

In the early 1980s, a persistent theoretical polemic between system- and action-oriented approaches to social change unexpectedly moved to the center of debates in industrial sociology. Attempts to radically restructure Western economies in a context of increased competition in global markets, and the efforts at decentralization of centrally-planned economies in relation to a vibrant labor activism and other social movements, generated a significant interest in how changes in the broader political economy affect or are affected by labor-management relations (e.g., Burawoy, 1979, 1985; Touraine et al., 1983; Piore and Sabel, 1984; Kochan et al., 1986; Tolliday and Zeitlin, 1987; Wood, 1989). While different theoretical perspectives have been used to address this issue, at present, two theoretical frameworks--structuralist and relational--offer the most divergent and influential interpretations of the dynamics of social change in terms of the system versus action debate.<sup>1</sup>

More specifically, the structuralist approach suggests that general societal conditions

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<sup>1</sup> While there is considerable diversity among theoretical arguments concerning the recent dynamics of industrial restructuring, only a few theoretical perspectives systematically focus on the persistence of the class dimensions of these processes. For example, a large body of pluralist theorizing and research deals with recent changes in work organization and in industrial relations systems. In the field of comparative industrial sociology, pluralists at first developed convergence theory which postulated a unilinear process of social development, the "logic of industrialization," steering all societies toward a common goal (e.g., Kerr et al., 1960; Kerr, 1983). While the convergence thesis enjoyed some popularity in the 1960s and 1970s, more recently, it has been asserted that it is obsolete (e.g., Ellman, 1980; Stark, 1989, Stark and Nee, 1989). Even more importantly, since the pluralist paradigm does not address the problematic nature of class relations, which is the focus of this work, I consider this literature to be supplementary rather than central to my arguments.

determine people's behavior. In the field of industrial sociology, recent illustrations of this thesis have provided comparative studies of industrial relations in two different systems, capitalism and socialism (Sabel and Stark, 1982; Burawoy and Lukacs, 1985; Burawoy, 1980; 1985; Stark, 1989). Based on comparative research of different political economies at the state or enterprise level, these studies conclude labor and management display divergent behaviors across these contexts.

Importantly, the divergence in actors' behavior has been attributed to differences in political economies: to the fact that, while the capitalist system is governed by the logic of market competition, the socialist system is governed by the logic of bureaucracy. In the former, market competition among enterprises produces a decentralized and hegemonic form of "production regime," whereas in the latter, hierarchical relations between the socialist state and enterprise result in a centralized and despotic mode of industrial relations (Burawoy and Lukacs, 1985: 735).<sup>2</sup> In turn, these two divergent modes of regulation account for the correspondingly different patterns of working-class behavior. Capitalist hegemony produces labor consent while despotic regime leads to labor militancy (Burawoy, 1985: 10).

Two corollaries follow from structuralist position. First, there is a direct correspondence between the political-economic system and the mode of industrial relations. Second, the patterns and forms of labor actions mirror both societal and industrial structures.

---

<sup>2</sup> According to Burawoy (1985: 9-10), a production regime encompasses two dimensions of production politics--labor process and industrial institutions: "First, the organization of work has political and ideological effects--that is, as men and women transform raw materials into useful things, they also reproduce particular social relations as well as an experience of those relations. Second, alongside the organization of work--that is, the labor process--there are distinctive apparatuses of production which regulate production relations."

Thus, based on the notion of convergence within a given system, structuralist inquiries lean toward "top-down" explanations. They point to relationships between different levels of social structures to account for organizational change and to institutional arrangements at the societal and enterprise levels to explain the dynamics of class conflict.

The relational perspective, which is rooted in the tradition of the humanist paradigm in sociology (Burrell and Morgan, 1985), especially in a dialectical standpoint and structuration theory (Lefebvre, 1971, 1976; Markovic 1974; Abrams, 1982; Giddens, 1984), provides a radically different approach to issues of social change and labor activism. First, it presumes that both social change and social order result from the interactions between people's actions and surrounding social structures. To put it differently, this position depicts a processual relation between agency and structure, presenting an effort at building "a sociology of process as an alternative to our tried, worn and inadequate sociologies of action and system" (Abrams, 1989: xv). Second, when applied to the field of industrial sociology, the relational approach does not posit the notion of the top-down convergence of political economy and labor-management relations. Instead, it recognizes both the partial autonomy of the latter from, and embeddedness within, macro-structures (P.K. Edwards, 1986; Wardell and Wiesenfeld, 1991; Wardell, 1992).

While the relational perspective has not been widely used to conduct comparative cross-national research, recent literature in this tradition suggests that we should find both divergences and convergence in the processes of organizational change across national and historical boundaries (Kolankiewicz, 1973; Wardell and Zajicek, 1991). Contrary to the structuralist explanation, which would explain the existence of similarities and differences in

social processes by reference to macro-structural configurations, especially product markets or lack of thereof, the relational approach points to people's actions within the concrete historical context (Hyman, 1975; Stark, 1980).

Finally, while industrial sociology generally has not experienced a "feminist revolution" and continues to use gender-blind perspectives, the relational approach contains a potential for examining gender. That is, it can build upon the flourishing feminist theories and research to suggest that gender, as both an identity and a structure, is a central organizing principle of contemporary societies, and therefore is an important aspect of structuration processes in both socialist and capitalist systems (see, for example, Cockburn, 1983; 1991; Wharton, 1988; Siemienska, 1990; Baron, 1991).

Taken together, these two major theoretical positions define the research question of this work. In the most general sense, the question is: "Does a focus on the social system, which posits structural conditions as uniformly determining people's actions, provide an adequate understanding of the dynamics of industrial relations?" This broad problem can be translated into more specific research questions to frame the current study: (1) Are the character of, and changes in, industrial relations across two different political economic systems governed by the structural differences in the larger social organizations?; or (2) Does the understanding of the processes of change in industrial relations require an analysis of the interactions between labor and management occurring within the constraints of existing industrial structures embedded in the larger political economies?

To address these research questions, that is to compare the utility of structural and relational theories for understanding industrial change, I conduct an historical-comparative

analysis of patterns of labor activism and change in industrial relations in the underground coal mining industries located in two capitalist countries, the United States and Great Britain, and in a socialist country, Poland, between 1980-1990. The choice of underground coal mining industry as the unit of analysis controls for variation in important factors, including the labor markets, the labor process, and product. The choice of capitalist and socialist countries as providing the broader contexts is crucial for establishing the existence of similarities and differences in processes of change in industrial organization across different political-economies.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**STRUCTURES, ACTORS AND PROCESSES:**  
**TOWARDS AN INTERACTIVE MODEL**

**I. Theoretical Perspectives**

In this chapter I present in some detail the structuralist and relational approaches to the issue of change of industrial relations. I begin by first reviewing the main assumptions and the logic underlying the structuralist approach. In this context, I emphasize and critically evaluate some of the structuralist arguments by analyzing theoretical premises put forward by Michael Burawoy; one of the most influential representatives of structuralist position.<sup>3</sup> Next, I turn to a discussion of the relational approach to the processes of change. After I first outline its main assumptions, I indicate the advantages of this perspective as compared with the structuralist position, including the relational position's potential to build upon existing feminist research and theory to incorporate gender into this framework. Finally, I summarize this perspective's main theoretical propositions regarding the interactive nature of the processes of industrial relations change. In the second section of this chapter, I state the main theoretical objectives of my research. I conclude with a summary of this chapter's main points and an outline of the content of the remaining chapters.

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<sup>3</sup> Importantly, while my discussion of structuralist paradigm focuses on Burawoy, it does not mean that my arguments pertain only to his work. Rather, Burawoy must be seen as a representative of a larger structuralist paradigm whose other proponents include such Marxist scholars as Althusser and Colletti, or such conflict theorists as Dahrendorf.



## 1. The Structuralist Perspective

### A. Main Assumptions

The structuralist position, while consisting of a heterogeneous body of thought, shares several common features. Its most basic characteristic is the ontological assumption concerning the explanatory efficacy of social structures in relation to human agency. As Agger (1989: 318) nicely puts it, a structuralist sociology posits "the hegemony of social structure canceling the prospect of free agency on ontological, not empirical grounds." Based on this assumption, the major proponents of structuralist tradition are predominantly interested in (1) exploring the interconnections among social structures; (2) understanding which structural configurations produce social change and which ones contribute to social order; and (3) examining actor's positions within structures to determine their behavior (Burrell and Morgan, 1985).

In the field of industrial sociology, representatives of the structuralist approach contend that the transformation of collective relations between labor and employers, especially the introduction of new control regimes, is shaped by the interplay of environmental economic--product and labor markets--factors; managerial attempts to elicit workers' productive effort; and workers' resistance (e.g., R. Edwards, 1979; Burawoy, 1979, 1985; Gordon, et al., 1982; Littler, 1982). A recent example of such a reasoning is provided by Turner (1991: 11) who argues

that general economic changes, including intensified market competition and managerial imperatives to reorganize production, have driven widespread processes of change in industrial relations, which in many cases includes union

decline.

Importantly, as Turner's statement presages it, while all structuralists emphasize the explanatory primacy of structural forces, they may differ in their perception of the relative degree of management versus workers' influence on organizational changes (see, for example, R. Edwards, 1979, Littler, 1982). Still, on another level they treat management as the prime force. Workers and their organizations are seen as reacting to managerial initiatives, rather than as having the potential for autonomous activities. That is, structuralists assume that facing external uncertainties or crises, management unilaterally develops new production regimes which control workers and contain possible conflicts better than the preceding ones. Not surprisingly, then, structuralists propose that the history of industrial relations should be conceptualized in terms of an evolving sequence of industrial regimes established in response to the structural crises.

Of course, structuralists do acknowledge the possibility of concurrent, yet different, industrial regimes or control strategies under capitalism. For example, Richard Edwards (1979: 21), an influential structuralist scholar, writes:

The typology of control embodies both the pattern of historical evolution and the array of contemporary methods of organizing work. On the one hand, each form of control corresponds to a definite stage in the development of the representative or most important firms; in this sense structural control succeeded simple control and bureaucratic control succeeded technical control, and the systems of control correspond to or characterize stages of capitalism. On the other hand, capitalist production has developed unevenly, with some sectors pushing far in advance of other sectors, and so each type of control represents an alternative method of organizing work; so long as uneven development produces disparate circumstances, alternative methods will exist.

However, while Edwards allows for the co-existence of different industrial regimes, he still maintains that (1) this co-existence is primarily due to the structural properties of capitalism and only secondarily to human activities; and (2) even in the context of uneven development, industrial management successively evolves through simple, technical, and bureaucratic control systems, with each subsequent system appearing to be more successful in undermining or containing workers' resistance. As he says: "[t]he success of bureaucratic control makes it seem the first capitalist organization of power that successfully eliminates its opposition" (1979: 152).

However, some recent developments in the organization of production, especially the increasingly flexible work organization and informal work regulation, involving the erosion of the seniority system, formal job descriptions and evaluations, on the one hand, and the continued existence of industrial conflicts, on the other hand, suggest that bureaucratic regime has not eliminated industrial conflict or is the end point in the development of industrial relations. Instead, many observers emphasize that the industrial regimes of the 1980s and 1990s are increasingly characterized by diverse attempts to decrease the number of work rules and specifications, to break out of excessive job regulation, to reduce organizational hierarchy and to increase workers' satisfaction, autonomy, and cooperation with management (see, for example, Piore and Sabel, 1984). The extent to which these new managerial schemes represent a break from the past, succeed or are widespread is fiercely debated (see Wood, 1989), but one thing appears certain: to preserve its intellectual currency, the structuralist argument had to develop beyond the confines of the more traditional position illustrated above.

Along these lines, Michael Burawoy (1979, 1983, 1985) provides a more innovative

structural explanation of the most current trends in class struggle and industrial relations. On several dimensions, Burawoy's theorizing can be seen as the most elaborate attempt to revitalize and develop a political-economic, structuralist analysis of the reproduction and transformation of capitalist production regimes by building on Marx's work written after the so-called epistemological break. In general, Burawoy's (1985: 263) theorizing incorporates the explanatory logic of structuralism:

The hegemonic regime sowed the seeds of its own destruction. It established constraints on the deployment of capital, whether by tying wages to profits or by creating internal labor markets, collective bargaining and grievance machinery which hamstrung management's domination of the workplace.

Also, similar to other structuralists, Burawoy (1985, Burawoy and Lukacs, 1985) sees market competition as the main force behind organizational change under capitalism, while he posits the uncertainties related to central-planning as the main determinant of human activities under socialism.

Importantly, however, two of his contributions move some aspects of his theorizing beyond the boundaries of traditional structuralist theory. First, Burawoy supports the arguments of writers such as Richard Edwards by arguing that, although conflict over control of production process is central to capitalist relations, the political and ideological apparatuses of production within advanced monopoly capitalism have largely eliminated labor militancy. Yet he goes beyond Edwards and other structuralists, who conceive of labor-management relations only in terms of conflict, by stressing that workers' activities can be seen as involving both conflict and consent. Second, the novelty of Burawoy's analyses lies in the fact that contrary to most Western political-economists who develop their arguments based on their

observations of industrialized capitalist societies, he substantiates his arguments by comparing and contrasting capitalist and socialist countries. This comparative approach allows Burawoy to develop his arguments extremely well and also makes them exceptionally powerful. At the same time, however, they give rise to several controversies.

In his discussion of the most recent changes in labor-management relations, Burawoy (1979: ii; 1985) suggests that class politics under monopoly capitalism are characterized by workers' spontaneous consent to the requirements of capitalist productive activities. Burawoy (1979: 70) begins with the observation that while labor-management conflict has diminished over the last thirty years, conflict among workers has increased. Accordingly, he maintains that a shift from conflictual, coercive industrial relations to consensual ones has occurred.

In terms of the mechanisms of change, Burawoy argues that this shift was a result of the emergence of monopoly capitalism characterized by a degree of market control by firms. That is, firms which have a certain degree of control over a product market or the ability to somehow insulate themselves from market pressures, have the potential to exercise control by making concessions which conceal class conflict and suppress the possibility of workers' struggles. Importantly, Burawoy stresses that the hegemonic regime--which he observed while working in the engine division of a multinational corporation--is widespread: "[c]hanges on the shop floor are manifestations of a general trend in society away from coercion and in the direction of persuasion" (Burawoy, 1979: 182). This, in turn, suggests that with the ascendance of the hegemonic regime we should observe trends toward consensual relations both at the societal and workplace levels.

## **B. Main Criticisms**

Neither Burawoy's theoretical nor empirical contentions have escaped criticism (e.g., Littler, 1982; Peck, 1982; Gartman, 1982; P.K. Edwards, 1986; Wardell, 1991). According to his detractors, Burawoy's analyses are, in several aspects, one-dimensional. First, he presents a so-called "top-down" approach to labor-management relations. As a result, he ignores possible worker resistance to managerial efforts to meet production objectives. He does not see workers as possibly active agents whose creative and productive powers induce ever-present uncertainty into the labor process in terms of the realization of managerial objectives. According to critics, then, Burawoy misses the other side of the coin: the fact that, through diverse forms of collective and individual action, workers prompt managers to introduce changes in the modes of control. That is, alternatively, the emergence of new forms of production regime(s) can be a result of (1) managerial attempts to cope with the problematic character of labor effort (Wardell, 1991), or (2) labor activism, especially that aspect of labor activism which threatens management's right to manage.

Second, as P. K. Edwards (1986) and others suggest, the notion of consent is too strong a term for describing workers' behavior. It necessitates that we take the notions of industrial conflict or consent for granted, and, consequently: (1) neglect the emergence of new, sometimes less obvious forms of labor activism; or, (2) ignore the development of alternative strategies of union resistance; or, (3) overlook the existence of tensions within and among the politics, ideologies, and economics of capitalism which threaten the smooth functioning of hegemony and consent.

Third, Littler (1982: 3) maintains that implicit in the notion of consent is an assumption that new managerial styles form a coherent strategy to problems of control. However, managerial solutions often combine a variety of old and new managerial schemes, so-called "hybrid types" schemes (Lane, 1988), as well as conflicting practices.

Fourth, when we look at labor activism, critics indicate that, since the early 1980s in some Western countries, such as the United States and Great Britain, production politics have predominantly been based upon aggressive management tactics to undermine union organizations and to take advantage of the labor laws' changes, including the institutionalization of various penalties for engaging in strikes, in order to weaken workers' ability to engage in collective activity. To argue, as Burawoy does, that workers and unions consent to the practices of hiring replacement workers and other disciplinary measures resulting in job loss seems difficult. Rather, it may be that workers' and unions' actions reflect an accommodation to a coercive situation, wherein new managerial strategies tend to decrease management's dependence on labor and, at the same time, increase labor's dependence on management and, more generally, on employment for survival.

The link between working with a given employer and survival, critics argue, is enhanced by such managerial strategies as the institutionalization of company-specific skills which cannot be transferred to other jobs. Labor dependence on employment also appears to be increasing in spite of various welfare policies such as unemployment benefits, which, according to Burawoy, separate the reproduction of labor power from paid-work related performance. In this context, traditional strategies of resistance may become obsolete. When coupled with a lack alternative strategies, this increased labor dependence may account for

workers' co-operation or may prompt new resistance strategies which may superficially appear to represent consent. Thus, critics contend that it is crucial to distinguish between the politics of co-operation or accommodation, which are not necessarily consensus-driven, and the politics of consent, that is, voluntary acceptance of what is done or planned by another person or group of people (Ramsay, 1977; Fantasia et al., 1988; Robinson, 1988; Sorge & Streek, 1988; Hyman, 1989).

A final criticism of particular significance comes from feminist scholars who contend that Burawoy's theorizing is gender-biased (see Davies, 1990). Burawoy assumes that class inequality is the only relevant form of domination in the production arena (Burawoy, 1979: 201). Since he believes that gender, which he takes to be an identity alone, is irrelevant to understanding class politics at the point of production, he views workers in "gender-neutral ways." Thus, his research, which focuses on the behavior of men only, views gender as unproblematic.

However, feminist scholarship suggests that both people's identities and social organizations are gendered. Consequently, we cannot assume that the concept of gender is inconsequential to our analysis (Baron, 1991), even if our focus is on men only. For example, "masculinity," a socio-historical construct entailing prescriptions for gender-related activities, shapes and is shaped by men's behavior in gender-homogenous settings. Thus, feminist research in the field of organizations suggests that modes of managerial control, unions structures, and labor activism should be viewed as gendered (Collinson and Hear, 1994; Cockburn, 1983, 1991; Jenson, 1989; Acker 1990; Baron 1991; Cobble, 1993). According to these critics, then, a theory of the transformation of industrial regimes should be able to



able to account for differences and similarities in gendered aspects of production regimes across historical and national boundaries and in the collective behavior of men and women workers.

As the above suggests, gender is more than an identity; it is also a social relation and a way of organizing social structures. This latter dimension of gender, as I will discuss in more detail below, implies that people both produce and reproduce social world, including both the reproduction of the relations of production and labor power, broadly understood. Hence their activities are shaped at the intersection of paid employment and household nexus.<sup>4</sup> While the analysis of the dialectic of production and reproduction of social relations has been pivotal to many Marxist analyses of capitalism (e.g., Lefebvre, 1976), by focusing on the tensions between private and public spheres feminist scholars recognized that

women and men have different relations to production and reproduction because of the gendered division of labor and gender ideology. In turn both the division of labor and gender ideology differentially structure and are structured by women's and men's labor force participation (Calasanti and Zajicek, 1993: 123).

Thus, to understand people's experiences and behavior in the workplace we cannot rely solely on what Feldberg and Glenn (1979) call the "job model." Instead, they propose that we use an integrated job/gender model which systematically treats the interactional character of job and family lives.

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<sup>4</sup> Broadly understood the reproduction of social relations and labor power include biological reproduction, socialization, education, taking care of bodily needs, and so forth.

### **C. Comparative Structuralist Research and Its Critique**

In examining the historical-comparative dimension of Burawoy's (1979; 1985; see also Burawoy and Lukacs, 1983) research, it is important to note that he also theorizes about the reasons behind the differences in factory regimes across socio-economic systems. Burawoy (1979) noted the cross-national divergences in modes of regulation and industrial behavior when he compared his experiences as a worker in two workplaces: in the United States and in Hungary. He explains these differences by reference to the broader political-economy. As Burawoy (1985: 18) puts it in his later work, "each particular factory regime is the product of general forces operating at a societal or global level." Since, at the societal level, the capitalistic system is governed by the logic of market competition, and the socialist system is governed by the logic of bureaucracy, the control regimes and consequently the patterns of industrial behavior are different. As the above statement indicates, the comparative studies not only extend Burawoy's analyses beyond the realm of workplace relations but also provide him with the strongest evidence regarding the character of connections between industrial management and the larger political economy.

Specifically, Burawoy's (1985; Burawoy and Lukacs, 1985: 725-726) dualistic view of socialism and capitalism comes from two sources. First, it is based on his conceptualization of capitalist and state socialist logic as being radically distinct because in the former the surplus is appropriated privately and in the latter it is appropriated centrally. However, if we take the standpoint of the direct producers--workers--and ask if, from their perspective, the private versus central appropriation of surplus makes a difference, this distinction may appear more

useful as an heuristic devise than as an interpretive variable.

The second source of the East-West dualism is Burawoy's ahistorical, static vision of capitalist and especially socialist production regimes as hegemony and bureaucratic despotism, respectively. He defines this latter regime as characterized by (1) an uncontested presence of the socialist state at the point of production; (2) a fixed degree of state intervention in the production processes; and (3) unified management, union and party interests. I maintain that, although heuristically adequate, these three assumptions of "bureaucratic despotism" need to be historicized if we are to understand the functioning of what Nuti (1981) calls "socialism on earth."

Importantly, as apparent from the above discussion, Burawoy constructs this dualism based on differences in the political-economies and especially the perceived across-systems differences in the relationships between the state and the workplace. Put differently, the nature of the connections between the state and the workplace is crucial to Burawoy's conceptualization of East-West dichotomy. In this regard, his logic is as follows: under capitalism, state apparatuses are institutionally separated from the factory apparatuses, and, hence, the state is not present at the point of production. This means that capitalist industrial relations are characterized by institutional decentralization, and concomitantly hegemonic class politics. By contrast, within socialist societies, state and factory institutions are fused and management, trade unions, and the party are the instruments of the state at the point of production. Thus, under socialism we can observe institutional centralization and the resultant class politics characterized by bureaucratic despotism (Burawoy, 1985: 10-12).

Specifically, Burawoy maintains that within capitalism workers' struggles are organized

within the boundaries of a given workplace. Only in unusual situations do they "spill over into the wider political arena" (Burawoy, 1985: 196). In contrast, "[u]nder state socialism, enterprise struggles are immediately struggles against the state" (Burawoy, 1985:196). These assertions give rise to two problems. First, worker struggles under capitalism are political in the sense that such issues as striker replacement, social security, sexual harassment, and affirmative action are taken to the political arena framed by the state policies. Second, Burawoy does not indicate what constitutes the unusual conditions that would result in labor-management conflict spilling over to the political arena or the politicization of labor-management conflict under capitalism. On the surface, the fact that Burawoy does not specify the conditions for politicization of industrial conflict in market economies can be seen as a welcomed departure from structural determinism. Theoretically, by leaving this aspect of industrial relations open, Burawoy creates a space in which the history of capitalism can be made by interactions of agency and structure. On the other side, however, such a disparate treatment of capitalist and socialist systems also reproduces the West-East dualism. Market economies are structured in such a way that their dynamics are not a priori defined; socialist bureaucracies predetermine the trajectory of bureaucratic despotism. The former system allows for history-making, the latter makes history above people's heads. In this context, based on the assumptions underlying the relational approach, I maintain that in both systems history results from the interactions of agency and surrounding structures.

At the same time, Burawoy provides us with other important propositions regarding the connections between the character of class relations and class consciousness. Because of the manner of surplus value appropriation, class divisions within socialism are more visible than

under capitalism. Therefore, socialist workers are more aware of their interests and "more likely to recover a socialist consciousness and struggle to appropriate control over production and distribution of surplus" (Burawoy, 1985: 197 and 202). Thus, by creating one, easily visible and defined enemy, the centralization of industrial institutions under state socialism is more conducive to the development of movements for workers' control than within a political-economy in which state and factory apparatuses are decentralized and control over production more dispersed.

Consequently, Burawoy (1981: 113 and 1985: 16, 199 and 202) argues that the centralization of structural arrangements, especially if it is combined with certain structural arrangements at the factory level such as the lack of internal labor markets, explains the trajectory of class struggle in socialist countries. Thus, according to Burawoy (1985: 199), the high degree of centralization in the Polish economy established the conditions for the emergence of cohesive opposition to the regime, while leaving Polish managers with insufficient room "to organize and pre-empt struggles." As a result, Burawoy argues, in Poland one would observe a high degree of working-class mobilization and a thrust for collective-self management, of which the Solidarity movement is a prime example.

Before I discuss Burawoy's reasoning further, let me briefly summarize the main points made so far. My review of Burawoy's comparative work suggests three things: (1) the politicization of labor struggles is primarily determined by the nature of the structural relationships between the state and the enterprise; (2) workers in socialist countries are more class-conscious and are more concerned with the issue of workers control than workers in capitalist countries; and (3) because of the relationship between economic centralization and

class struggles, workers under state socialism should be more militant than those under advanced capitalism.

It would be premature to conclude, based on the above discussion, that Burawoy does not have a sense of variations across capitalist countries. For example, in one of his subsequent historical-comparative analysis of different capitalist countries, primarily the United States and Great Britain, Burawoy (1983) finds a degree of variation in the connections between production politics and state politics. However, to understand these divergences in advanced monopoly capitalism, Burawoy still focuses on the general political-economic context of industrial relations and again provides a top-down explanation for the differences. Thus, to explain variations across capitalist economies, Burawoy (1983; 1985) considers cross-national differences in state intervention in and regulation of labor-management relations, especially in the ways in which the state shapes the conditions on which labor power is sold. For example, the state regulates labor power use by lifting or imposing limitations on employer's power over labor and, thus, "shapes the factory apparatuses by stipulating, for example, mechanisms for the conduct and resolution of struggle at the point of production" (Burawoy, 1985: 12). Importantly, he sees state politics as an intervening variable or mediating force between the larger structural logic and industrial behavior.

Again, Burawoy's structural determinism becomes clear in his assertion that state politics are "conditioned by class interests and class capacities defined primarily at the point of production" (1983: 601). This implies, as P.K. Edwards (1987: 146) suggests, that Burawoy perceives the state as shaped by the mode of production: "states act in the ways that they do because they are constrained by the character of the economy." Thus, despite acknowledged

differences in capitalist societies, his overall deterministic account of the convergence within a given socio-economic system remains ultimately intact.

Burawoy's conclusions derive not only from his theoretical-structuralist assumptions but also from his methodological approach. Specifically, some of Burawoy's own historical analyses of industrial relations in Great Britain, as well as other accounts, suggest that Great Britain, because of its large sector of nationalized industries and because of the role of labor in shaping production regimes, represents an intermediary case between a "purely" capitalist and a "purely" socialist country (Ramsay, 1977; Krieger, 1983; Kolankiewicz, 1973; Wardell & Zajicek, 1991).<sup>5</sup> Yet, while Burawoy compares the United States with Hungary, the United States with Great Britain, and Hungary with Poland, he does not simultaneously compare the United States and Great Britain with a socialist country. His choice of the United States as a capitalist economy and Hungary as a socialist one for West-East comparison introduces a potential methodological bias regarding structural differences. An historical-comparative analysis including the United States, Great Britain, and Poland might better assess the generalizability of his dualistic interpretations. Among socialist countries, Poland is a good choice as it provides the most visible evidence of his structuralist view regarding the radicalization of the working class under socialism. An historical analysis of Poland can also provide a more nuanced and historically sensitive understanding of the processes of reproduction and transformation of what Burawoy calls bureaucratic despotism.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, Kolankiewicz (1973: 149) discerns close similarities between the Shop Steward Committees in British industry and Polish shop-floor activists. Also industrial strife in Great Britain during the 1980s and the emergence of industrial conflicts in Poland in 1980 point to some similarities. In terms of structural arrangements, several industries in Great Britain, such as mining, steel, electricity, and shipyards were state owned until the 1980s.

#### **D. Summary**

In sum, structuralist analyses, as exemplified by Burawoy, provide an account of general differences across socio-economic systems and highlight the following factors: (1) structural arrangements at the societal level determine differences in industrial relations, which, in turn, lead to variations in industrial behavior and workers' consciousness; (2) while consent prevails over coercion in class politics under advanced monopoly capitalism; under socialism coercion prevails and workers in socialist countries are more militant than workers in capitalist countries ; (3) the transformation of production regimes can be explained as follows: in the context of capitalism, product markets changes determine the introduction of new control strategies and the forms of working-class struggle; within socialism the reorganizations of industrial management and new forms of industrial behavior stem from planning uncertainty; and (4) gender is an irrelevant interpretive factor.

Two types of general weaknesses in structuralist analyses, including Burawoy's, could be noted. First, one of the most important reasons for the fact that the political-economic structures become the dominant explanatory variables in structural analyses is the ontological assumption that neither management nor labor activities play a significant or proactive role in shaping production regimes. Second, while a structural analysis of general differences in socialist and capitalist political-economies might be heuristically adequate, as it illuminates the most general characteristics of these two systems, it may also be misleading because it introduces a potential bias towards a focus on differences. That is, the structuralist claims, including Burawoy's assertion regarding the dualistic nature of socialist and capitalist industrial



relations, may be informative on an abstract level, but in Burawoy's case his analysis lacks sufficient historical-comparative grounding to provide a more nuanced understanding of the character of industrial change across socio-economic systems.

The relational framework, which I will outline next, provides a theoretical alternative to the structuralist approaches. By paying particular attention to workers', unions' and management's co-operative and conflictual actions, the relational approach possibly can yield a more subtle understanding of the changes and reproduction of concrete modes of industrial relations which structuralist perspectives do not provide. Also, as I shall discuss, from this alternative stance, organizational centralization or decentralization can be conceptualized primarily as changes occurring at different structural levels, rather than as general typologies characterizing socio-economic systems.

Thus, by attending to both the historically- and contextually-specific interactions between agency and structure, this alternative political-economic perspective allows for the possibility that (1) at the macro-structural level, capitalist and socialist political economies are different, but at other levels they might contain similar social processes which reproduce and transform industrial structures; and (2) industrial behavior is not necessarily determined by the general logic of the socio-economic system. This means that while the relational approach does not negate entirely the structuralist thesis, it rejects structuralist determinism, treats the interactions between labor activism and managerial control as an explanatory variable, and shifts the focus of analysis from structural configurations to social processes.

## **2. The Relational Approach**

On some dimensions, such as the recognition of the existence of class struggle, the relational perspective of industrial relations is somewhat similar to the structuralist position. Radical differences between these two perspectives become more apparent if we look at domain assumptions (Gouldner, 1970) of each theoretical framework. For the purpose of this work, I focus on only six of the many general features which distinguish the relational and structuralist perspectives. In the rest of this section I discuss each assumption in turn.

### **A. Agency**

First, from the structuralist perspective, people are capable of merely intervening in history, where interventions means the ability to modify structural processes by responding to the structural pressures. The relational approach asserts that people are able to creatively contribute to the social world--act in the ways which cannot be sufficiently explained by the macro-structural logic of social organization. Put differently, the relational perspective asserts that while it is important to attend to both actors' positions and relationships among them and to locate these in a concrete, structural context, this may still be insufficient to understanding actors' behavior.

For example, both approaches may contend that industrial conflicts involve workers and their organizations, employers and their associations, and different state agencies. However, they will differ in their view of the possibility of, and the extent to which, actors',

especially workers', actions can be autonomous from social structure and have transformatory potential. Contrary to the structuralist assumption, from the relational perspective, people's activities can be relatively autonomous from social structures and existing power relations among social actors do not determine social practices nor their results. Further, the relational perspective emphasizes the problematic character of people's actions, especially their outcomes. That is, people's activities produce unintended consequences and new contradictions while maintaining, exacerbating, or dissolving the old ones.

### **B. Struggles Over Labor Control**

Second, while structuralists focus on the configurations of societal macro-structures, the relational approach contends that an ongoing power struggle over control of work and employment relations is a central force behind the changes in industrial relations. However, this does not mean that industrial relations are always conflictual; yet they are not consensual either, as Burawoy contends. Rather, the relational perspective sees industrial relations as characterized by changing patterns of conflict and accommodation. One of the most important results of power struggles is the dynamic character of the patterns of labor control, that is, the emergence of the control regimes and their transformation and dissolution.

One social realm where control is contested is the workplace. To understand workplace struggles, political economists, including structuralists, contend, we must consider that labor power has an indeterminate potential which cannot be fully accounted for by the employment contract: "[t]he commodity which the worker sells is not a fixed amount of labour

embodied in a completed product but 'labour power'; i.e. the capacity to work" (Littler and Salaman, 1982: 252). Thus, a conflict is built into every modern employment relation. On the one hand, employers need to elicit workers's cooperation and coerce them to produce profit (Wardell, 1990). On the other hand, workers, who are exploited by capital, have an interest in the viability of their employers. This level of conflict under capitalist relations of production can be termed "structured antagonism." As P.K. Edwards (1986: 5) says, "[t]here is a structured antagonism in all work organizations in which workers' ability to work is deployed in the creation of surplus that goes to another group."

The problematic character of class relations, then, is rooted in the interdependence between employer and employees, a feature of any labor process and employment relation (Edwards & Heery, 1989), whether capitalist or socialist. Also, managing the labor process involves transforming employees' capacity to produce into actual work activity through various control schemes (Hyman, 1989), whether in a capitalist or a socialist society. However, Burawoy views this interdependence as being redefined in very important ways by the larger political-economy, especially by the role of market competition under capitalism and the role of state bureaucracies under socialism. Thus, contrary to relational approach, he does not allow for the existence of important similarities deriving from the contradiction built into employment relations. As a result, he ignores the possibility that the problematic character of the production process prompts management to design new control schemes whose introduction can be seen as a managerial response to the growing autonomy of workers at the point of production and whose goal is to wrestle away from the labor the control over the labor process (Braverman, 1974; Ramsay, 1977; Wardell, 1990).

Importantly, while struggles over control can occur within a particular workplace, such struggles can also take place at the industry or even state level. For example, management might want to assert its "right to manage" in relation to workers' collective organizations at the level of an entire industry or the part of the industry controlled by a given labor union (Hyman, 1979, 1989; Wardell & Johnston, 1987), in other words, to shift the locus of control over certain decision-making arenas. However, when management want to transform workplace organization or other aspect of relations in production, they have to deal with unions or other industrial institutions representing workers, such as workers' councils. The ways in which management deal with unions or workers' councils, or how workers and their organizations respond, can differ within the same socio-economic system depending on the past history of struggle, workers' and management's consciousness of history, and labor and community solidarity. Also, the actors can choose among at least three options: the politics of conflict, the politics of cooperation or cooptation. In turn, the choice of one of these options, or their combination, will have important consequences for the industry as whole as well as for unions, management and rank-and-file workers.

For example, several accounts of the post-war situation in different Polish industries suggest that a centralized system of industrial relations developed out of struggles to control management of industries (Golebiowski, 1970; Czarniawska, 1985; Wolnicki, 1989). Since then, while the dynamics of Polish industrial relations have encompassed periods of both industrial conflict and accommodation, they have been characterized by the continued management attempts to gain more control over industries through the incorporation of workers' organizations formed from below (Stefanowski, 1977).

The first attempt at the decentralization of Polish industrial relations occurred in 1956. That year, as a result of workers' unrest, worker participatory schemes emerged as an organizational leverage against the authority of planning agencies, party and unions politics. This changed the character of industrial relations, shifted both the level and the locus of control over production back to the workplace and thus undermined the power of central bureaucracies and central unions. It took about two years of concerted actions on the part of trade unions and the party to restrict and eventually to take over the workers' councils, turning them into an instrument of managerial control. Yet, the fact that actors can make choices among different ways in which they can gain control over industrial relations is somewhat neglected in Burawoy's analyses of socialist countries.

Usually, then, the intention behind the introduction of new control schemes or the transformation of the forms of industrial relations is not only to harness workers' power but also to weaken their unions or other representative institutions, such as workers' councils. By broadening the employment contract to provide welfare and other benefits and developing different forms of worker participation, the managers appear to be caring employers. When introduced in union workplaces, worker participatory programs tend to disrupt existing grievance mechanisms and undermine worker solidarity (Fantasia, et al., 1988). All this, in turn, renders the presence of unions superfluous in the eyes of employers since workers' needs are "met" by managerial-type workers' councils. However, the possibility that transformation of industrial relations, especially of the relations between workers and their organizations, such as unions and worker's councils, can result from managerial responses to a labor control problem fall beyond Burawoy's conceptualization of production regimes.

### C. Industrial Relations

Third, while structuralists denote the relations among structures and institutions as the subject matter of industrial sociology, the relational approach defines the study of industrial relations as the investigation of "processes of control over work relations" (Hyman, 1979: 12; emphasis mine). The notion of control over work relations is synonymous with the term job control, especially in North American literature. It encompasses all devices used by employers, employees and their organizations to influence "the existence of, the access to, and the performance of operations" at the workplace-level in a given industry (Herding, 1972: 2). Thus job control includes issues such as job access and security, promotion, production norms, grievance procedures, wage schemes, and health and safety.

However, even with this broad definition of job control, the relational approach as it has been used tends to limit the scope of investigation of social production to its two dimensions: the production process and employment relations, that is, to the workplace issues. As a result, the processes of control over what can be termed the strategic dimension of industrial relations--that is, all the matters that affect the long-term industrial policies, including investments, marketing and distribution, long-term planning and so forth--are beyond the analytic scope. This approach seems to imply that strategic issues at firm or industry level are not a legitimate subject of class struggle. In contrast, then, I will define industrial relations as encompassing practices, institutions, and organizations that directly govern work and employment relations and the long-term industrial policies. I will define the subject matter of industrial relations as the processes of control over decision-making with regard to production

processes, employment relations and the strategic dimension of industrial policies.

The distinction between different arenas of control, that is, of production, employment, and general policy-related matters over which workers or managers have some degree of contested control is crucial for my research (see Table 1.1). As Wardell (1992: 159) suggests

If we assume that capitalistic relations of production had formed a hegemony over the workplace, as Burawoy has argued, the important arenas of struggle in the foreman's workshop should have resembled the important one's in the contractor's workshop.

Thus, if in my research I find that arenas of struggle and the extent of control wielded by workers and managers over decision-making in similar industries vary over time or cross-nationally within the boundaries of the same socio-economic system, such findings will challenge Burawoy's claims about the existence of top-down convergence within a given political-economy. Furthermore, if I find that arenas of struggle and the extent of control exercised by labor and managers over decision-making in similar workplaces converge in important ways across two different political-economic systems, this finding will challenge Burawoy's contention about the existence of radical dualism between the capitalistic and socialistic forms of industrial organization. Importantly, if the relational approach provides an alternative to the structuralist perspective, I expect to find significant variations in arenas of struggle within capitalism and important similarities across capitalism and socialism.

Of course, some of the issues included in Table 1.1 cut across more than one dimension. For example, the arena of effort level cuts across production process and employment relations. Thus, the categories that I included in Table 1.1 cannot be seen as based on mutually exclusive categories and treated rigidly. Rather, they need to be viewed as



Table 1.1: Decision-Making Dimensions and Arenas  
in the Industry(1)

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### I. Strategic Policies

Plant location	Opening and closing of units
Product selection	Level of employment
Investments	Bank Credits
Prices	Sales
Subcontracting	Accounting procedures
Depreciation	Long-term planning
Appointments to top managerial positions	Bonus plans
Profit sharing	Technological change
Pension Funds	Recognition of workers' right to collective representation
Managerial system	

### II. Production Process

Output	Quality
Tools	Methods of improvement
Production planning	Output standards
Utilization of machinery	Scheduling of operations
Incentive schemes	Crew size
Work pace	Effort levels
Work and shop rules	

Table 1.1: Continued

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III. Employment Relations	
Hiring and Firing	Workforce size
Promotion	Transfers
Scheduling	Labor turnover
Wages	Wage structure
Fringe benefits	Seniority systems
Layoffs	Dismissal and severance pay
Work schedules	Job classification
Job evaluations	Job transfers
Discipline	Shift transfers
Safety and health	Grievances
Attendance	Rest periods
Overtime regulations	Physical conditions
Retraining	

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## Notes:

(1) This table is a modification of Gold's (1986: 21) list of decision making topics in the firm.

a way of organizing different aspects of industrial relations. With this caveat in mind, it is also important to make two more analytical distinctions. I will distinguish between (1) the level of control, that is, the structural location where the decision-making processes occur, and (2) the locus of the decision-making processes, that is, who participates.

In the context of the relational approach, the role of the above distinctions is to provide analytical tools for tracing the processes of centralization and decentralization of industrial relations within the same and across different political-economies. According to the relational perspective, similar processes of centralization and decentralization could occur in the same industries across two different socio-economic systems and a variation in processes of centralization and decentralization can occur in the same political-economic system.

As it may appear that the structural concept "production regime" and the relational concept "processes of control" are somewhat similar, I would like to emphasize two important differences between them. First, the concept of production regime implies a top-down approach to industrial relations, while the latter concept allows us to see that both managers and workers are active agents in the emergence of conflict and accommodation. Second, the notion of production regime relates to structural connections between social institutions, such as the internal labor markets, systems of remuneration and bargaining, and work regulations, but the concept of the processes of control over decision-making focuses on social processes through which the connections among and the locus of control over contested arenas are established.

#### D. Unions and Rank-and-file Workers and Collective Bargaining

While the set up of the internal union structure is not a focus of Burawoy's comparative analyses, there are reasons to believe that not only the relations between the state and unions, but also internal union organization influences the relationships between labor and employers. As Herding (1972: 45) comments "[t]he state of the democracy within a trade union has an obvious and crucial impact on the job-control rights the union will demand in the bargaining process, and on the distribution and meaning of these rights for its members."<sup>6</sup> Thus, union structure defines the extent to which workers have access to decision-making processes, and their ability to have a say concerning the issues constituting union demands bears upon labor-management relations.

With regard to unions, it has been argued that when unions are involved in centralization of industrial relations or become subject to this process themselves, workers' militancy is often directed against union leadership (Herding, 1972; Krieger, 1983; Perry, 1984). Thus, from the relational perspective, changes in the structural level of control within unions "exert a powerful influence on the patterns of industrial conflict; and in particular, since centralization of negotiations increases the interdependence of workplace and external union

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<sup>6</sup> Herding (1972: 45) also says that "[t]he American set up of industrial relations, characterized by the absence of legislative regulation of most shop-floor conditions, and by exclusive representation of the bargaining unit by one union, virtually cuts off recourse to the judicial process as well as to challenge from the outside against a union unresponsive to the membership's interests. Democratic unionism, therefore, is even more vital than in countries without these two features." Interestingly enough, neither in Poland nor in Great Britain were the shop-floor conditions legislatively regulated at that time, but Great Britain diverges here from the United States and Poland on the second feature.

organizations, conflict over control within trade unionism is intensified" (Hyman, 1975: 166).<sup>7</sup>

In general, two types of changes in structural level of control can occur within union. First, the decision-making processes regarding internal issues such as appointment of union officials or rule change can be centralized, that is, taken away from the union membership and located within the union leadership. Second, the decision-making regarding industrial relations matters, including strikes, overtime ban, bargaining issues and so forth, can be subject to centralization or decentralization processes (see Table 1.2).

For example, regarding the first aspect of change in level of control, in both capitalist and socialist societies, the push toward centralization of union structures results from their role as mediators between workers and employers against whom unions must present themselves as unified entities, able to influence and control their members (Hyman, 1975). While in socialist societies, trade unions' role has not involved the collective bargaining type of mediation between the employer and the employees, similar to the capitalist countries, the push toward centralization of union structures within the socialist context relates to enhancement of union leadership control over the membership. One way of achieving this goal is through limiting the union members' participation in decision-making processes, including the appointment of union officials and the conduct of industrial relations.

However, in contrast to capitalist countries where unions are not supposed to enhance the employer's control over the membership, in socialist countries, the union leadership is burdened with the political responsibility for enhancing the party's control over workers. Yet, despite this difference, in both contexts union leadership is responsible for labor and union

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<sup>7</sup> Also, as Lipset et al.'s (1962) study of the printers' union in the United States indicates, it could be the case that more democratic unions will have more militant bargaining behavior.

Table 1.2: Decision-Making Dimensions and Arenas in the Union

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I. Internal Matters

Appointment of officials  
Rule change  
Mergers and Affiliations

II. Industrial Relations Matters

Strikes  
Overtime ban  
Bargaining issues  
Ratification of bargaining agreements  
Union strategies

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discipline, especially for the actions of local unions whose potential to withdraw co-operation constitutes a major threat to management. Thus, to maintain co-operative relationships with local unions, the national leadership cannot operate solely as a managerial arm. Rather, it has to balance the different demands made on it from both sides. One way in which such balancing act became easier, is by centralizing decision-making powers at the national level. Thus, across different socio-economic contexts, rather than constituting a "top-down" command system, the relations between unions, employers and workers vary at different levels of industrial relations and are not necessarily symbiotic.

In different socio-economic and political contexts, then, similar processes of union structure centralization can result from different rationales behind union leaders' attempts to enhance the central union's control over labor. Of course, in both contexts, an unintended consequence of these politics might be the union's collusion with management's overall goals and alienation of rank-and-file workers. Attending to the above processes makes it possible to discern similarities between, for example, American business unionism and the role of unions in the socialist countries, despite the differences in terms of their general political and ideological status. That is, in certain historical circumstances, both business and socialist unionism may participate in change processes more as instruments of managerial control, than as representing the interests of labor against the employers. In this way, unions may also encourage workers' militancy against themselves.

In terms of the second point, as I will discuss more fully in Chapter 3, in capitalist countries, the character of collective bargaining-- its relative centralization and formalization in the United States, and its decentralized and informal character in Great Britain--seem to denote

substantial national differences. However, since the Donovan Report in 1968 attempts at formalization and centralization of British industrial relations have occurred.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly enough, during the 1980s, the processes of simultaneous centralization and decentralization of some aspects of industrial relations and industrial management began in all three countries.

For example, Kochan, Katz, and MacKersie (1986) comment on the emergence of new industrial relations in the United States and allude to similar changes in other capitalist countries such as Great Britain. The central feature of this new industrial regime is the shift from collective bargaining, which used to constitute the most important level of industrial activity, to the workplace level, on the one hand, and corporate/strategic level, on the other hand. Although the authors do not put it in this way, my interpretation of their observation concerning changes in capitalist industrial relations is that these changes denote the shift in both the level and the locus of control of work and employment relations. Interestingly enough, a similar process occurred in Poland where collective bargaining has never been an arena of struggle between unions and management. Toward the end of the 1980s, the role of industrial associations--the Polish equivalent of the middle level of industrial structures--has decreased significantly. Even if these simultaneous processes of centralization/ decentralization proceed unevenly across national and industrial boundaries, in all three cases they can be seen as managerial attempts to overcome obstacles to fulfilling production objectives (e.g. Littler, 1982; Wardell, 1990; Wardell & Weisenfeld, 1991). If similarity exists across capitalist and socialist societies, we should be able to find it by focusing on the processes of emergence,

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<sup>8</sup> This observation has implications for the definition of industrial relations and industrial sociology. That is, if the existence of collective bargaining understood as a process of negotiation of industrial matters is seen as the subject matter of industrial relations, then we cannot talk about industrial relations in the former socialist countries.



transformation, or dissolution of diverse administrative and organizational structures and practices.

At this juncture it is important to emphasize again that, from the relational perspective, neither the strategies of workers, nor unions, nor managers themselves are simple or mechanical (Hyman, 1979). Rather, they are enmeshed in the particular histories of a given industry, its work relations, and broader political-economic conditions. They involve often problematic and contradictory choices recognized as feasible under given circumstances, but creating new sets of issues and problems. These contentions and a growing number of theoretical and empirical works, imply that to understand the history, and the cross-national similarities and differences of industrial relations, at minimum one needs to focus on power struggles and the shifts of the level, arenas, and the locus of control over the management of industrial relations (e.g., Herding, 1972; Lane and Kolankiewicz, 1973; Hyman, 1975; Comisso, 1981; Wolnicki, 1989, Shapiro, 1981; Krieger, 1983). Without allowing for a relative autonomy of the activities and strategies of the main actors involved, we restrict, as Burawoy does, our ability to understand the ways in which changing patterns of conflict and cooperation can produce similar process of change of the industrial structures. A practical implication of these suggestions is that if a comparative, cross-national research is to answer the question regarding the nature of the relationships between the larger political economy and actors' behavior, it should attend to both particular and general patterns of industrial relations and to consider the variables which are overlooked by the highly abstract structural analyses.

## **E. Political Economies and Industrial Relations**

Fourth, while the relational approach focuses on social forces operating within the realm of an industrial relations, and views industrial relations as a relatively autonomous social domain, it also recognizes that these forces do not exist in a vacuum. They are embedded in a historical political-economic context which facilitates or limits the development of particular actions and strategies. While structuralists view the broader social context of industrial relations, such as the state, economy and ideology, as determining agents' activities, the relational perspective sees these agents as interacting within the broader context of the nation state and global economy.

More specifically, Burawoy views each level of social organization as mirroring a higher structural level. By contrast, the relational perspective suggests that while there are interactions between changes in workplace organization and industrial relations, and the broader economy, the extent and strength of these interactions are historically contingent. As Strauss (1991:78) nicely puts it, we should see industrial relations

[a]s embedded in society. The legal system, the economy, culture, history, technology, geography--all are relevant. Though the relationships among the parts vary kaleidoscopically, all affect industrial relations. In turn, industrial relations affects them.

From this position, then, it might be useful to think about relations among the different levels of social organization as being encompassed by permeable boundaries. Thus, for the relational approach, shifts in the locus of control over industrial management are best understood by exploring peoples' activities across different organizational levels.

## **F. Gender**

So far my discussion of the relational perspective has focused almost exclusively on the realm of production. However, and this is the fifth difference between the structuralist and relational approaches, an adequate understanding of the connections between the larger political-economy and the strategies and activities of labor and management requires including the concept of gender as an explanatory variable. As I have already mentioned in Section 1 of this chapter, doing a gender analysis of industrial relations means examining the ways in which gender as a social structure, identity, ideology and culture, contributes to the production, reproduction, and transformation of patterns of control. Gendering processes are not the analytical focus of this work; still, the relational approach can incorporate gender in two ways.

First, the relational perspective can see gender as a property of actors. That is, it may ask us to view industrial workers as gendered social subjects who use their conceptions of masculinity and femininity to guide their actions, on the one hand, and who construct their gender identities--manhood and womanhood--in the context of their work and family experiences, including work cultures and notions of respectable men or women workers, on the other hand (Westwood, 1980; Baron, 1991a; Blewett, 1991). Second, gender needs to be seen in terms of social organization--specifically, patriarchal organization. In this second sense, the concept of gender implies that, for example, the ways in which paid work and household interact constitute one dimension of men's domination over women. This means looking at the variety of ways in which class politics become closely related to household politics through forms of patriarchal social organization such as the family wage (see May, 1982).

However, if we see gender as always determining people's actions or say that gender systems operate the same way across all levels of social organization, we would make the same deterministic error as Burawoy does. To avoid this, we can understand gender as an emergent social process wherein "various economic, social, and political processes give historically specific meanings and capacities to gendered social relations" (Wharton, 1991:384; emphasis mine). This conception of gender requires a "more dynamic, historically contingent approach, instead of viewing gender as if it were a dominant principle through which social life could be understood" (Wharton, 1991: 384).

### **G. State**

Sixth, structuralists tend to view the state as an undifferentiated entity which enforces the interests of dominant class.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the relational perspective sees the state as composed of different organizations and institutions which pursue varying and often contradictory goals and whose strategies while autonomous are not unrestricted (Zeitlin, 1985). Besides being constrained by historical legacies, state agencies' activities are influenced by diverse and unequally powerful social groups, dominant ideological discourses, and economic conditions (P.K. Edwards, 1986: 90-93). Theoretical recognition of this fact takes on special significance when the lens turns to the socialist state, which is often conceptualized in terms of a unified, centralized bureaucracy (Burawoy, 1985; Burawoy and Lukacs, 1985). In fact, this unified view of centralized bureaucracy reverberates in Burawoy's analysis of the socialist

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<sup>9</sup> Among others, Skocpol, (1980), Carnoy, (1984), Zeitlin (1985) and Block (1987) discuss the neo-Marxist approach to the state.

production regimes and casts a totalitarian and inevitable light on their actual dynamics.<sup>10</sup>

While state-level political processes are not the analytical focus of this work, government policies which set the parameters within which the actors operate must be considered. Thus, for present purpose, a variety of regulatory policies and forms of state intervention in industrial relations that directly influence the relationships among contending parties, such as labor laws, wage policies, financial controls, and the establishment and dissolution of different administrative bodies are important interpretive variables.

#### **H. Summary**

In practice, then, my analytical framework focuses on the processes of emergence, reproduction, and dissolution of the historical patterns of industrial relations. I define industrial relations as encompassing practices, institutions, and organizations that directly govern work and employment relations and the long-term industrial policies. I use term industrial management to denote the decision-making processes regarding strategic policies, production process and employment relations. Moreover, the above discussion of the relational, political economic approach suggests three things. First, struggles for industrial relations control occur within existing industrial structures; hence, they shape and are shaped by pre-existing structural forms. Second, changing patterns of conflict and accommodation produce and underlie the emergence, reproduction, and dissolution of these structures and can be seen at the following levels of social organization: (1) the workplace; (2) the area/region; (3) the industry; and (4)

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<sup>10</sup> For an alternative discussion of the socialist state see Nee and Stark (1989).

the society. Third, industrial conflict and accommodation, and changes in industrial structures shape and are shaped by a concrete social context consisting of state policies, the economy, the dominant ideology, and historical legacies, including the existence of an historically concrete gender system.

## II. Research Objectives

This research is an historical-comparative case study of a "fragment" of social reality-- industrial relations in the coal-mining industries of three countries. Given that the relational framework, as I have developed it above, has not yet been used to conduct a comparative study and that our knowledge about the workings of industrial relations in socialist societies is still very cursory, the goal of this research is twofold. First, its purpose is to establish which theoretical--relational or structuralist-- approach provides a more adequate understanding of the connections between the larger political economy and labor-management relations. Second, the present research seeks to "discern important new general problems" and to "refine and elaborate the initially available theory employed by the investigator" (George, 1979: 51-52).

The objective of the present research is, then, to explore if the structuralist, as represented by Burawoy, interpretation of the changes in the patterns of industrial relations is adequate and to suggest an alternative interpretation if and when the structuralist approach does not work. In this context, I will ask if the general notion of political-economic system provides a sufficient explanation of the reproduction and transformation of industrial relations. Alternatively, my research will ask if the centralization/decentralization of industrial relations

across historical and national boundaries have been the result of structural forces or the interactions of labor activism and management actions. In addition, I will inquire about the importance of gender for understanding changes in industrial organization.

Specifically, this research will examine the adequacy of four structuralist hypothesis:

(1) the structuralist market-control hypothesis, which posits that the industry's economic situation is the most important variable determining changes in industrial relations; (2) the structuralist hegemony hypothesis, which posits convergence in arenas of struggle within capitalism and their stability across historical boundaries; (3) the labor consent hypothesis, which states that labor militancy has significantly decreased during the 1980s, and that workers in socialist countries tend to be more militant than their capitalist counterparts; and (4) the gender hypothesis, which suggests that gender is an irrelevant interpretive variable.

### **III. Chapter Summary**

In the preceding pages, I have outlined the main assumptions and critiques of two major approaches to the nature of industrial change. I maintained that, although the structuralist approach may be heuristically useful, it is too abstract and one-dimensional to provide an adequate understanding of changes in industrial relations. In contrast, the relational perspective's focus on historical struggles over control of industrial management within the broader political-economic context renders this approach can yield a more subtle understanding of the changes and reproduction of concrete modes of industrial relations which structuralist perspectives do not provide. Moreover, from this alternative stance, organizational

centralization or decentralization can be conceptualized primarily as processes occurring at different structural levels, rather than as general typologies characterizing socio-economic systems. Thus, the relational perspective as an alternative seems a more adequate model of organizational change. Yet, the relational framework as it has been used lacks a gender dimension. Building upon the growing body of feminist theory and research, I incorporated the concept of gender into the relational approach.

With regard to the structural perspective, two general weaknesses in structuralist analyses, including Burawoy's, stand out. First, from this position, political-economic structures rather than providing a broader context for actors' activities become the dominant explanatory variables. As a result, neither management nor labor activities play a significant or proactive role in shaping industrial relations. Second, while an analysis of macro-structural in socialist and capitalist political-economies can illuminate the most general characteristics of these two systems, it may also be misleading because it introduces a potential bias towards a focus on differences. That is, the structuralist claims, including Burawoy's assertion regarding the dualistic nature of socialist and capitalist industrial relations, may be informative on an abstract level, but in Burawoy's case his analysis lacks sufficient historical-comparative grounding to provide a more nuanced understanding of the character of industrial change across socio-economic systems.

In Chapter Two I first justify the use and describe the logic of the comparative-historical method. Relatedly, I discuss my rationale for selecting the particular cases for the comparative research. Second, I discuss the specific concepts that derive from the relational approach. Third, I conceptualize the main variables to be used in my research to test the



propositions coming from the competing theoretical perspectives. Finally, I discuss the data used for this study, including the data collection process.

Chapter Three provides a brief overview of the political-economic histories of the coal mining industry in the United States, Great Britain, and Poland. Chapter Four is devoted to an examination of industrial relations in all three countries prior to 1980. In Chapter Five I analyze comparative demographics of the coal mining industries in these three countries during the 1980s, including production, employment, productivity, wages, as well as coal consumption, relative fuel prices, and so forth. In Chapter Six I first turn to a discussion of comparative demographics of labor activism. The second part of this chapter is a comparative case study of three major industrial conflicts which occurred in the coal mining industries of Poland, Great Britain and the United States during the 1980s. Chapter Seven examines changes in industrial relations, including union structures and collective bargaining, during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, especially in the aftermath of these conflicts. Finally, Chapter Eight provides a discussion of this research findings followed by a short examination of the limitations of structural approach and the shortcomings of the present study. I conclude by stating directions for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter consists of seven sections. Section one explains why an historical-comparative method is an appropriate research strategy for this study. Section two discusses the analytical procedures I will use in my research. Sections three and four explain and describe cases selection, unit of analysis, and the time frame for the present research. Sections five and six describe the variables, data and data sources. In section seven, I will discuss some of the problems faced by researchers doing historical-comparative research.

#### I. Strategy

In general, industrial sociology can be characterized by reference to three theoretical concerns and their corresponding research strategies.<sup>11</sup> The first, and traditionally dominant, theoretical issue has been the creation of general theories of economic development or industrialization, including the search for the "laws of tendency" or "laws of evolution" governing the processes of historical change (e.g. Dunlop 1958; Kerr et al., 1960; Kerr, 1983). Toward this end, a positivist method which "seeks uniformities in the sea of differences" (Sztompka, 1988: 214-215) has commonly been used. However, this approach has two serious weaknesses. In addition to the fact that the positivist focus on commonalities shared by

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<sup>11</sup> This discussion is based on Abrams (1982) and Layder (1988) who argue that the connection between theoretical concerns and the research methods is more intrinsic than commonly acknowledged.

societies or industrial relations is at the expense of their variability, it also emphasizes the more orderly and repetitive aspects of people's behavior and ignores emergent and creative features.

The second interest of industrial sociologists has been in creating systematic classification of countries or industrial relations systems. To meet this goal, industrial sociologists have been attending to both the presence and absence of certain characteristics across investigated cases. For example, as my discussion in Chapter I shows, Burawoy constructs different types of political-economies and production regimes based on the presence or absence of some crucial characteristics, such as market or centralized bureaucracy. However, while such typology construction provides a useful heuristic tool for categorization of countries or industrial systems along certain theoretically important dimensions, it yields a rather static and abstract view of the components of social structure and human behavior.

The third major concern of industrial sociologists has been with understanding the mechanisms of industrial and social change, especially the emergence, dissolution, and reproduction of structural arrangements or human practices. Recently, this traditional concern has been invigorated by a growing recognition that "[i]f industrial relations is to preserve its intellectual respectability in a world whose economies are becoming increasingly integrated, it must be able to explain uniformities and differences among countries" (Strauss, 1991: 75). This third concern requires addressing a few basic questions: (1) Why did this thing happen?; (2) What is the nature of what happened?; and (3) Does it converge with or diverge from other arrangements? To explore these questions, industrial sociologists have used an historical-comparative method. The advantage of this method is that it can not only comprehend what happens by comparing the condition prior to an event with the situation after this event, but can

also explore how and why things happen, including patterns of and reasons for convergence and divergence.

In light of the above discussion congruence exists between the third concern of industrial relations scholars and the historical-comparative method they use and the purpose of the present research. Thus, I will use the historical-comparative method to address the objectives of the present research.

## **II. Analytical Procedures**

An historical-comparative method can use a variety of analytical strategies to account for the phenomena at hand (Skocpol, 1984; Oyen, 1990). To decipher whether industrial change occurs due to human actions which are conditioned, but not determined, by existing structures or is structurally determined, I will use three analytical strategies which serve to reconstruct events, interpret actions, and determine causes. Put differently, I will assess the adequacy of alternative theories by (1) focusing on events as "moments of becoming at which action and structure meet" (Abrams, 1982: 192); (2) comparing and contrasting actors' practices, intentions, and strategies across time and space; and (3) establishing controls, and comparing and contrasting structural arrangements across historical and national boundaries.

Specifically, to determine the character of social change we must be able to empirically follow the dynamics of social processes, that is, "the reciprocal flow of action and structure" (Abrams, 1982: 192). Since, as Abrams (1982: 192) says, social processes are not directly observable, we must find a way to "look at" social processes without having direct access to

them. One way of doing this is to break social processes into analytically manageable constructs.

In this context, Abrams (1982) suggests that the concept of event is best suited for this task. "[A]n event is a point of entry to the process" (Abrams, 1982: 192) in the sense that, by looking at the course of events it becomes possible to grasp the moments at which action and structure intersect in the context of preceding and surrounding elements. In addition, since this construct directs our attention to a coincidence of action and structure without presuming the theoretical primacy of either, this construct should preserve the balance between agency and structure, hence, it should indicate the relations between structure and agency on empirical grounds (see Chapter I, page 1).

Thus, the main issue becomes establishing what constitutes an event and what does it mean to explain it? Specifically, in the context of present research, the questions are: how can I establish what constitutes a change in arena, level or locus of decision-making processes? And, how should I go about explaining these changes? With regard to the former question, "On what basis can an incident or happening be designated as an event?," I will follow Abrams's (1982: 192) advice. That is, I will designate something as an event based on my judgement that a given occurrence has been theoretically important, that is, presents a "peculiarly forceful" or "peculiarly transparent" meeting of agency and structure. For the purpose at hand, a significant meeting of agency and structure must either generate a counteraction or result in a change of a theoretically relevant practice or structural arrangement.

Specifically, I will decide that a theoretically significant event or change in industrial

management occurred and go about explaining these changes in the following way. For example, before a wave of strikes occurred in Poland in 1956, industrial management of production processes had been highly centralized. Specifically, arenas of production processes such as output quantities and incentive schemes, as well as arenas of employment relations such as workforce size and wages were decided centrally, at the state level. In the aftermath of 1956 strikes when Polish workers demanded that they be given an opportunity to participate in industrial management, the decision-making processes with regard to these arenas shifted to the enterprise level allowing workers' councils to influence these aspects of industrial management. However, this situation did not last long. Since this process of decentralization of industrial management threatened the power of central bureaucracy to control processes of production and employment relations, by 1958 new, middle-level industrial structures were created and the decision-making processes reverted back to the state authorities, including Central Planning Commission and sectorial Ministries.

In this historical sequence, the 1956 strikes and the emergence of the new industrial structures in 1958 are two theoretically important events which changed both level and locus of decision-making with regard to the arena of production. Importantly, since the occurrence of events as the ones described above can only be known, and judgement about their importance can only be passed, after the event had occurred, historical research provides an invaluable approach for designating events and interpreting their importance.

In terms of the procedure of explaining an event, we can follow Weber's (1949: 169) advice to establish "the causal explanations of those elements and aspects of the events in question which are of general significance." However, in the context of the purpose of my

research, an explanation of an event would require not only the identification of the factors behind this event, but also the identification of their--structural and/or human--nature in order to weigh the adequacy of alternative theories.

Establishing the adequacy of structuralist versus relational explanations involves documenting which strategies and actions are determined by structural forces and which ones are relatively autonomous and actually foster structural changes. This requires comparing and contrasting actors' intentions and actions and rendering meaningful theoretical interpretations. A strategy within historical sociology, called "interpretative historical sociology," can help in this regard (Skocpol, 1984). As Skocpol (1984: 368-374) describes it, doing interpretive historical sociology first requires attending to recorded historical expressions of actors' viewpoints--accounts of actors' strategies and intentions--and relating these to the concrete historical setting. Second, we must assess whether the intentions and strategies are to be expected given our knowledge of relevant structural elements, including (1) the dispositions of actors or, to put it differently, the historical patterns of actions undertaken by a given category of participants; (2) the relations among participants at the concrete point in time; and (3) the broad political-economic context in which agents found themselves. If the intentions or actions do not follow structurally- driven expectations, we can conclude that they were not structure-determined.

Finally, Wardell (undated) suggests that "Comparative analysis yields an understanding of those [industrial] relations based on the presence and absence of certain factors in the different contexts." More specifically, to assess the validity or adequacy of alternative interpretations we must control some variations and allow other factors to vary. Along these

lines, we can use two analytical procedures: (1) "method of agreement" or (2) "method of difference" (Skocpol, 1984: 378-379). The first method focuses on otherwise different cases to establish patterns of presence of both the phenomena to be explained and the hypothetical causal factors across the cases. The second method, uses otherwise similar cases to establish patterns of presence of the causal configurations and their effect and patterns of the absence of both the cause and the effect. By using one of these methods or, better still, both, we can identify whether the presence/absence of given structural factors determines the presence/absence of certain activities or if these activities are patterned in an independent manner.

In addition to establishing the presence or absence of certain structural elements or practices, the present research requires that I account for the emergence, reproduction, and dissolution of structural arrangements and human practices. Towards this end, I will use both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data are useful for analyzing how and why the emergence or dissolution occurred, and the quantitative data is useful for summarizing recurrent and changing structural patterns.

In sum, the objectives of my research--to see if similar processes of centralization/decentralization of industrial relations across historical and national boundaries and, if this is the case, to decide if they are due to actors' strategies occurring within the context of concrete structural conditions--will be assessed by examining human practices and the processes of centralization/decentralization of industrial relations in a given political-economic context. Next, cross-national comparisons of these processes will be undertaken. While the historical study will illuminate the sequences of events leading to conflict/accommodation and



centralization/ decentralization of industrial management at the industry level in a given country, the cross-national comparisons will help identify the presence or absence of relevant structural factors. In turn, this will allow me to determine whether these processes are reflections of the structural logic at the societal level, or if they are the manifestations of varying actors' strategies which are conditioned, but not determined, by social context.

### III. Cases

To address my research questions, I selected the United States, Great Britain and Poland as three countries to provide the political-economic contexts for the unit of analysis; underground coal mining industry which as the unit of analysis; and the years from 1980 to 1990 as the main time period.

I selected these countries based on some theoretical and methodological concerns related to Burawoy's analyses. Although Burawoy did not conduct research in Poland, according to his logic, Poland represents an example of a bureaucratic despotism which Burawoy developed based on his Hungarian experience. Further, Burawoy (1985: 199) asserts that, among socialist countries, Poland provides the strongest example of the structural determination of working-class radicalism and consciousness. According to Burawoy, the reason for it lies in the fact that Polish economy has been highly centralized and has had a very militant labor movement which culminated in the country-wide formation of Solidarity in 1980.

Since, according to Burawoy's logic, Poland and the United States represent different political-economies--market vs. command economy and fusion vs. separation of state and

factory apparatuses--it appears that Poland and the United States provide evidence supportive of Burawoy's thesis regarding the structural determination of the patterns of working class struggles: labor radicalism in Poland and labor acquiescence the United States. Also, methodologically, contrasting and comparing actors' practices across such divergent social contexts, increases the visibility of the differences in the relations between structural variables and actors' actions. In turn, this facilitates the assessment of labor and management strategies in relation to the presence of definite structural conditions.

At the same time, however, a large degree of initial variation may induce methodological bias towards differences, a bias which may hinder, rather than enhance, the comparison of context-specific social relations. For this reason, it is both methodologically and theoretically desirable to locate the political-economic contexts in which the investigation takes place on a continuum. Specifically, a third country should represent a case of a mixed political economy in which both private and government-owned enterprises are present, but market principles, as opposed to central planning, dominate the economy. Thus, if Burawoy's argument about the convergence within the system is valid, we should observe only two general types of production regimes and two general patterns of labor activism across the cases. With this goal in mind, I selected Great Britain, which is also a focus of Burawoy's analyses, as another capitalist country.

In my research design, Great Britain serves two goals. First, in the context of the two other countries, Great Britain's mixed political-economy provides me with a comparative reference point for understanding the similarities and differences of the United States and Polish economies. Second, Great Britain presents a "historically mixed" case in the sense that until

the end of the 1980s the state owned some crucial industries and sheltered them from the market forces. With the ascendance of the Thatcher Government whose major goal was to commercialize and privatize state-owned industries, the situation radically changed. In this regard, then, while differences of degree exist, the situation of British state-owned enterprises was similar to Poland until the end of the 1970s and then started converging towards the United States during the 1980s. If Burawoy's reasoning is adequate I should find increasing similarities between industrial activities in Great Britain and the United States than between either of them and Poland during the 1980s.

In this context, however, one development during the 1980s becomes very perplexing. At the societal level, Great Britain and the United States experienced similar economic pressures throughout the 1980s and had similar overall socio-political climates, especially in terms of state politics in relation to labor. Nonetheless the two countries differed significantly in terms of the labor activism during that decade. For example, similar to Poland during the 1980s, Great Britain experienced a miners' strike which reverberated throughout the whole economy and industrial relations. Thus, the developments in Great Britain pose a very interesting research problem as they seem to simultaneously confirm and challenge Burawoy's logic, asserting that industrial behavior reflects the structural organization at the societal level. All in all, a more detailed study of British case will help to illuminate the contending theories.

The choice of the bituminous underground coal mining industry as the unit of analysis is motivated by two general concerns. First, by controlling for the labor process across all three cases and for the market environment in Great Britain and the United States, and by allowing for variation in political-economic systems, I can examine Burawoy's assertion that

working-class mobilization is determined by the modes of regulation at the societal level. Furthermore, the coal miners live in relatively isolated communities which are largely organized around coal. Thus, the choice of this industry controls for the labor markets and other influences associated with industries found in larger mixed communities.

Second, the coal mining industry not only also presents a desirable combination of similarities but differences as well. While in the United States and Great Britain this industry is situated in a context of similar energy markets, including the experience of two oil crises in the 1970s, Polish coal mining has been situated in a very different energy market, one characterized by sheltered trade relations among the countries belonging to the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) and a relative price stability within the context of five-year international exchange agreements.

The main time frame of the present investigation is the decade of the 1980s. The choice of this time period is dictated by two factors. First, Burawoy's generalizations, with regard to the character of production regimes in socialistic and capitalistic countries, are informed by his case studies conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, by selecting the same time frame I will be able to control for historical changes in political-economies of selected countries. Second, during the decade of the 1980s, the United States and Great Britain were governed by conservative parties which represented similar anti-labor politics. In this instance, the choice of the 1980s reduces variation in the state politics across the two countries. Consequently, if Burawoy's reasoning is right, we should observe more similarities in patterns of labor activism and production regimes in the United States and Great Britain than in either of these countries and Poland.

However, while the main focus of the present research is the decade of the 1980s, I will also provide an overview of the key historical events and trends in the coal mining industry in the years prior to 1980. The reasons for this extension of the time frame are theoretical and practical. Namely, consideration of labor activism, employers' strategies, and of the character of industrial relations as well as socio-economic arrangements prior to 1980 enhance understanding of the emergence of new arrangements during the decade of the 1980s. In practical terms, the patterns of mining industry histories prior to the 1980s provide a comparative reference point for discerning the changes in the most conflictual issues in the industry.

In all, by controlling for variation in the labor process, labor markets, and product, and examining the similarities and differences in competitive pressures in Poland, Great Britain and the United States, I will be able to determine whether the forms of labor activism and organizational change reflect structural arrangements at the societal level. Specifically, if Great Britain and the United States become more similar at the structural level and with regard to labor activism and arenas of struggle then Burawoy's thesis will be supported. Alternatively, if the propositions derived from the relational perspective are adequate, given the same situation at the structural level, I should find more similarities in patterns of labor activism and the processes of centralization and decentralization between Poland and the United States than between either of these countries and Great Britain. Of course, in this context, determining the market situation of British coal-mining industry prior to and during the 1980s becomes one of the most important empirical questions to be explored by this study.

#### IV. Description of Cases

The United States has the richest reserves of coal in the world, totaling around 4 trillion tons or 31 percent of the total world deposits. While the country's coalfields are mainly located in three--western, interior and eastern or Appalachian--regions, the principal underground deposits of bituminous coal are located in the Eastern states, with Kentucky, West Virginia and Pennsylvania being the leading coal-producing states in the East (Coal Data, 1985). Besides being the nation's principal source of coal, in 1987 Appalachian coalfields accounted for almost half of the total output, most of the mines and miners, and half of the total value of the coal produced (Coal Data, 1988).

In 1980 Great Britain was the fifth largest coal producer in the world, following China, the United States, former Soviet Union and Poland. Coal deposits are mainly located in the northern, central and southern regions of the country. In 1982 British underground coalfields operated by the National Coal Board were divided into as many as twelve mining areas. In terms of the contribution of specific areas to the total output, three areas--the North East, North Nottinghamshire, and Western--provided about 30 percent of saleable output in 1981 (Report and Accounts, 1981/1982).

With its total output of 193 million tons, Poland was the fourth largest producer of coal in 1980. Main deposits of underground mined coal are located in three--Lower Silesia, Upper Silesia and eastern--geographic regions, with Upper Silesia contributing the largest share to the total production in the country. Besides being the most important producer of coal, in 1980 Silesia accounted for 64 out of 68 Polish coal mines and employed more than three fourths of all

Polish miners.

With regard to industrial structures across all three countries, it is important to distinguish between different structural levels of industrial relations wherein struggles over control of industrial management can occur. In this sense, in all three countries, the workplace--the pit or the mine--constitutes the point of production in the coal-mining industrial relations and the state represents the socially most distant set of actors from the point of production. Importantly, all three cases will be both similar and different in terms of the institutional organization of the workplace. For example, in all three cases there will an enterprise director or chief manager and managers of the production sections, forepersons, and so on. However, while in all three countries unions are present at the point of production through safety committees, the ways in which workers are represented in the workplace differs. In the United States workers are not represented by the trade unions at the point of production; in Great Britain workers are represented by shop stewards; and in Poland, not only trade unions, but also other organizations such as the primary Party organizations, workers' councils, conferences of worker self-management, and many others, have been functioning in each workplace or enterprise.

In all three cases, state, industry, company, region, and mine levels of industrial relations will be very important locations of struggles over control, although in different ways. In the United States, certain aspects of industrial relations namely job control issues, have been primarily determined at the level of industry-wide, multi-employer collective bargaining and have involved the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and the representatives of the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA). Matters related to long-term policies, such as

the opening and closing of units, mergers, investments and managerial systems have been decided at the company level. Issues related to production processes, including output, utilization of machinery and the like have been decided at the mine level.

In Great Britain, prior to 1980, some aspects of industrial management, especially matters related to employment relations, had been decided at level of industry-wide, single-employer collective bargaining taking place between the National Union of Miners (NUM) and the National Coal Board (NCB). In addition, similar to Poland, the industrial structure of coal mining in Great Britain has been characterized by the existence of different intermediary institutions between the NCB and the workplaces, such as Areas or Divisions. The role of these intermediate organizational forms has been to oversee different arenas of production processes. Still, in the British context, the local level has always retained a good deal of autonomy.

Finally, in Polish coal mining, some industrial relations-related matters have been decided at the industry level wherein the collective wage agreements between the Trade Union of Miners and the single employer, typically a relevant ministry, were signed.<sup>12</sup> Also, a variety of intermediary institutions separating the ministry from the workplace, such as associations, have existed in Poland. As with Great Britain, I will consider these intermediary structures as constituting the middle-level of industrial relations.

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<sup>12</sup> In Poland there were no collective bargaining relations comparable to the United States and Great Britain wherein the unions would independently bargain with the representatives of the employers. Therefore, I will not use the term collective bargaining in relation to the Polish case. Instead, I will refer to "collective wage agreements."



## V. Variables

To assess structuralist claims that market factors determine changes in the modes of industrial management, I will consider variations in the market situation of coal by tracing changes in the volume of home-produced coal sold, cost of home-produced coal per ton and its price per ton and compare those with the utilization, costs and prices of other, alternative, fossil-fuels, such as imported coal, gas and oil (see Table 2.1).<sup>13</sup> Importantly, cross-fuel comparisons cannot be made without establishing comparable measures. Thus, I will use comparable measures, such as energy cost per British Thermal Unit, or I will convert the energetic values of different fuels into one basic measure.

By relating the observed changes in market situation of coal to the changes in industrial management, I will be able to decide whether the association between the changes in product market and changes in industrial behavior or control strategies proposed by structuralists holds. For example, if a change in the coal market situation is followed by a change in industrial management within a reasonable time period, this would bolster the structuralist proposition. Yet, if, for example, the decrease in the volume of coal sold follows productivity decrease or strikes, and changes in control strategies follow within a reasonable time period, a plausible interpretation is that the latter changes were induced by the power struggles over control of some aspects of industrial management. Also, if industrial relations undergo radical changes

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<sup>13</sup> The main elements determining demand for coal have been: 1) its cost vis-a-vis other fuels in the energy markets; 2) perception regarding supply security. In terms of cost structure, coal has substantive production and transport costs relative to oil and gas, while having very small costs of so-called "economic rent," defined as the difference the total cost and price.

Table 2.1: Variables and Indicators

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 Variable 1: Product-Market Competition

## Indicators:

Utilization of home-produced coal  
 Cost of production per ton of coal  
 Market price per ton of coal  
 Utilization and market price of imported coal  
 Utilization and market price of oil  
 Utilization and market price of gas

## Variable 2: Labor Activism

## Dimensions

## (A) Collective Activism

## Indicators:

Number of strikes  
 Number of workers involved  
 Number of working days lost

## (B) Individual Activism

## Indicators:

Volume of grievance activity  
 Labor turnover  
 Absenteeism  
 Ratio of industrial output/worker

## Variable 3: Centralization of Industrial Management

## Dimensions

## (A) Level of Decision Making

## Indicators:

Number of organizational levels  
 The organizational level where decisions are made  
 Worker participatory schemes

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in the context of stable markets, this suggests that changes were not related to market pressures. However, if two countries, such as Great Britain and the United States, become more similar with regard to energy markets and the patterns of labor activism and managerial strategies converge as well, this would support the structuralist thesis. Of course, in both cases the validity of a given explanation is enhanced if the alternative explanations are ruled out.

The theoretical arguments provided by the relational framework also require tracing the sequences of events, particularly the interactions and dynamics of: (1) patterns of labor activism undertaken by workers and their organizations; and (2) the centralization of industrial relations.

The arguments outlined in my literature review suggest that labor activism includes multi-faceted social struggles involving workers and their organizations. Among the most important and measurable workers' and unions' strategies are collective actions. These will, then, constitute one measure of labor activism. The most commonly used quantitative indicators of collective workers' behavior are the number of strikes, their duration, and number of workers involved. These indicators can be interpreted as reflecting worker militancy and shop-floor conflict, or in other words, workers' refusal to cooperate (Bean, 1985; Flaherty, 1987).

However, the available data on strikes, especially in Poland and the United States, are beset with problems. In Poland strikes were prohibited; when they occurred, they were not included in official statistics. It was not until 1990, that the first official strike statistics were published by the Polish Statistical Office. Turning to the strike data for the United States, in 1982 the criteria for the inclusion of stoppages in strikes statistics changed. Prior to the change, strike statistics included all strikes which lasted at least one day and which involved at

least six workers. After the 1982 change only stoppages which lasted one day and involved 1,000 workers were qualified for inclusion. While this change has not had a very significant impact on the number of days lost or the number of workers involved, it had a great impact on the number of strikes. For example, Edwards (1983) suggests that it caused the disappearance of 94 percent of stoppages. In this context, in terms of historical or cross-national comparisons, the number of workers involved and the number of days lost became more useful indicators of strike activity. In this case, on average 66.6 percent of the old number is recorded under new definition. All these limitations of strike statistics will bear upon my discussion of collective labor activism in Chapter Six.

Several scholars suggest the importance of another dimension of labor activism, namely, the individual activism which can be measured using indicators such as the volume of grievances, labor turnover, absenteeism, and the ratio of industrial output per worker (Weisskopf et al. 1983; Flaherty, 1987). Measures of the volume of grievances, intensity of labor turnover, absenteeism, and the ratio of industrial output to labor input also constitute decision-making arenas (see Table 1.1) and may help to account for changes in the relative importance of these arenas in the conflicts over industrial management. Thus, by looking at these indicators of both collective and individual labor activism I can begin to assess the validity of alternative to the structuralist interpretation for changes in industrial relations, namely struggles over the processes of control. Also, these indicators will allow me to compare and contrast patterns in labor activism across historical and national boundaries.

There are different ways of interpreting labor turnover. In certain circumstances, high labor turnover maybe desirable from the management point of view. For example, Standing

(1989: 1079) points out that "for many monotonous jobs high turnover may have a positive benefit for employers, since maximum efficiency may be reached after only few months, thereafter plateauing or declining." Yet, as Pfeffer and Baron (1988: 261) contend, "for much of this century, turnover has been described as a problem." Therefore, this measurement can be used with some degree of confidence as reflecting workers' discontent with shop-floor control, and contributing to changes in control strategies. I should note that the above measurements do not necessarily indicate the existence of a collective expression of industrial conflict if we define collective behavior as a concerted and agreed upon activity. Yet, patterns of individual actions may constitute one expression of conflict, especially when, as it had been the case in socialist countries, including Poland, strike actions cannot be pursued.

Turning to Burawoy's arguments concerning consent, which are based on his participant observation of shop-floor behavior where he could observe how workers had willingly participated in their own exploitation while engaging in day-to-day paid work-related activities, the relevance of the above indicators can be questioned. That is, it can be argued that not only do the levels of our analyses differ--workplace versus industry--but we are not measuring the same phenomena--everyday shop-floor behavior versus worker mobilization which occurs only in some extreme circumstances. However, indicators of collective and individual activism can be seen as a proxy for phenomena observed by Burawoy on the shop-floor. For example, Flaherty (1987: 588-589) argues that strike frequency can be used as a proxy for shop-floor behavior, such as sabotage, slowdowns and general withdrawals of efficiency, which are beyond the grasp of a chosen research method. Second, contrary to Burawoy who generalizes his observations based on a case study to the whole capitalist system,

I make no claims that my findings, whether similar or different from Burawoy's, apply to all industries or workplaces or directly address his context-specific analyses. Rather, my goal is to examine if his thesis regarding capitalist hegemony and socialist bureaucratic despotism and his assertion of across-systems differences hold if we look at the underground coal mining industry.

If necessary, to better assess whether the level of industrial conflicts can be related to the notion of consent, other conditions, such as restrictive labor legislation, unemployment, or decline in union membership, must be considered. With respect to the level of unemployment, it has been suggested that a high level of unemployment is associated with decline in strike frequency, since it exacerbates the threat of job loss (Hyman, 1989). Union membership decline has a similar effect since it impedes the ability of workers to collectively confront the employers.

With respect to state policies, if necessary, I will analyze and interpret those policies which set the parameters of labor activism. For example, originally strikes were prohibited under Polish labor legislation; when they occurred, they were not included in official statistics. For Poland, then, I can only use a limited set of data which pertain to those industrial conflicts that reverberated throughout the entire Polish society. As a result, the case study of labor activism in Poland during the 1980/81 strikes will become the most important source of data for Polish miners' activism during the 1980s. To reveal the effects of labor laws and policies on structuring work relations I must examine views of the different actors involved and explore their own assessment of how labor laws and policies bear upon their activities, and specifically on their relative power in shaping the modes of industrial relations. These viewpoints will be

expressed in written statements and historical records.

To explore the relations between gender, industrial relations, and labor activism, I will use historical records and existing research to determine if either of the two dimensions of gender--the notions of masculinity and the intersections of private and public--were important in making decisions about the changes in industrial relations or could account for labor activism or accommodation. Similar to the analysis of state policies, my consideration of gender is interpretive in character.

The third variable, the centralization of industrial relations, has three dimensions: (1) the level decision-making; (2) the decision-making dimension/arena; and (3) the locus of decision-making. Further, centralization must be examined in relation to union structure.

Indicators of the first dimension of centralization of industrial relations include the number of organizational levels where different issues are decided and at what organizational level most decisions pertaining to the processes of production, work, and employment relations and general industrial policies are made. Also, centralization can be assessed by looking at the level of collective bargaining--industry, enterprise, or workplace--and the operation of other institutions serving to bring together unions and management, such as joint consultation. In terms of the unions, indicators of the first dimension of centralization will also include the number of organizational levels and at what level--national, regional or local--different decisions are made. However, an adequate interpretation of centralization of industrial relations can be provided only in relation to the second and third dimensions of centralization, what decisions are made and by whom.

The second dimension of centralization, the decisions actually made, includes two

aspects. The first is the content of decisions; the second is the importance of that content for rank-and-file workers. In this respect, to reveal the importance of a given industrial relation issue for structuring the production process, employment relations, industrial policy or workers' behavior, I will assess the assumptions and meanings behind different administrative pronouncements and collective bargaining settlements, as well as their implications, from the point of view of workers and other actors involved. Specifically, to infer the importance of a given issue for the workforce, I will conduct an historical-documentary analysis of issues included in workers' grievances and strike demands.

The third indicator of centralization is especially relevant to the assessment of worker participatory schemes, another often-used indicator of the centralization of industrial relations. Often what is called a worker participatory scheme, such as briefing groups, quality circles, and workers' councils, is a method of worker control. For example, a workers' council or employees' self-management may be created by management to create an impression of workers' involvement in decision-making processes and an appearance of mutual trust. Also, a workers' participatory institution may not exclusively consist of rank-and-file members but may also include supervisory and other administrative personnel, such as representatives of political organizations in Poland. Moreover, in reality, the supervisory personnel may often dominate workers' representative bodies.

Specifically, indicators of the third dimension of industrial relations include (1) who makes the decisions with regard to the three dimensions of industry management discussed earlier: planning agencies, management, union leaders, political parties and rank-and-file; and (2) who participates in collective bargaining and other union-management institutions.



The fourth indicator of centralization refers to union structures and includes who participates in decision-making processes regarding union internal affairs. The more decentralized the industrial relations, including union structure, the more labor and its representatives--or rank-and-file workers when unions are concerned--are involved in decision-making processes over substantive issues.

At this juncture, an important caveat, must be made. When investigating two different socio-economic systems, such as capitalism and socialism, the data cannot be compared without some interpretations and adjustments necessitated by their contextually-specific meaning. Thus, I will first interpret the data by using a within-society comparison. In this comparison, empirical materials acquire meaning in relation to their specific institutional context rendered by a given country's social organization. The cross-society comparison will therefore follow the within-society interpretations of the relevant data. Practically, this means that, for instance, the average wages of production workers in mining industry must first be compared with the average wages in other industries. Then the relative wage standing in each country can be compared across countries.

## **VI. Data and Sources**

The data for this research come from diverse archival and other historical sources. This data come from both primary sources, that is, original documents, and secondary sources, such as newspapers, or published books and articles by historians, sociologists, or other scholars studying the coal mining industry. However, many scholars challenge the reliability

of secondary sources as the source of evidence. In this context, it is worth quoting Skocpol's (1984: 382) comment on this subject matter at length:

From the point of view of historical sociology, however, a dogmatic insistence on redoing primary research for every investigation would be disastrous; it would rule out most comparative-historical research. If a topic is too big for purely primary research--and if excellent studies by specialists are already available in some profusion--secondary sources are appropriate as the basic source of evidence for a given study. Using them is not different from survey analysis reworking the results of previous surveys rather than asking all questions anew, or students or comparative ethnography synthesizing results from many different published filed studies.

Of course, this does not mean that historical-comparative research can be pursued without following certain rules and principles. Skocpol (1984: 382) suggests three rules. First, attention must be paid to historical variations in interpretations. Second, the secondary sources must be systematically selected to assess the stated propositions. The third principle is that of "strategic supplementation." That is, whenever possible and desirable, the secondary data must be supplemented by the primary investigations of the evidence.

With these guidelines in mind, my research uses the following primary and secondary sources of data. For the United States, I use the published versions of different bargaining statements and collective agreements between the BCOA and UMWA; publications by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the National Coal Association, such as the Coal Data Book, 1980 Keystone Coal Industry Manual, U.S. Industrial Outlook, Industry Wage Survey; and published articles on economic conditions of the industry, for quantitative data for market competition and for measuring labor activism. The Daily Labor Report, Monthly Labor Review, Coal Week, and United Mine

Worker Journal are sources for both quantitative and qualitative data, and will especially serve as sources for obtaining the bargaining settlements and statements of the leaders of bargaining parties. Thus, these sources are mainly used to obtain data for measuring labor activism and centralization of industrial relations.

In the case of Great Britain, some desired sources can be difficult to obtain. Still, quantitative data for Great Britain related to market competition and labor activism variables are published in the Employment Gazette, Colliery Guardian, and Report and Accounts, the two latter being the publications of the National Coal Board. When a problem with the data for Great Britain arose, I used existing sociological and historical research, and publications in British and U.S. journals such as British Journal of Industrial Relations, Cambridge Journal of Economics, Industrial Relations Journal, Industrial and Labor Relations Review, Industrial Relations Review and Report, Labor Law Journal and in Mining Engineer. These sources are also used to obtain the data for labor activism and centralization of job control variables. Also, most of these sources provide data for these variables for the United States.

For Poland, I use publications by the Ministry of Labor and Wages, the Ministry of the Coal Mining Industry, the International Labor Office, the Central Bureau of Statistics for data for market competition and labor activism variables. The data for the labor activism and centralization of job control are mainly provided by the Mining Review, the Mining Trade Union Journal and numerous studies of the coal mining industry conducted in the Department of Sociology at the Silesia University and in the Center of History of the Silesia Region.

Other sources of information for all three cases, especially the information concerning labor activism and centralization variables, include different union publications and media

accounts, such as publications in Time, Business Week, Wall Street Journal, Economist, Radio Free Europe Reports, Robotnik, and Przegląd Robotniczy. Also a variety of primary documents such as bargaining statements, collective agreements, industrial acts, labor laws provide the evidence for the present study.

Most of the data sources presented above also provide written statements concerning actor's strategies and actions as well as actors' own assessments of the effects of historical events on their situation. In this regard, the publications by unions and employers, already published histories of coal mining industry as well as socio-political and economic histories of investigated countries will help to interpret both quantitative and qualitative variables.

While I was able to locate most of the sources for this research in different places in the United States, also I had to request some of the data from different institutions in Great Britain and travel to Poland to obtain data on Polish coal-mining industry.

## **VII. "Limited Vision": Problems Faced by a Historical-comparative Researcher**

In the course of the present research, I encountered many problems and faced factors that posed serious limitations on the expected format of this research project. In general, these issues boil down to the limitations related to the institutional context of the scientific work and limitations coming from the researcher's experiences. I will postpone the discussion of the institutional factors to the concluding chapter, but here I would like to present the researcher-related issues I had to deal with in conducting this study.

Reinharz (1992: 116-123) states that American feminist scholars doing comparative research face two types of problems: (1) ethnocentrism which results from the exclusion of the

experiences different from one's own from the scope of studies; and (2) the projection of the researcher's own experiences on other societies. While Reinhartz's discussion is specifically oriented towards American feminists, this does not mean that the problems she indicates pertain only to a certain group of scholars. Quite the contrary.

In the context of the present research, the possibility of me excluding certain issues or concerns, or projecting my own experiences on miners is not only related to my outsider status with regard to both the United States and Great Britain but also from my socio-cultural roots in Polish intelligentsia combined with a lack of extensive experiences with the functioning of the coal industry and with the concerns of miners and their supervisors.<sup>14</sup> As a result, and despite the fact that I was conscious of this possibility and careful, I might have filtered certain issues or events through the lenses of my own experiences, thus, ignoring, diminishing, or augmenting their significance.

On the other side, however, my status of an outsider could actually deepen and promote understanding of the subject matter. As George Simmel (1921) emphasized, some of the benefits of the "stranger" status involve (1) the promise of objectivity coming from a combination of nearness and remoteness, concern and indifference; and (2) the ability of the "stranger" to see the patterns, configurations and meanings that may be more difficult to discern for those who have been used to the situation, way of life or practices. In sum, then, my background, biography and experiences could simultaneously pose some limitations on this

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<sup>14</sup> My direct experiences with miners and coal mining industry are of threefold nature. First, between 1980-1985 I was living in a mining community in Sosnowiec, one of the big mining centers in the Upper-Silesia region. Second, during my stay in Blacksburg, Virginia, between 1988-1994, I visited mining communities in Appalachia and an anthracite coal mine in Ashland, Pennsylvania.

study and stimulate objectivity or critical assessment of the studied issues and people.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### AMERICAN, BRITISH AND POLISH COAL MINING INDUSTRIES PRIOR TO 1980: AN OVERVIEW

The goal of this chapter's analyses is twofold. First, it will provide the historical contexts of the coal-mining industry prior to the 1980s. Second, it will allow me to establish similarities and differences in structural, market-related pressures for change of industrial relations across the three countries, on the one hand, and in labor activism-related pressures, on the other hand. While the goal of this chapter is not exactly to examine the adequacy of either theoretical perspective, it nonetheless lays the groundwork for a more detailed exploration of the following propositions: if the structuralist assumption about the determination of industrial behavior by structural forces is correct, labor activism and arenas of struggle in the coal-mining industries in all three countries will reflect the general structural patterns of industry's functioning. For instance, if Poland and Great Britain are more alike at the structural level, labor activism and arenas of struggle in these two countries will be more similar than in either of them and the United States. In contrast, if the thesis put forward by the relational perspective is correct, structural variables will not suffice to understand labor activism and variations in arenas of struggle.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of economic histories and labor activism in the coal mining industries in the United States, Great Britain and Poland. In examining the former, I first discuss such basic indicators of industry's performance as production, employment, and number of mines. In addition, I outline the main aspects of technological change and compare labor productivity and miners' earnings in all three countries. In the

second section of this chapter I briefly analyze the market situation of coal mining prior to 1980. I look at changes of coal prices and prices of other fossil fuels, coal's share of domestic energy markets, and coal supply and demand patterns. Finally, in the third section I examine the general patterns of miners' activism in all three countries.

## **I. Brief Economic Histories**

According to the relational perspective, output, employment volume, pit closures and establishment of new units, technological change, productivity and wages are potential arenas of struggles. In this section I will briefly discuss the developments in these arenas of industrial management in all three countries prior to 1980 and indicate whether they were at the center of industrial conflicts in the coal-mining industry. This analysis will provide the basis for a more detailed assessment of Burawoy's hegemony thesis in later chapters.

### **1. Production and Employment**

In the first section, I will look at historical changes and cross-national similarities and differences in production and employment patterns as well as industrial behavior in relation to these arenas.

#### **A. The United States Prior to 1950**

In the United States coal has been extracted commercially for over 200 hundred years,



beginning near Richmond, Virginia, in 1748. With the growth of the railroad industry and overall industrialization during the late 1800s and early 1900s, coal mining soared. The production of bituminous coal grew from 108,000 tons in 1800 to almost 200 million tons in 1900 and over 500 million tons in 1920. In 1870 the industry employed 186,000 workers; by 1900, its labor force increased to 677,000 (Marks, 1989: 158). The long period of growth tapered off, and between 1929 and 1938 coal production declined from 534,989 to 348,545 million tons, and employment decreased from 459,000 to 406,000 workers. However, despite this decline in production, after the First World War, the industry started experiencing the problem of overcapacity. Yet, the demand for coal grew dramatically during World War II to reach its zenith in 1947 when 407,700 miners produced more than 630 million tons (1950 Bituminous Coal Annual: 12-13).

## **B. Great Britain Prior to 1950**

Coal extraction in Great Britain dates back to the fifteenth century. The industrial boom of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries set the stage for the steady development of the coal industry. Similar to the United States, the turn of the eighteenth century marked the beginning of a very dynamic expansion of British coal mining. The growth lasted until 1913 when the industry employed more than a million workers--10 percent of the male labor force--to produce 287 million tonnes of coal, the highest volume of output ever produced in Great Britain (Church, 1990: 12; Supple, 1987: 5).<sup>15</sup> Similar to its U.S. counterpart, since the end of

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<sup>15</sup> All British figures of weight are reported in tonnes. One ton equals 1.016 tonnes.

the First World War, British coal mining has been confronted with the continued, albeit fluctuating, problem of overcapacity. However, it was not until 1950 that an almost linear pattern of the industry's decline emerged.

### **C. Poland Prior to 1950**

Within the current Polish borders, coal has been mined for over 400 hundred years. The first period of industry expansion dates back to the late 1800s and early 1900s when, similar to the United States and Great Britain, the energy needs of the expanding railroad and steel industries fostered coal mining's rapid growth. In 1850, coal production was around 1.5 million tons (Jaros, 1973: 17), but by 1913 it reached almost 58 million tons. Subsequently, after several years of stagnation, coal output reached its pre-war peak of 74.3 million tons in 1929, 62.2 percent of which was mined within the boundaries of the Polish Republic. In the 1930s, coal production fell to the lowest level of 47 million tons in 1933, and then stagnated around 50-60 million tons until the beginning of World War II when the German war economy needs stimulated coal production in the occupied territories (Statystyka Przemysłu Węglowego, 1962: 38).

### **D. The United States Between 1950-1980**

Between 1950 and 1970 production of bituminous coal in the United States showed a fluctuating pattern, vacillating between 550 and 400 million tons (see Table 3.1.). At the same

Table 3.1: Bituminous Coal Mining, United States,  
1950-1979

Year	Production (thousands tons)	Employment	Number of mines
1950	516,311	415,582	9,429
1955	464,633	225,093	7,856
1960	415,512	169,400	7,865
1965	512,008	133,732	7,228
1970	602,932	140,140	5,601
1971	552,192	145,664	5,149
1972	595,386	149,265	4,879
1973	591,000	157,800	4,650
1974	603,406	166,701	5,247
1975	648,438	189,880	6,168
1976	678,695	202,280	6,161
1977	691,344	221,428	6,077
1978	665,127	242,295	6,075
1979	776,299	224,203	6,000

Sources:

Coal Data: A Reference, 1980: 29-30.

Coal Data: A Reference, 1988: 26.

time, decline in employment and the number of active mines signalled the industry's gradual contraction. The number of workers dropped markedly from 440,000 in 1948 to its lowest level of 124,532 miners employed in 5118 active mines in 1969 (Keystone Coal Industry Manual, 1977: 550). It was not until 1975 when total output for the first time exceeded its 1947 level of 648 million tons, and by 1979 reached 776 million tons. Also, as Table 3.1 shows, during the 1970s, and especially in the aftermath of the 1973-74 oil embargo, employment and the number of active bituminous coal industry to a 1978 level of 242,295 workers and almost 900 active mines. Thus, in terms of coal production, employment, and active mines, the industry entered the 1980s with some hopes for growth.

At this juncture, it is important to distinguish between underground and surface mining. Between 1940 and 1975 output from the underground mines declined from 417.6 million tons per year to 292.8 million tons, a dramatic fall from 90.6 percent of total coal production to 45.2 percent (Table 3.2). From 1950 to 1975, employment and number of mines decreased from 311,669 to 134,710 miners, and from 7,559 to 2,292 mines (1953 Bituminous Coal Annual: 120; Coal Data: A Reference, 1980: 23; Bituminous Coal Trends 1956: 79; Coal Data, 1976: II-16). While, as Table 3.2 indicates, in 1979 underground coal output increased to 320.3 million tons, from 242.1 in 1978 and its production share grew from 36.4 to 41.3 percent, these figures are lower compared to the beginning of the 1970s. Only employment was higher than at the beginning of the decade, from 107,880 miners in 1970 to 151,364 miners in 1979 (1975 Keystone Coal Manual: 497; Coal Data: A Reference, 1985: 26). In contrast, surface mining output, total production share, employment, and number of mines had been steadily increasing until 1979.

Table 3.2: Bituminous Coal Mining by Method of Mining, United States, 1940-1979

Year	Production (million tons)		Percentage of total	
	Underground	Surface	Underground	Surface
1940	417.6	43.2	90.6	9.4
1950	392.8	123.5	76.1	23.9
1960	284.9	130.6	68.6	31.4
1970	338.8	264.1	56.2	43.8
1975	292.8	355.6	45.2	54.8
1976	294.9	383.8	43.4	56.6
1977	266.0	425.4	38.5	61.5
1978	242.1	423.0	36.4	63.6
1979	320.3	456.0	41.3	58.7

Sources:

1975 Keystone Industry Manual: 497.

1977 Keystone Industry Manual: 545.

Coal Data: A Reference, 1980: 23.

Coal Data: A Reference, 1985: 26.

Furthermore, output from mines organized by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) steadily declined from 78.5 percent of total production in 1950 to 52.1 percent in 1977 (President's Commission on Coal, 1980: 52). Likewise, the Bituminous Coal Operators Association's position in the industry has changed significantly. The BCOA share of coal production fell from 1950 to 1983 from 70-80 percent of all coal to 40 percent (Seltzer, 1985: 127). The decreases in both the UMWA and BCOA share of production mark the industry's shift to surface mining and to non-UMWA mines (Table 3.2; Miernyk, 1980: 2; Perry, 1984: 19-20; Hannah and Mangum, 1985: 36-49). Importantly, the industry's contraction, especially the reduction of the labor force, was not in any major way resisted by the UMWA nor became an important arena of labor-management conflicts.

#### **E. Great Britain Between 1950-1980**

Similar to underground coal mining in United States, the British underground coal industry's workforce experienced a significant reduction in the 1950s and 1960s as more than 400,000 miners lost their jobs.<sup>16</sup> By the beginning of the 1970s, employment was down to 287,200 workers from 703,900 in 1947; coal output fell from 187.5 million tonnes in 1947 to 135.5 million tonnes; and 666 mines were closed. In terms of coal production, after the Second World War the downward trend reversed briefly: by 1955 output reached a post-war peak of 211.3 million tonnes ( Report and Accounts, 1981/82: 32). Since then, as Table 3.3

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<sup>16</sup> Similar to the United States, British coal has been mined using underground and opencast methods. However, since opencast mining does not contribute more than 15 percent of total coal production and does not compete with underground coal, I excluded it from my analysis.

Table 3.3: Underground Coal Mining, Great Britain,  
1947-1979

Year	Production (million tonnes)	Employment (1) (thousands)	Number of mines
1947	187.5	703.9	958
1950	205.6	690.8	901
1955	211.3	698.7	850
1960	186.8	602.1	698
1965/6	177.0	455.7	483
1970/1	135.5	286.0	292
1971/2	111.0	281.5	289
1972/3	129.1	268.0	281
1973/4	98.7	252.0	259
1974/5	116.9	246.0	246
1975/6	114.5	247.7	241
1976/7	108.5	242.0	238
1977/8	106.3	240.5	231
1978/9	105.5	234.9	223
1979/80	109.3	232.5	219

Notes:

(1) Average colliery industrial manpower

Source:

Report and Accounts, 1981/82: 32-33.

shows, the economic decline of the industry, as measured by production, employment, and number of mines, has proceeded in an almost linear manner, with the exception of the post-national strike years. As with U.S. underground coal mining, the British coal industrial predicament did not improve during the 1970s. By the beginning of fiscal year 1978/79, coal production dropped to 105.5 million tonnes, employment was reduced by 51,000 and the number of mines was reduced by further 69. Similar to the United States, pit closures and employment reduction was not opposed by the National Union of Mineworkers.

#### **F. Poland Between 1943-1980**

Similar to the United States, coal production in Poland reached its zenith in 1943 with annual 91 million tons of output and around 200,000 workers employed (Statystyka Przemysłu Węglowego w Polsce, 1962: 38 and 122). However, unlike United States and Great Britain's underground coal mining, the Polish coal mining industry has experienced continued growth. During the 1950s and 1960s, both production and employment showed steady growth, with the exception of slight declines in production 1956-57 and employment in 1957-58 (Jaros, 1973: 173). Similarly, with the one exception of 1975-76, the growth pattern continued throughout the 1970s (Table 3.4).

However, the post-war economic history of Polish coal mining was not as unproblematic as the above picture suggests. Immediately following World War II, Polish coal mining faced war-related labor shortages. This problem was compounded by difficulties with recruiting and retaining workers. To address the shortage and meet growing energy needs



Table 3.4: Underground Coal Mining, Poland, 1950-1979

Year	Production (thousands tons)	Employment (1)	Number of mines
1950	78,001	215,664	73
1955	94,476	285,619	79
1960	104,438	304,264	80
1970	140,101	354,957	77
1975	171,625	366,756	68
1976	179,303	365,315	65
1977	186,112	372,534	65
1978	192,622	381,979	65
1979	201,004	396,910 (2)	66

## Notes:

(1) Average industrial employment

(2) Including social workers employed in the recreational branch of the industry

## Sources:

Statystyka Przemysłu Węglowego w Polsce, 1962: 38, 48 and 121.

Rocznik Statystyczny Ministerstwa Gornictwa, 1978: 14, 48 and 51.

Rocznik Statystyczny Ministerstwa Gornictwa, 1980: 14, 48 and 51

created by extensive industrialization, the industry tried to recruit farmers and agricultural workers from other parts of the country or to employ prospective soldiers. Importantly, these employment policies continued during the next three decades. As a result, the primarily Silesian labor force in Upper Silesia became more ethnically diversified, and increasingly young and single. While this situation differed from the British experience, the U.S. coal-mining also employed large numbers of single young workers. Yet, similar to the two other countries, industrial relations in the Polish industry were more cooperative than conflictual.

### **G. Summary**

The above discussion reveals both convergent and divergent aspects of coal mining in the United States, Great Britain and Poland prior to 1980. All three countries experienced rapid growth until the beginning of the 20th century. Then, despite some differences, the economic situation of underground coal-mining gradually worsened in all three countries. The United States and British coal industries experienced extensive growth in employment until mid-nineteen twenties.<sup>17</sup> In terms of production, U.S. and Polish mining experienced growth until the late 1920s, while the British industry peaked in 1913 (1950 Bituminous Coal Annual: 12; Supple, 1987: 8-9; Statystyka Przemyslu Węglowego w Polsce, 1962: 38). In general, prior to World War Two, the economic trends in all three industries show convergence rather than divergence.

Differences in the economic trends in coal mining across the socio-economic systems

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<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, employment data for Poland prior to World War Two was not available to me.

became more apparent during the post-war period. If we compare the underground coal-mining across three countries we will note that whereas the United States and British underground industries shrank until 1979, Polish coal mining experienced a steady growth, hence, diverged from both of them. According to structuralist logic, these trends should account for similarities in industrial behavior between both the United States and Great Britain, on the one hand, and differences between either of them and Poland, on the other hand.

## **2. Technological Change and Productivity**

In this section, I continue laying the groundwork for assessing Burawoy's hegemony thesis by comparing and contrasting technological change and labor productivity as well as labor and management behavior regarding these issues.

### **A. Technological Changes in the United States**

The technological developments in the American coal industry fall into four distinctive historical periods. Between 1880 and 1920, the first mechanical cutters were introduced. However, significant increases in output that occurred during this time were not attributable to these cutters as much as to the intensive mobilization of the labor force (Marks, 1989). In the 1920s, the arrival of the mechanical coal-loading machine, which reduced hand loading, marked a significant step towards mechanization of mining. The second period of intensive technological change began in the 1950s, when the coal operators, supported by the UMWA

president, John L. Lewis, made a concerted effort to mechanize production even further by a widespread introduction of mechanical loader. The third period begun at the end of the 1960s and was marked by the replacement of mechanical loader by the continuous miner, a machine that rips coal from the seam, carries it by conveyor belt, and loads it on shuttle cars. The fourth period of technological change began in the late 1970s with the gradual introduction of longwall mining with powered roof supports. The cumulative effect of these changes was the gradual disappearance of hand production after 1947; by 1976, 31 percent of underground coal production was cut by machines, 63.9 percent by continuous mining machines and 3.6 percent by longwall (Coal Facts, 1978-1979: 54-55).

### **B. Technological Changes in Great Britain**

Prior to 1945, two mining systems predominated in British coal mining. In the nineteenth century, the pillar and stall method was widely used. The introduction of longwall mining, or so-called simple mechanization, began around the First World War, and by 1948 almost 90 percent of coal was mined using the longwall technique (Supple, 1987: 26-30). However, this does not mean that the whole process of coal extraction and transportation was mechanized. Longwall mining remained labor intensive, involving hand methods of cutting and loading coal.

Thus, despite the earlier introduction of the longwall technique, the British industry was not as mechanized as its U.S. counterpart. For example, in 1929 about 28 percent of British coal was mechanically cut, compared to 75 percent of U.S.. In 1936, after the British coal

owners made a substantive effort at mechanization, the figures were 55 percent and 79 percent respectively. Further, in the 1930s, British coal mining was more labor intensive and employed more people to produce less coal than its U.S. counterpart. It was not until the 1960s that the most intensive period of mechanization occurred. Thus, in 1955 only 11 percent of coal output was mechanized; in 1969/70 this figure stood at 92.3 percent (Pitt, 1984: Table 3). Importantly, since 551 collieries were closed during the same period, this increase was probably as much due to introduction of technology as it was to closing the oldest, least mechanized mines. Yet, similar to the politics of the UMWA, the NUM did not resist technological change and decline in employment that it fostered.

### **C. Technological Changes in Poland**

One of the distinctive characteristics of Polish coal mining is the fact that 45.4 percent of the machines were destroyed during the war (Kantyka, 1990: Table 1). Thus, the mechanization of Polish coal mining began after 1945. For example, in 1945 the loading of coal was primarily done by hand. Between 1950 and 1955, the mechanized coal extraction increased from 29 percent to 34 percent, and the mechanized loading increased from 3 percent to 14 percent. In terms of mining techniques, between 1950 and 1955, shortwall system usage decreased from 34.6 to 27 percent of the overall output, and the longwall technique usage rose from 43.4 to 51.6 percent of the overall production. In 1957, continuous mining produced less than 2 percent of the overall output (Jaros, 1973: 137).

However, similar to the United States and Great Britain, the Polish coal-mining

industry went through a period of intensive mechanization during the 1950s and 1960s. Specifically, between 1956 and 1970, mechanized coal extraction increased from 36.5 to 77 percent, and the mechanized loading increased from 20.1 to 66.5 percent of total output. By 1979, 96.0 percent of coal production was mechanized (Rocznik Statystyczny, 1980: 181). Yet, according to Jaros (1973: 176), Polish coal mining had the lowest number of mechanical equipment per ton of output relative to the United States and Great Britain. Again, similar to the two other countries I could not find any indication that technological change was contested by the union or miners.

#### **D. Labor Productivity in the U.S. Coal Mining**

Technological innovations which occurred in the United States between 1940 and 1970 were closely related to another trend: changes in labor productivity. Specifically, between 1950 and 1960 labor productivity in underground coal mines almost doubled from 0.72 to 1.33 tons per miner-hour, and tripled by 1969 when it reached 1.95 tons (Table 3.5). This growth in labor productivity combined with the presence of industrial peace indicates a period of accommodation with management. The politics of accommodation, however, had a dramatic effect on the industrial labor force which, between 1950 and 1965, was reduced by 281,850 workers. In the 1970s labor productivity gradually decreased to reach 1.04 tons per miner-hour in 1978, the same level as in 1955, 23 years before.<sup>18</sup> Thus, despite all technological

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<sup>18</sup> Since in the foregoing analysis of labor productivity I do not make a cross-country comparison, only a comparison of trends within each country, I did not convey different measures of labor productivity into a common measure.

Table 3.5: Labor Productivity, Underground  
Bituminous Coal Mining, United  
States, 1950-1979

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Year	Tons per miner hour(1)
1950	0.72
1955	1.04
1960	1.33
1965	1.75
1970	1.72
1971	1.50
1972	1.49
1973	1.46
1974	1.41
1975	1.19
1976	1.14
1977	1.09
1978	1.04
1979	1.13

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Notes:

(1) including all mine employees except office workers

Source:

Annual Energy Review, 1990: 195.

improvements, at the end of the 1970s labor productivity was down to its 1950s levels. As a result, labor productivity emerged as an important arena of managerial offensive in the 1970s.

### **E. Labor Productivity in British Coal Mining**

Compared to the United States, labor productivity trends in British coal-mining in the 1970s show more stability as the most dramatic changes had occurred between 1960-70. The first change, a 30 percent increase in labor productivity by 1965, could be attributed to the combined effects of labor force contraction and technological improvements. The second increase, about 24 percent between 1966 and 1970, was largely due to the National Power Loading Agreement introduced in 1966. In 1972/73, as Table 3.6 indicates, British miners' productivity reached its post-war peak of 3.00 tonnes per miner shift. Subsequently, despite the re-introduction of the incentive scheme toward the end of the decade, labor productivity stabilized between 2.77 and 2.95 tonnes per miner shift. This situation and growing solidarity among miners prompted the NCB to reintroduce the incentive scheme. Thus, similar to the United States, the issue of labor productivity became an important arena of managerial offensive toward the end of the 1970s.

### **F. Labor Productivity in Polish Coal-mining**

In Poland, output per worker-day increased from 0.85 tons in 1945 to 1.26 tons in 1950. Then it decreased to the level of 1.14 tons in 1955 and started picking up afterwards. In



Table 3.6: Labor Productivity, Underground Coal Mining, Great Britain, 1955-1979

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Year	Tonnes per miner shift
1955	1.60
1960	1.81
1965/66	2.35
1970/71	2.92
1971/72	2.76
1972/73	3.00
1973/74	2.77
1974/75	2.94
1975/76	2.91
1976/77	2.83
1977/78	2.79
1978/79	2.86
1979/80	2.95

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Source:  
Report and Accounts, 1981/82: 32-33.

1970 the output per worker day was 2.6 tons, in 1975 3.3 tons, and 3.6 tons in 1979 (Table 3.7). Thus, except for a downward trend in the first part of the 1950s, Polish miners' productivity increased in a linear manner; a sign of cooperative industrial relations. However, this growth was not enough in the context of growing demand. To increase labor productivity even further, the four-shift work organization was introduced at the end of the decade. Thus, despite different structural pressures, similar to the United States and Great Britain, the issue of productivity became a of the incentive scheme toward the end of the decade, labor productivity stabilized between 2.77 and 2.95 tonnes per miner shift. This situation and growing solidarity among miners prompted the NCB to reintroduce the incentive scheme. Thus, similar to the United States, the issue of labor productivity became an important arena of managerial offensive toward the end of the 1970s.

### **G. Summary**

In sum, four points can be made. First, labor productivity patterns differed across national boundaries, with Poland presenting the most consistent tendency to grow. In contrast, labor productivity in Great Britain stabilized during the 1970s and started decreasing in the United States. Second, in all three countries, the most intensive technological changes in coal mining industries occurred prior to 1980, with the exception of the widespread introduction of the longwall in the United States in the 1980s. Consequently, if any significant productivity increase occurred in Great Britain and Poland during the 1980s, this would probably be due

Table 3.7: Labor Productivity, Underground Coal Mining, Poland, 1950-1979

Year	Tons per worker day(1)
1950	1.23
1955	1.14
1960	1.28
1965	n/a
1970	2.60
1975	3.31
1976	3.43
1977	3.47
1978	3.57
1979	3.61

Notes:

(1) including employed on the surface

Sources:

Statystyka Przemysłu Węglowego w Polsce, 1962: 140.

Rocznik Statystyczny Ministerstwa Górnictwa, 1978: 70

Rocznik Statystyczny Ministerstwa Górnictwa, 1980: 70

primarily to the closure of the least efficient mines and increases in workers' effort, respectively. Three, an important difference between the United States and Great Britain, on the one hand, and Poland, on the other, was the fact that technological change was accompanied by workforce reduction and pit closures in the former countries, while employment increased and the number of mines remained almost intact in Poland. Four, in all three countries unions did not resist changes in production volume, employment, or technological change in any major way. Thus, none of these issues not appear to be an arena of struggle in the coal-mining industries prior to 1980. In contrast, the decreases in labor productivity in the United States and Great Britain, and growing energy demands in Poland turned management's attention to this arena. Towards the end of the 1970s, labor productivity became important arena of struggle in all three countries.

All this suggests that, prior to 1980, despite structural differences, such as changes in the number of mines, employment, and production between Poland, on the one hand, and Great Britain and the United States, on the other hand, management behavior displayed similarities regarding technological change and labor productivity. In all three countries, the movement towards continuous mining and away from hand loading was a part of managerial strategy to diminish management's dependence on labor, on the one hand, and increase labor productivity, thus lower the labor costs on the other hand. Also, unions behavior converged regarding lack of major resistance to changes in production volume, employment and technology.

### 3. Wages

In this last sub-section I compare and contrast miners' wages relative to other groups of industrial workers and assess whether wages were an important arena of struggle in any of the countries prior to 1980.

#### A. The United States

Since 1945 miners have been among the highest paid industrial workers in the United States (Miernyk, 1980: 11-12). For example, in 1950 the Bituminous Coal Annual (1950: 141) proudly announced: "Weekly earnings highest in bituminous industry." In 1976, miners were still the best paid per hour of production work: average hourly earnings in coal were \$7.91, \$7.68 and \$7.10 in steel and in auto, respectively, and 5.19 in all manufacturing. However, towards the end of the 1970s miners lost their historic advantage over steel and auto workers. Further, even when miners enjoyed the highest hourly wages, they did not necessarily have the highest annual earnings. Frequent production interruptions due to strikes or a temporary decline in orders could depress total earnings for coal miners, especially in the 1970s.

For example, a study of Virginia miners indicates that in 1977 8.4 percent of respondents reported family earnings to be \$10,000 or less, 15 percent earned between \$10,000 and \$15,000, 50 percent made between \$15,000 and \$20,000, and 26.7 percent earned over \$20,000 annually (Wardell et al., undated). Similar to Poland and Great Britain, mining was the primary source of income, as only a few of miners' wives were employed outside their

home. Thus, miners' annual earnings were not necessarily impressive and constituted one of the contested issues in UMWA-BCOA negotiations in the 1970s (Perry, 1984).

### **B. Great Britain**

In Great Britain, in 1948, miners' average hourly wages were 20 percent higher than average hourly earnings in vehicle manufacturing, 21.5 percent higher than metal manufacture and 27.0 percent higher than in all manufacturing. In 1960, miner's relative advantage decreased to 10.1 percent, 18.7 percent, and 24.5 percent respectively. In 1970, miners lost their advantage to auto workers whose average weekly wages became 7.2 percent higher than those of miners. Yet, by 1974 miner's average weekly wages were not only highest among industrial workers but also miners' relative position vis-a-vis other workers improved (Handy 1981: Table 8.1). Importantly, because miners work fewer hours than men employed in other industries, if we compare weekly earnings of miners and other male workers, the miners will fall behind other industrial workers, including auto workers (Handy, 1981: 173). Thus, similar to the United States, the comparison of hourly wages does not necessarily translate into the same weekly or annual wage differentials and wages were a major issue in miners' strikes (Durcan et al. 1983) and NUM-NCB negotiations.

### **C. Poland**

In Poland, in comparison with the average monthly rate in all other socialized

industries, the coal miner's wage was on average 35 percent higher in the 1950s (Jaros, 1973: 154-155). By 1970 the average monthly wage in coal mining industry was 57 percent higher than in other industries, and in 1979 this difference increased to 70 percent. However, since these are not hourly wages, this monthly differential might have been due to differences in hourly wages or longer work-hours and overtime, or a combination of both factors. What is clear, however, is that in contrast to the United States and Great Britain, Polish coal miners had a clear long-term earning advantage compared to other industries and wages were not a conflictual issue in the Polish industry.

#### **D. Summary**

In sum, in terms of miners' wages, I observed more similarities between Great Britain and the United States than between either of these countries and Poland, especially during the 1970s. That is, in both countries, miners lost their wage advantage relative to some other industrial workers, while in Poland their relative position improved. Also, wages were an important issue for U.S. and British miners, but not for their Polish counterparts. At the same time, in all three countries miners were among the best paid industrial workers whose earnings were probably sufficient to support their families without any additional income.

## **II. The Industry and Its Market Environment**

To assess structuralist claims that macro-structural, especially market, factors

determine changes in the modes of industrial management, this section examines similarities and differences in market environment of and state economic intervention in the operation of coal-mining industries in all three countries. The first major purpose is to examine historical changes and cross-national variations and similarities in the industry's market environment. The second major goal is decide if the market environment of British coal-mining industry was more similar to its U.S. or Polish counterparts prior to 1980. The third goal is to explore the possibility that different forms of state regulation could produce similar market-related outcomes or that similar forms of state intervention could produce different outcomes. By relating the observed changes in market situation of coal and state regulation to the changes in industrial relations, I will decide whether the association between the structural variables describing the product market and cross-system differences in industrial behavior proposed by structuralists holds. I will begin with a discussion of coal prices relative to other fuels and state regulation of coal prices.

## **1. Prices**

In this section I will start assessing structuralist claims that market factors determine changes in the modes of industrial relations, by looking at variations in the market situation of coal. Toward this end, I will trace changes in coal's relative position in energy markets in each country, including coal prices relative to alternative fuels and the nature of state intervention in energy markets.



### A. The United States

Examining the domestic prices of energy fuels in the United States in the 1970s, oil emerges as the most expensive source of energy, followed by coal and natural gas (Industrial Outlook, 1981).<sup>19</sup> In terms of coal prices themselves, in the context of the oil embargo of 1973-1974, the average coal prices in 1973 climbed to \$8.53 per ton, almost double the 1969 price of \$4.99. Between 1969 and 1973, the average value of bituminous coal from strip mines increased from \$3.98 to \$6.18 per ton, and the average value of underground mined coal rose from \$5.62 to \$10.84. Following the oil crisis and substantial wage increases negotiated by the UMWA, in 1974 the average coal prices jumped to \$15.75 and reached \$23.65 in 1979. At the same time, the average price of surface-mined coal climbed from \$12.25 per ton to \$17.37, and the average value of underground-mined coal increased from \$19.86 to \$32.75 (Bituminous Coal Data, 1970: 69; Coal Data, 1976: II-28; Coal Data: A Reference, 1987: 66).

As the above statistics indicate, the general growth in average coal prices was accompanied by increasing price gap between surface- and underground-mined coal. For example, in 1940 the price of underground-mined coal was only 19.6 percent higher than that of surfaced mined coal (Bituminous Coal Data, 1970: 69); in 1969 this difference stood at 29.2 percent, and in 1979, 47 percent. This means that, over time, United States underground bituminous coal-mining has been facing increasingly competitive price pressures from surface-mined coal.

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<sup>19</sup> Inter-fuel comparisons are made using British Thermal Units.

## B. Great Britain

Both Poland's and Britain's energy production and coal supplies have been characterized by monopolistic and monopsonic arrangements. In Great Britain, the National Coal Board (NCB) was the exclusive producer of coal and the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) was its largest buyer. As a monopoly producer, the NCB, in consultation with the government and not in response to market forces, was fixing coal prices. For its part, the CEGB, also in consultation with the government, was setting energy prices. In both cases, prices resulted from policy decisions rather than economic decisions.

Unlike the United States, then, where coal prices were set at the company level and differed by company or by state, in Great Britain, the government regulated coal prices, thus creating a centralized industrial management in this regard. The British government allowed only moderate increases every few years and sometimes even letting the NCB write off losses accruing to price stability. For example, in 1966 coal prices rose by 12 percent; in 1970, by 12 percent; and in 1972 by 7.5 percent (Ashworth, 1986: 244-245). At the same time, British oil prices were not government-controlled. Thus, similar to the United States, in 1973/74 the price of oil fuel in Great Britain doubled and rose far above the average price level for coal, thereby, giving coal a competitive advantage over other fuels. Also, similar to the United States, these changes in the oil prices resulted in a lost confidence in the security of oil supply, spawning new approaches with regard to fuel policy. As a result, in both countries, energy policy-makers emphasized the strategic importance of domestically-mined coal (see Plan For Coal, 1974 and President's Commission on Coal, 1978).

While British coal enjoyed state market protection, this does not mean that it did not experience pressures with regard to production costs and prices. In fact, these pressures increased over time, especially towards the end of the 1970s. For example, in 1957 the industry's major monthly journal, Colliery Guardian (January 10, 1957: 56) celebrated the fact that "British coal has been and remains today, the cheapest in Western Europe." However, later the rhetoric changed. First, the Conservative government set strict financial controls for the industry. Second, the British coal industry started being compared with the Australian and U.S. underground mines, whose "costs are about half these of the UK" (Pitt, 1984: 270; see also Colliery Guardian, April 1984; for a critique of this approach, see New Statesman, 30 March, 1984). All this accounted for the emergence of financial pressures on the British coal industry.

### **C. Poland**

Similar to Great Britain, Polish prices were proposed by the Central Coal Board (CCB) and centrally controlled by the government. While the government did allow quite significant increases in prices in the 1950s, during the 1960s and 1970s prices were kept relatively stable. Thus, between 1955 and 1956 the price of a ton of coal increased 56 percent, while between 1970 and 1977 the increases were almost negligible. This change in price policy was due to the fact that, during the 1950s, coal prices had to be significantly raised to cover the costs of its extraction; it was not until 1960 that the price of a ton of coal exceeded its extraction cost (Statystyka Przemysłu Węglowego w Polsce, 1962; Rocznik Statystyczny Ministerstwa

Gornictwa, 1978). As a result, after 1968, the government decided to keep coal prices down during the next decade.

#### **D. Summary**

In sum, one main point emerges through the above comparison of coal prices/costs and price policies in the United States, Great Britain and Poland. First, in all three countries the energy policy-makers emphasized the strategic importance of coal. Second, while both Polish and British coal industries operated in a context of government-controlled prices and sheltered market, over time the latter started experiencing cost/prices-related pressures. That is, it has been argued that British coal industry is not as efficient as the low-cost producing countries, including the United States. Similarly, as the price/cost differential between the surface and underground mined coal has grown over time, the underground coal mining industry in the United States started experiencing pressures to lower its production costs. In terms of Poland, it appears that such cost/prices pressures were not experienced by the Polish coal mining industry during the post-war period. Thus, despite similar degree of state intervention in Great Britain and Poland its outcomes differed so that towards the end of the 1970s Great Britain became more like the United States, which in general did not share the same extent of state control over the industry.

## **2. Coal's Position in Energy Markets**

In the following section I will continue to assess structuralist claims that market factors determine changes in the modes of industrial relations, by looking at variations in the market situation of coal. Toward this end, I will trace changes in coal's relative position in energy markets in each country, including coal consumption relative other alternative fuels and total coal supply and demand.

### **A. Coal Position in Energy Markets in the United States**

In 1940 coal accounted for 46.5 percent of energy consumption and by 1960 this figure dropped to 22.5 percent. As Table 3.8 shows, this downward trend was reversed in 1973 when, after a drop to 16.9 percent of the market share in 1972, coal's share in energy consumption started slowly, but steadily, to increase. However, changes in the market prices of coal did not exert a direct pressure on its consumption for two reasons. First, during the 1970s another important transformation in the energy market occurred. Namely, the long-term coal contracts, which provided producers with a sheltered market, became a widespread practice in the industry (Coal Data: A Reference, 1987). This meant that while the underground coal-mining industry entered the 1980s facing some degree of competition from other relatively cheaper sources of energy, such as natural gas, and potentially cheaper surface-mined or foreign coal, the effects of this competition were somewhat offset by the existence of long-time contracts. Second, the government's intervention in the energy markets in the 1970s

Table 3.8: Energy Consumption by Source, United States,  
1945-1979 (1)

Year	Coal	Oil	Natural gas	Other
1945	46.5	32.1	11.4	3.8
1950	34.8	36.0	18.0	4.7
1960	22.5	45.5	28.3	3.8
1970	18.5	44.4	32.8	4.3
1971	17.1	45.0	33.1	4.8
1972	16.9	46.2	31.9	5.0
1973	17.5	46.9	30.3	5.3
1974	17.5	46.1	30.0	6.5
1975	17.9	46.4	28.3	7.4
1976	18.3	47.3	27.4	7.1
1977	18.2	48.7	26.1	7.0
1978	17.6	48.6	25.6	8.1
1979	19.1	47.1	26.2	7.7

Notes:

(1) percentage on a Btu basis

Sources:

Bituminous Coal Data, 1970: 99.

Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1991: 562.

also contributed to the reversal of the decline in coal's market share. Thus, after a downward trend between 1940 and 1960, during the 1970s and 1980s coal was able to maintain, or even slightly increase, its relative share of the energy market in the United States.

### **B. Coal Position in Energy Markets in Great Britain**

Coal's position in the British energy market was greater than in the United States immediately after the Second World War. However, similar to the United States, this role has diminished over time. For example, in 1953 coal accounted for 87.7 percent of total energy consumption in Great Britain. Ten years later, in 1963, coal accounted for only 68.4 of energy consumption (Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1964: 140). This downward trend continued throughout the 1960s, and by 1971 coal provided only 42.1 percent of total energy consumption (Table 3.9). This decline lessened somewhat after 1972. In 1975 accounted for 36.4 percent and in 1979 for 35.5 percent of energy consumption; a 0.9 percent difference over the five years.

### **C. Coal Position in Energy Markets in Poland**

While I was unable to obtain detailed statistics regarding coal's share of the energy market in Poland or the supply-demand patterns prior to 1980, from the more cursory data I was able to gather, it appears that coal's role in the Polish economy has not significantly

Table 3.9: Energy Consumption by Source, Great Britain,  
1953-1979(1)

Year	Coal	Oil	Natural Gas	Other
1953	87.7	11.9	n/a	0.4
1960	74.1	24.8	n/a	1.0(2)
1970	46.7	44.7	5.3	3.2
1971	42.1	45.9	8.7	3.2
1972	36.1	48.3	12.2	3.4
1973	37.4	46.8	12.6	3.2
1974	34.7	45.5	15.8	3.9
1975	36.4	42.6	17.3	3.7
1976	36.4	41.3	18.1	4.2
1977	35.7	41.0	18.8	4.5
1978	34.6	41.7	19.4	4.2
1979	35.5	39.9	20.3	4.0

Notes:

(1) percentage based on estimates of the gross caloric value

(2) the numbers may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding

Source:

Author's own calculations based on Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1964: 140; Annual Abstract of Statistics 1981: 204.



changed between 1945 and 1979. Indeed, the development of Polish economy in the postwar period was based on the assumption of an unlimited coal supply. Throughout the post-war years, coal accounted for 80 percent of the energy supply, of which 65 percent was provided by the underground- mined coal (Diariusz Sejmowy, 3/1985). In all three countries, then, coal has maintained the status of a strategic fuel with regard to electricity production.

#### **D. Coal Consumption by End-use Sector in the United States**

Turning to coal consumption by end-use sector between 1950 and 1970 United States coal experienced the biggest losses in transportation and residential and commercial sectors, from 63.0 million tons to 0.3 million tons and from 114.6 million tons to 16.1 million tons, respectively. This was followed by losses in the industrial sector in the 1970s; total coal consumption dropped markedly from 186.6 in 1970 to 145.1 million tons in 1979. However, increased coal consumption by electric utilities, for whom coal has always been economically attractive and therefore constituted the largest source of coal demand, offset coal losses in industrial sector. The utility sector accounted for 77.5 percent of coal consumption in 1979 as compared with 18.6 percent in 1950. As a result of this increase, total domestic coal consumption rose from 523.2 million tons in 1970 to 680.5 million tons in 1979 (Coal Data: A Reference, 1987: 60).

At the same time, the upward trend in coal consumption by electric utilities did not reverse the historical imbalance in coal supply and demand in the national market. In 1950 the difference between coal production and domestic consumption was 66.3 million tons; this

difference grew to 89.5 million tons and 100.6 million tons in 1970 and 1979, respectively. These figures do not adequately reflect overproduction, however, as the United States, similar Poland, has been one of the major coal exporters. Thus, if we count coal exports, overproduction decreases to 37.3 million tons in 1950, becomes almost negligible in 1970, 17.7 million tons, and is significantly reduced, 36.6 million tons, in 1979--a lower level than in 1950 (Table 3.10).<sup>20</sup> Still, as the above data suggest, the coal mining industry in the United States produced more coal than domestic and foreign demand combined. Indeed, the volume of total stocks--stocks held by all coal consumers--more than doubled between 1950 and 1979, when it reached 182.0 million tons (Table 3.10).

#### **E. Coal Consumption by End-use Sector in Great Britain**

Some important changes in coal consumption by end-use sector also occurred between 1947 and 1979 in Great Britain. For example, similar to their U.S. counterpart, British power stations increased their coal consumption from 27.5 million tonnes in 1947 to 74.7 million tonnes in 1970/71, and to 89.1 million tonnes in 1979/90. At the same time, coal consumption by coke ovens and gasworks decreased from 43.2 million tonnes to 14.4 million tonnes, and residential coal consumption declined from 37.2 to 10.3 million tonnes (Report and Accounts, 1980/81: 32-33). While, as these data suggest, the direction of change was similar in both countries--coal consumption increased in the electric utilities sector and decreased in other sectors--coal utilization in Great Britain was still more diversified than in the United States.

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<sup>20</sup> This shrinkage in the volume of exported coal was mainly due to the significant losses on Japanese market .

Table 3.10: Total Coal Supply and Demand, United States,  
1950-1979 (1)

Year	Supply	Demand	Difference	Total Stocks
1950	560.8	523.5	+ 37.3	77.3
1960	434.6	436.1	- 1.5	75.2
1970	612.7	595.0	+ 17.7	93.0
1975	655.5	629.0	+ 26.5	128.3
1976	686.1	663.8	+ 22.3	134.7
1977	698.8	679.6	+ 19.2	157.3
1978	673.2	665.9	- 7.3	145.9
1979	783.2	746.6	+ 36.6	182.0

Notes:

(1) million tons

Sources:

Coal Data: A Reference, 1987: 57

Annual Energy Review, 1990: 193

Until the mid-1950s coal represented over 90 percent of the power stations' fuel supplies in Great Britain. Then in 1972 coal's share of electricity generation reached a minimum of 75 percent of fossil fuel-based energy production (Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1981: 211). However, after the large oil price increases in 1973/74 and 1979/80, coal returned to a position of pre-eminence in electricity generation (Hosler, 1982: 428). During the 1970s, the tonnage of coal used in power stations rose from 66.0 million tonnes in 1972 to 88.5 million tonnes in 1979 and accounted for 88.3 percent of fossil fuel-based electricity production (Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1981: 211).

However, while in the United States demand for coal from utilities was growing, in Great Britain total demand declined 45.8 percent from 1950 to 1978/79. Also, Great Britain's supply and demand imbalance was different from the United States. As a result, total coal stocks figures also show a different pattern; an upward trend from 1950 to the second half of the 1970s, with the volume stabilizing at around 29-27 million tonnes of coal from 1975 onward (Table 3.11).

The contraction of the coal market was in part due to the discovery of North Sea gas and in part due to governmental politics. First, during the 1950s the Conservative Government pursued an anti-coal policy which allowed oil to replace coal, even though the 1956 Suez Crisis had revealed the insecurity of supply. Second, while in 1958 coal imports were stopped, in 1971 the Labour Government, whose major policies had already tightened the market for coal, agreed to import foreign coal again (Ashworth, 1986: 235-236, 239). In 1974, the year of a national strike, coal consumption declined further to 119.5 million tonnes. The decline stopped in 1976/77 and in 1979 total coal consumption showed signs of recovery (Table 3.11).

Table 3.11: Total Coal Supply and Demand, Great Britain,  
1950-1979(1)

Year	Supply	Demand	Difference	Total stocks
1950	219.6	223.1	- 3.5	14.3
1960	196.7	205.5	- 8.8	39.6
1970/71	145.9	153.7	- 7.8	18.0
1975/76	130.6	123.6	+ 7.0	29.9
1976/77	123.2	126.0	- 2.8	28.1
1977/78	123.6	123.4	+ 0.2	29.8
1978/79	122.0	124.6	- 2.6	28.8
1979/80	128.4	130.9	- 2.5	27.8

Notes:

(1) million tonnes

Source:

Report and Accounts, 1980/81: 32-33.

## **F. Coal Supply and Demand in Poland**

While I was unable to obtain detailed statistics regarding coal consumption pattern, I was able to gather data on coal supply and demand. Contrary to the experiences of the two other countries, Polish coal supply and demand have been growing in a linear manner (Table 3.12). In terms of supply and demand balance, it has been so tight that it was impossible to build large stocks of coal. While the situation improved over time and coal stocks increased from 0.3 million tons in 1956 to 5.4 million tons in 1979, in the Polish case it is difficult to talk about a problem of overproduction. Rather, underproduction, in the context of growing energy demand, meant that Polish coal mining industry has been under constant pressure to produce more, not less.

## **G. Summary**

In sum, while overproduction and excess capacity were not unusual in the United States coal industry, during the 1970s coal's situation became more dramatic as the industry experienced both significant overproduction and overcapacity. British coal mining also experienced a problem of overcapacity and declining demand, although to a lesser degree. Despite the fact that the pattern of supply and demand in Poland was more similar to that in Great Britain than that in the United States, it was also more balanced than in the two other countries. In the context of growing energy consumption, this tight supply-demand balance meant a constant threat of underproduction. In general, then, while energy markets were

Table 3.12: Total Coal Supply and Demand, Poland,  
1956-1979 (1)

Year	Supply	Demand	Difference	Total stocks
1956	95.9	95.7	0.2	0.3
1960	105.9	106.2	-0.3	0.3
1965	120.8	120.2	+0.6	0.6
1970	144.2	143.5	+0.7	0.8
1971	149.1	147.2	+1.9	2.0
1972	155.5	151.9	+3.6	3.6
1973	162.9	156.9	+6.0	6.1
1974	170.8	168.0	+1.2	2.9
1975	177.3	174.3	+3.0	3.0
1978	198.7	195.0	+3.7	3.8
1979	207.3	202.0	+5.3	5.4

Notes:

(1) million tons

Sources:

Rocznik Statystyczny, 1970: 181.

Rocznik Statystyczny, 1975: 209.

Rocznik Statystyczny, 1980: 189.

different in the United States and Great Britain, the significant differences came out when these two countries are compared with the Polish case.

Importantly, the United States and British governments had very similar policies regarding coal as both governments promoted coal consumption, at least in the aftermath of the 1973/74 oil crisis. The difference between these two governments and the Polish government was that the latter promoted both coal production and domestic coal consumption with a great consistency and over a longer time-period. Overall, it appears that the market environments of the coal mining industry were different in the three countries, still the United States and British coal industries were more similar than the situation of either and their Polish counterpart.

### **III. Labor Activism and Arenas of Struggle**

In this section I will explore the patterns of labor activism and major arenas of struggle in the coal-mining industries of the United States, Great Britain and Poland prior to 1980. The analysis I have discussed thus far suggests that while the coal-mining industry functions in different market environments in each country, the British coal-mining industry tends to display more commonalities with its U.S. than Polish counterpart. If the structuralist thesis is correct, then, I should observe more similarities in labor activism patterns and major arenas of struggle in the British and U.S. industries than in their Polish counterpart. If the relational perspective is more adequate patterns of labor activism and arenas of struggle would not reflect these structural patterns.



### A. The United States

Prior to 1980, industrial relations in the United States coal-mining industry were characterized by subsequent periods of conflict and accommodation. During the John L. Lewis presidency (1920-1960), the early UMW's politics of conflict, wherein the union countered the power of the coal operators, were followed by a period of cooperation which lasted until 1943. Conflict peaked again in 1944 and, as Table 3.13 shows, continued through 1949. The conclusion of the National Wage Agreement in 1950 marked the beginning of a period of industrial peace which coincided with the introduction of far-reaching technological changes and also decimated the labor force during the 1950s and 1960s (Tables 3.14 and 3.1). This was part of Lewis' strategy to concentrate production in large mines, demand high wages at the expense of working membership, and passively accept technological changes. Not surprisingly, one of the legacies of Lewis's presidency was a significant reduction in union membership (Bethell, 1978: in passim).

Towards the end of the 1960s, industrial relations in the bituminous coal-mining industry in the United States became an arena of fierce conflicts, including wildcat strikes which emerged out of rank-and-file opposition to autocratically governed and highly centralized union. For example, in 1960, only 58,000 workdays were lost due to wildcat strikes, in 1970 this figure to 593,100 and by 1975 it reached 1,417,400 workdays lost (The President's Commission on Coal, 1980: 48). Importantly, despite the fact that the rank-and-file workers participated in the negotiations of the three-year contract agreement signed in 1974, it did not result in industrial peace: during the three subsequent years, the industry lost more

Table 3.13: Strike Activity, Bituminous Coal Mining, United States, 1930-1950

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Year	Number of stoppages	Workers involved	Workdays lost
1930	52	26,841	882,599
1935	42	420,574	2,971,449
1940	34	24,372	153,296
1945	598	582,000	5,007,000
1950	430	165,000	9,320,000

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Source:

Bituminous Coal Annual, 1954: 108.

Table 3.14: Strike Trends, Coal Industry, United States,  
1942-1979

Year	Frequency (1)	Involvement (2)	Loss Ratio (3)
1942-5	1,040	827	8,850
1946-9	1,002	1,720	25,700
1950-9	828	396	4,600
1960-9	1,160	447	2,150
1970-9	4,890	2,010	17,700

Notes:

- (1) number of strikes per million employees
- (2) number of workers involved per thousand employees
- (3) number of days lost per thousand employees

Source:

P.K. Edwards, 1986: 194

workdays due to wildcat strikes than during any other time (The President Commission on Coal, 1980: 48). While the contract was written in a seemingly cooperative spirit, some of its provisions actually led to an increase, not decrease, in labor-management conflict. It was not until the negotiation of the 1978 contract that a tenuous labor peace came into effect.

To examine the main provisions of the 1974 contract briefly, they not only included an increase of wages and benefits, but also diminished the wage differential among miners by reducing the number of pay grades from six to five. To limit the number of industrial conflicts, the agreement also established mine committees, composed of local union and management officials, who were mandated to meet at least once a month. As the contract stated:

the prosperity and the efficiency of the coal industry are dependent upon the ability of the (parties) to work cooperatively...The function of the committee shall be to identify and discuss any problems or potential problems which if unresolved could interrupt the steady and regular operation of the mine (quoted in Simon, 1983: 24).

Another important change in labor-management relations brought about by the 1974 contract was the establishment of new grievance machinery--the Arbitration Resolution Board (ARB) whose role was to decrease the number of cases going through the full arbitration process. However, while the new grievance system encouraged dispute settlement at the mine site, the number of unsettled disputes that went beyond the lower level indicated that the ARB was not very successful in achieving its goal (Valtin, 1978). Two developments created problems for the ARB. First, companies pushed problems to the time-consuming last step of the grievance process and both sides did little to achieve an early resolution. Second, even before this machinery began working, there was a backlog of cases which already went beyond the lower level of arbitration. This backlog not only continued to be a basic problem for the

next three years, but the increase in the incidence of wildcat strikes was often caused by frustration with the slow grievance processes (Valtin, 1978: 472-473).

Why then did the number of wildcat strikes decrease by 90 percent after the 1978 contract (The President's Commission on Coal, 1980: 15)? Five factors, which were a combination of decentralization and disciplining measures, seem to be of the greatest importance. First, in the 1978 contract the companies won a concession to fire wildcat strike leaders. Second, some companies changed their managerial style and allowed miners to influence decisions over local matters without striking (The Guardian March 7, 1979). Third, the threat of nonunion coal increased as the UMWA's share of the national soft-coal output declined to 52 percent in 1977. During the 1977/78 strike, non-UMWA mines maintained around 56 percent of the normal level of coal production (The Wall Street Journal, May 25, 1978). Fourth, the 1978 contract made provisions for establishing wage incentives in the form of "plans compensating employees according to output, subject to majority approval by members of the particular local union" (Monthly Labor Review, May, 1978: 70). This meant the introduction of decentralized productivity deals and probably contributed to the reversal of the downward trend in labor productivity, on the one hand, and the decline in the number of local disputes over wages, on the other hand.

Finally, while the UMWA was democratized and rank-and-file workers began more fully to participate in the decision-making processes within the union beginning in 1973, in late 1979 Samuel Morgan Church, who was perceived as a strong leader able to solidify and unify the union, became the president of UMWA. Church's ascendancy rejuvenated the hopes for responsible unionism--that is unions exerting control over the rank-and-file and making

reasonable demands in negotiations. Church himself promoted the notion that he would like to cooperate with the industry: "I don't throw them curves, and I don't consider them the enemy. Both the union and the industry have a job to do, and that is to promote coal" (Business Week, December 3, 1979). Thus, towards the end of the 1970s, not only different disciplinary measures and some limited participatory solutions were developed in order to assure a more stable labor-management relations in the coal industry, but the union leadership promoted a cooperative attitude as well.

## **B. Great Britain**

Strike frequency in British coal mining has been gradually increasing since 1923-30, reaching a peak between 1950-1959 (Table 3.15). In fact, while the number of strikes started to decline in 1958, it was not until the mid-1960s that industrial conflict significantly decreased (Table 3.16). Wage-based miners' militancy in the 1950s coincided with the first attempts to centralize managerial structure at the price of divisional boards, an effort fostered by publication of Fleck Report in 1953 (Ashworth, 1986: 194-196). Despite a certain opposition to this centralization drive, the argument that the homogeneity of the industry allows for centralized management prevailed. Also, after a turbulent first half of the 1950s when stoppages among pieceworkers caused great output losses, in 1956 the uniform daywage system which encompassed almost all workers except faceworkers was introduced. However, the agreement did not resolve the issues related to the existence of piece-rates for 45 percent of the workforce, the large majority of which were employed at the coalface.

Table 3.15: Strike Trends, Coal Mining, Great Britain,  
1923-1979

Year	Frequency(1)	Involvement(2)	Loss ratio(3)
1923-30	122	211	16,900
1931-9	274	201	1,100
1940-5	897	319	1,070
1946-9	1,290	284	753
1950-9	1,950	284	671
1960-9	1,520	241	697
1970-9	661	354	5,780

Notes:

- (1) number of strikes per million employees
- (2) number of workers involved per thousand employees
- (3) number of days lost per thousand employees

Source:

P.K. Edwards, 1986: Table 5.4

Table 3.16: Strike Activity, Coal Mining, Great Britain, 1946-1973

Year	Number of stoppages	Workers involved	Workdays lost
1946	1,329	216,600	422,000
1950	860	141,900	431,000
1955	1,783	353,600	1,112,000
1960	1,666	237,400	494,000
1965	740	117,600	412,000
1970	160	117,500	1,090,000
1971	135	22,800	63,000
1972	224	341,500	10,798,000
1973	301	46,600	90,000

Source:

Durcan et al., 1983: Table 8.1



In the mid-1960s, the NUM, which previously had an ambiguous position regarding the issue of piece-work, had gradually moved in favor of a day wage for face workers, without any incentive element. Despite the opposition coming from large collieries, the National Power Loading Agreement (NPLA) of 1966 was ratified across all the NUM's areas (Howell, 1989: 21-22). This agreement established a uniform wage structure across the grades of workers and regions. In terms of management, enactment of the NPLA meant abandoning the traditional, wage-based method of labor control in favor of work-study methods (Kreiger, 1983: 34). However, as several observers contend, the NPLA was not successful in instilling greater managerial control over miners (e.g., Kreiger, 1983; Church, 1990).

As the data in Table 3.16 indicate, the passage of NPLA coincided with a dramatic decline of strikes. Yet, it would be premature to conclude that this decrease signified a similarly dramatic decline in miners' militancy. In fact, one consequence of the introduction of a new wage system was a change in the pattern of miners' militancy. Specifically, the NPLA diminished the differentials between various groups of workers and regions. This in turn led to a decline in the number of local work stoppages over wages, on the one hand, and the creation of a national, wage-based militancy, on the other hand. While the proportion of stoppages over pay decreased from 40 percent to 20 percent between 1966-1971 (see Durcan et al., 1983), at the beginning of the 1970s, a more widespread, wage-based militancy spread across British coalfields and affected even traditionally less militant coalfields (Howell, 1989: 28-29), including two national stoppages in 1972 and 1974.<sup>21</sup> Thus, after a period of labor-

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<sup>21</sup> Based on through examination of strike patterns in different British industries, Durcan et al. (1983) uncovered a relationship between the method of wage settlement and strike patterns. That is, during the period when wages were determined locally, many short and relatively small-scale strikes occurred in the industry. After the NPLA brought about the uniformization

management cooperation similar to the United States, in Great Britain, the end of 1960s was marked by the intensification of fierce industrial conflicts in coal mining.

Importantly, similar to the United States, the high levels of labor activism in the post-war period were due to challenges to the Coal Board and government industrial policies brought about by rank-and-file workers (Howell, 1989: 20-28). Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the NUM leadership co-operated with both the government and the NCB in pit closures and modernization of the industry. Even in 1967 when closures increased, top NUM officials did not challenge the more aggressive downsizing of the industry. In 1968 when resentment grew and some NUM's delegates to a Special National Delegate conference advocated industrial action, Gormley's strategy of a cooperative dialogue with the government dominated discussions within the union (Howell, 1989: 15-20). At the beginning of the 1970s, the union became more responsive to rank-and-file workers. One sign of upcoming changes was the 1971 NUM Delegate Conference vote to change the majority required to call a strike from 66 to 55 percent, thus paving the way for the first national stoppage since 1926.

Given that the new wage system created a high degree of miners' solidarity which, in turn, influenced union politics, the NCB began considering different strategies to create the more peaceful industrial relations. In 1974, a Coal Board official drafted a proposal to pacify labor militancy by reversing the growth of left political influence in the NUM. Looking to the longer term, the report encouraged introducing automation and reducing the number of mines and the proportion of NUM members as ways of undermining the unwelcome influence of the militant left. A short-term strategy, according to the proposal, would be to meet the economic

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of wages and eroded certain wage differentials, the industry experienced a series of national strikes.

demands of miners:

One step in this direction would be to revert to some form of local pit or district incentives based upon Agreements negotiable locally which would restore to some of the traditionally moderate leaders the authority and influence they have increasingly lacked since the NPLA and the Third Wage Structure (cited in Howell, 1989: 49).

The appearance of this report marked the beginning of the battle to break the emerging miners' solidarity by recreating wage differentials and fostering competition across the coalfields.

Compared to the United States, the British authorities responded in a different way to miners' militancy, yet the NCB response created a situation wherein Great Britain started converging with the United States. Namely, in 1977/78, the incentive scheme was re-introduced in British coal mining. This occurred despite the fact that the rank-and-file voted to reject a new scheme in 1977. In this situation, the Executive Office of the NUM decided to permit individual areas to negotiate their own incentive schemes.<sup>22</sup> The NUM's move had far-reaching consequences for industrial relations. Under the previous, day-wage system, decisions regarding workers' income were made at the level of the industry. This payment system was largely redistributive; that is economic gains made in the more efficient pits were shared by the weaker ones, hence preventing competition among the mines and coalfields within an area. Under the incentive system, while the NUM and NCB decided on a "reasonable performance standard," a substantive part of the miners' income was obtained through

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<sup>22</sup> According to Crick (1985: 76-77), this set a precedent with regard to NUM's internal politics. First, Gormley created a situation wherein he used his power as a president and support he enjoyed from the National Executive Office to make decisions regarding the incentive scheme without attending to decisions made by the delegate conference or union membership. Second, it was the first time when the idea of localized decision-making--area by area--was used by union leadership.

decentralized, workplace bargaining. Within this scheme, payment procedures were negotiated by the pit managers and the local NUM lodge (Edwards and Heery, 1985: 40). This, in turn, meant that mines started competing with each other, and that the importance of locals relative to the national union increased.

### **C. Poland**

While I was unable to obtain first-hand data on strikes in Polish coal mining industry, overviews compiled by others indicate that after a short period of labor militancy immediately after the end of the World War II, similar to the United States, industrial relations in the Polish coal-mining industry were mainly cooperative (Jaros, 1973: 79).<sup>23</sup> The government, the party, and trade unions used this time to centralize industrial relations and to wrestle the control over industrial management from the workplace to the state level. The first attempt at decentralizing industrial management in the Polish economy, including coal mining, occurred in June 1956 when the metal workers in the Cegielski factory went on strike to oppose the centralization and bureaucratization of industrial management and trade unions (Kolankiewicz, 1973; Woodall, 1982).

While the available information about the extent of miners' activism during this time is very cursory, it appears that in the fall of 1956 there were strikes in a few coal mines over the issue of overtime and, in some cases, members of supervisory personnel were removed (Jaros,

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<sup>23</sup> Specifically, Jaros (1973: 79) reports that 32 strikes occurred in Polish coal mining in 1945, 48 in 1946 and 18 in 1947. In 1951 strikes over the extension of the work time to 8.5 hours occurred in Silesia-Dabrowa (Rolicki, 1990: 32-34).

1973: 173). Importantly, similar to some other industries, in coal mining there was a bottom-up effort at the formation of workers' councils. In 1957, workers' councils existed in 80 coal mines, encompassing 2300 members of which 64 percent were blue-collar workers (Jaros, 1973: 219).<sup>24</sup> Another consequence of this bottom-up movement was a new collective agreement which, with minor changes, spanned the years between 1957 and 1970. The most important provision of the 1957 agreement was the reduction of underground work time from 8.5 hours to 7.5 hours.<sup>25</sup>

While in 1970 and in 1975 two major strike waves shook the country, miners did not participate in these strikes. In fact, it was not until the introduction of the four-shift organization of work in 29 coal mines between 1978-1980 that miners' activism emerged at the beginning of the 1980s. The introduction of this new system resulted in hiring 17,000 miners which seriously strained the housing capacities in the coal region. Also, the four-shift system, which allows for continuous mining wherein each shift works 8 hours and begins work where the other shift left it, decreased the time devoted to equipment maintenance and resulted in an increase in accidents. At the same time, trying to increase coal production even more, management introduced compulsory work on weekends (Rola, 1981: 142-144).

Not surprisingly, then, research on the introduction of the four-shift work system

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<sup>24</sup> However, by 1958, after the Fourth Trade Union Congress, worker's councils were absorbed into the broader Conference of Worker's Self-Government which also included trade unions and Party, hence, curbed the councils' autonomy. To allow unions to control workers' councils even better, the 1958 Act on Workers' Self-Government made trade unions responsible for the organization of the elections to workers' councils.

<sup>25</sup> In reality, it was not until 1961-1962 that the work time for the underground workers was actually shortened to 7,5 hours. In 1965 the work in Sundays and holidays was generally abolished.

conducted by a group of sociologists from the University of Silesia indicated that 63.2 percent of respondents who had not worked in this system did not approve of it (Jacher et al., 1980). Three major reasons underlie this negative attitude: (1) the necessity of working on Sundays; (2) problems with the organization of the family life; and (3) the extension of daily work. In terms of the positive aspects of the change, miners emphasized the increased number of free days. Interestingly enough, miners' evaluation of both the positive and negative aspects of the change was based on its impact on the work/private life nexus. Among miners who had already worked with this system, 68.8 percent indicated that the change was imposed against their will; 46.5 percent reported that the relationships between workers and supervisors worsened after the change; and 49.3 percent indicated increased problems with organizing their family lives. Further, a happy family life was reported to be the most important value for this group of respondents. While the Trade Union of Miners cooperated with management in introducing this change in work organization, as the events of 1980 will show, this reorganization was strongly opposed by rank-and-file miners and resulted in a first wave of miners' strikes since the 1950s.

#### **D. Summary**

In sum, prior to 1980 industrial relations in the coal mining industry in all three countries were characterized by periods of conflict and accommodation, with unions being cooperative most of time. In terms of trends in labor activism as measured by strike frequencies, involvement, and workdays loss ratio, it appears that, contrary to the structuralist

thesis, U.S. miners were at least as militant as their British counterparts. Specifically, U.S. figures present higher degrees of both miners' involvement in strikes and workdays loss ratio. The situation is more complex with regard to strike frequencies: until 1970, British strike frequency appears higher than the U.S. figures, but during the decade of the 1970s these figures reverse. In a large part, this reversal was due to the increase in wildcat strikes in the U.S. coal mining, partly a sign of miners' disenchantment with the politics of union leadership. Finally, while the Polish strike data is very cursory, Polish miners appear to be the least militant, as compared to their British or U.S. counterparts--a finding that directly contradicts the structuralist notion that the more centralized social organization the more militant labor force. In terms of miners' unions, while only the UMWA politics were openly challenged by the miners, in all three countries the rank-and-file appears to be more radical than the more cooperatively disposed union leadership.

In terms of arenas of struggle, wages were an important arena of conflict in both Great Britain and the United States. For Polish miners, overtime and industrial relations centralization were the main issues during the work stoppages in the 1950s. Also, at the end of the 1960s the politics of a highly centralized and autocratically run national union became the most important contested arena in the United States. As a result of the intensification of industrial unrest, the 1974 agreement contained three provisions: the establishment of mine committees and the Arbitration Review Board, on the one hand, and a disciplinary measure, on the other hand. The goal of encouraging workers' participation while tightening work discipline was to foster labor-management cooperation and prevent industrial conflict. However, the creation of the new grievance resolution procedure resulted in more, not less,

industrial conflicts.

Also, towards the end of the 1970s, despite the differences in structural pressures and productivity patterns, labor productivity became an important arena of managerial offensive in all three countries. Specifically, the UMWA agreed to establish decentralized productivity deals to foster productivity increases. In Great Britain, the NUM agreed to reintroduce the incentive scheme, thereby contributing to the creation of wage differential among miners and competition across the coalfields. In Poland, the most important change towards the end of the decade was the introduction of the four-shift work organization whose goal was to increase labor productivity.

Finally, as my discussion in this section suggests, prior to 1980 some aspects of industrial management regarding productivity, wages, grievances, and so forth went through processes of centralization/decentralization in all three industries. In the United States, the establishment of mine committees, local productivity deals and grievance machinery signifies an attempt at fostering miners' participation regarding local issues, on the one hand, and decentralization of wage deals, on the other hand. In Great Britain, decision-making regarding wages was first centralized to the national level in 1966 and subsequently decentralized to mine level in 1978/79. In Poland, similar to Great Britain, industrial relations went first through a process of centralization until 1956 and experienced a decentralization after the wave of strikes that occurred in 1956. Thus, as I will discuss in a more detail in the next chapter, processes of centralization/ decentralization occurred in all three cases, although with regard to different decision-making topics and dimensions.



#### IV. Summary and Discussion

In terms of structural patterns of similarities and differences, the findings in this chapter suggest that, although different in some important ways, the coal-mining industries of the United States and Great Britain show more similarities than either of these countries with Poland. Specifically, the main indicators of the industry's economic performance after World War II, such as production and employment patterns, display an apparent divergence between the situation of Polish coal mining and its British and U.S. counterparts. In turn, the indicators for these two latter countries show more similarities. While part of the differences between Polish and two other industries could be attributed to the varying experiences of destruction during World War II, another part could be related to the changes of the political-economic environment of the industry as well as to the ownership transformation. In this context, it appears that despite its nationalization, the coal-mining industry in Great Britain tended to perform more like a capitalist than a socialist industry. However, since the coal industry in Great Britain was sheltered from market forces, it would be difficult to attribute this similarity to the effects of competitive energy markets. Rather, this convergence needs to be attributed to the state's and NCB's policies regarding the industry.

Next, as I suggested in Chapter One, from the structuralist perspective, if capitalist hegemony exists, arenas of struggle in the United States and Great Britain should remain the same over time within these countries, but should diverge from the arenas of struggle in socialism. In order to determine the adequacy of this claim, I briefly examined the main arenas of struggle in the coal mining industry in the United States, Great Britain and Poland prior to

1980. From this analysis it appears that, although employment issues had a potential to emerge as an arena of struggle, in no industry employment became important arenas of confrontation between labor and management, but the issue of productivity did in all three countries. Thus, despite structural differences in the patterns of the industry's growth or contraction, there was an important similarity in industrial behavior across national boundaries. One important difference between the United States and Great Britain, on the one side, and Poland, on the other side, was the fact that whereas in the former countries technological change was accompanied by workforce reduction and pit closures, in the latter employment increased and number of mines remained almost intact. This finding suggests the possibility that the macro-structural differences fostered different patterns of managerial responses across two different political-economic systems. However, in all three countries unions did not resist technological change in any major way. Thus, although technological change constituted a potential arena of struggle, in reality it was not problematic in any of the three countries.

Moreover, in the context of the technological changes occurring in all three countries, the differences in labor productivity patterns between the United States and Great Britain, on the one hand, and Poland, on the other hand, suggest that, compared to former, the politics of the Polish miners during the 1970s were marked by stability and cooperation.

The general trends in miners' earnings discussed in this chapter suggest more similarities between the relative position of miners in the United States and Great Britain than between these countries and Poland. Also, the issue of wages was an important arena of labor-management conflict in the two former countries, and not in Poland. At the same time, my discussion of miners' wages in all three countries suggests that their wages were probably

sufficient to support their families. Further, my analysis of the introduction of the four-shift system in Poland suggests that the functioning of the family-employment nexus was an important element of miners' dissatisfaction with this work organization.

The recognition of gender, as called for by the relational model, adds a new dimension to the analysis of miners' activism despite the lack of additional data. First, we can speculate that, when gender ideology and structure define men as the breadwinner, this situation structures the dependence of the entire household on his employment for survival. This greatly constrains his ability to withdraw labor effort. At the same time, however, his high wage becomes more essential to the overall well-being of the household and the reproduction of his dominance therein. In this context, gender, understood in terms of the nexus between workplace and household, directs our attention to the relation among wages, miner's age and family status. That is, young miners, who do not tend to have large families, may be more willing to strike. Based in this and on the fact that the introduction of the four-shift system disrupted the functioning of the paid employment-family nexus, we should expect the U.S. and Polish miners to be more militant than British miners during the 1980s.

Importantly, then, prior to 1980 wages appear to be an important arena of struggle in the United States and Great Britain, but in Poland the issues of work time and overtime, and centralization of industrial relations were behind miners' activism in 1956. Further, since the NCB and the NUM had a primarily cooperative relationship, the NUM's participation in industrial management was not an arena of struggle until the 1970s. This situation changed towards the end of the decade when the NCB started to consider how it could curb the influence of a more militant union wing. Finally, the United States was different from Great

Britain, but similar to Poland, regarding centralization of union structures and its relation to miners' activism at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. In this context, if my analysis of the arenas of struggle during the 1980s shows that they have not changed substantially within any of the three countries and especially in Poland, and diverge across the socio-economic systems, it will substantiate Burawoy's hegemony versus bureaucratic despotism thesis.

Examining the market variables discussed above, from a theoretical standpoint, if we assume that these market variables indicate the existence of demand-driven structural pressures, two general points can be made. First, during the post-war period prior to the 1980s, coal mining in the United States, Great Britain and Poland experienced some kind of structural pressures related to overproduction in capitalist countries and a tight supply-demand balance in the socialist economy. Second, in the context of the diminishing role of coal in the U.S. and British economies between 1950-1970, the main issues that became important starting in the 1970s were to stop the decline and, then, maintain coal's share in more competitive markets. In contrast, in Poland the main concern was to increase coal production. Further, despite state regulation of coal prices and markets in Great Britain and Poland, over time Great Britain became more like the United States, which did not have nearly the same level of state economic intervention.

Thus, if we assume that, management in both countries would attempt to introduce changes in industrial relations that reflected a context of gradual output contraction and competitive markets, we should find similar processes of change occurring in the U.S. and British industries. Also, according to this logic, in the context of steady growth and lack of

market pressures in a centrally-planned economy, we should find a different pattern of change in the organization of the Polish coal mining industry.

In all, based on convergence in structural variables between the United States and Great Britain, and divergence between them and Poland, the structuralist perspective would predict that we should find more similarities in industrial behavior in the United States and Great Britain than in these two countries and Poland. However, prior to 1980, labor activism in the United States and Great Britain shows different patterns, with the U.S. pattern characterized by a greater number of stoppages which lasted longer and had a higher worker involvement, a finding which seems to support the relational thesis. Also, contrary to the structuralist prediction that labor activism will be highest in the context of centralized economic system, Polish miners appear to be the least militant and the most cooperative. Yet, the fact that Poland diverged from its capitalist counterparts appears to support the structuralist thesis about the importance of the macro-structural organization for the operation of the micro-level entities, such as an industry.

Before I turn to the analysis of the 1980s, I first need to establish three things. First, according to Burawoy, the state is an important explanatory variable in understanding patterns of working-class struggle (Chapter I). Thus, to determine if actors' activities and practices in British coal mining in the 1980s should be more similar to the practices in the U.S. or Polish coal-mining, I must define the role of the state in industrial relations. Second, since I defined centralization/ decentralization in terms of social processes rather than as general typologies characterizing socio-economic systems, I need to establish the nature of industrial relations in the 1970s so that I can determine not only cross-national similarities and differences but

historical changes in these variables as well. Third, according to the relational perspective, the internal organization of trade unions and their relationship with the rank-and-file workers as well as the activities of the latter are important for understanding the transformations of industrial relations. In the following chapter, then, I establish the nature of these variables prior to 1980.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN THE U.S., BRITISH**  
**AND POLISH COAL MINING PRIOR TO 1980:**  
**AN OVERVIEW**

In this chapter I analyze the main characteristics of industrial relations in the coal-mining industries in each country prior to 1980. After a discussion of similarities and differences in state involvement in industrial management in the United States, Great Britain and Poland, I examine the processes of centralization/ decentralization of industrial structures and employers' organizations. Next, after comparing and contrasting the character of the main industrial institutions through which miners or their representatives participated in industrial management, I explore the processes of centralization/decentralization of the major unions in all three coal-mining industries. The purpose of this historical sketch is to lay the groundwork for examining Burawoy's contention about institutional decentralization in capitalism and institutional centralization in socialism. Also, in line with the insight provided by the relational approach that union structures play an important role in labor activism, I examine the character of worker participatory institutions, including union structures in all three countries, an aspect of industrial relations neglected in Burawoy's analyses. Thus, the analysis in this chapter will provide a reference point against which the changes in industrial relations during the 1980s can be assessed.

## **I. State Involvement**

The nature of the relationships between the state and the workplace is crucial for Burawoy's conceptualization of East-West dichotomy, especially of differences in patterns of workers' struggles. In this section I analyze the nature of state intervention in the coal-mining industry to determine the patterns of similarities and differences in the state's involvement for all three countries.

Government regulation of coal mining can be discussed in relation to four general categories. First, state intervention can occur in the area of health and safety standards. Second, the government can regulate the economics of the industry through measures related to environment, protection of domestic energy markets, taxes, and subsidies, and it can also regulate pensions, wages, production, and so on. Third, the state can influence the conduct of industrial relations in the industry, including such things as mediating labor disputes and grievance procedures. Finally, the state can regulate internal union affairs. I will discuss each of these arenas in relation to all three countries below.

### **1. Health and Safety**

During the post-war period, the governments of all three countries became involved in the regulation of mine safety, an arena of employment relations, mainly through legislative and institutional means. For example, the passage of the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act in 1969 in the United States created the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA).



MSHA established quite stringent health and safety principles and standardized them at the national level (Conaway, 1972).

The counterparts to MSHA in two other countries were The Mines Inspectorate in Great Britain and the Main Inspectorate of Safety and Health in Poland. In addition, in both countries, the state controlled such institutional bodies as safety research boards and medical services which were delivered free of charge.<sup>26</sup> Thus, with regard to state involvement in regulating health and safety, with exception of socialized health care for miners in Great Britain and Poland, its character and degree have been fairly similar across the countries during the post-war period.

## **2. Strategic Management**

The governments in all three countries have been regulating the environmental impact of the coal-mining industry, including different air quality acts, sulfur emission, land reclamation, and slag heaps. Hence, each has influenced costs associated with the production and burning of coal. Also, all three governments have been shaping the industry's market environment, including restricting imports and promoting the use of domestic coal. In this way, the governments have been regulating coal production and consumption patterns, aspects of strategic industrial management. What differed somewhat across all three countries, at least until the end of the 1970s, was state involvement in other arenas of industrial relations.

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<sup>26</sup> In the wake of nationalization, the NCB formed its own safety-oriented institutions, operating within the legislative framework established by the government, and its own medical service (Ashworth, 1985: 525-530). For a comparative discussion of the coal mine safety regulation in the United States and Poland see Hamilton (1983).

### **A. The United States**

Among the decision-making arenas summarized in Table 1.1, the United States government was involved in two strategic arenas: pension funding and recognizing workers' right to collective representation. In terms of employment relations, after the 1974 contract established the Arbitration Review Board (ARB), the government became involved in grievance arbitration.<sup>27</sup> Also, while both British and Polish industries were directly subsidized by the state, through investment or cost/price subsidies, some state governments in the United States subsidized coal producers indirectly through such means as tax exemptions (Szakos, 1989).

### **B. Great Britain**

Although the extent and nature of the British government's involvement in the industrial management of coal industry was more pronounced than in the United States, day-to-day operational management was decentralized to the level of the National Coal Board. In this context, the ministers were primarily responsible for giving "directions of a general character" (Coal Industry Nationalization Act, 1946, Section 3). Still, in the wake of nationalization the state became strongly involved in determining strategic policies, including investments, prices, appointment to top managerial positions, and in different aspects of welfare, such as pension funds (Coal Industry Nationalization Act, 1946, Section 2). The state was also implicated in regulating production volume, an aspect of the production process, and wages, an aspect of

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<sup>27</sup> The ARB was a tripartite organization involving one representative of each, the UMW, the BCOA, and a Chief Umpire, a neutral member (Valtin, 1978).

employment relations (Church, 1990: 46). Finally, similar to the United States, the state also had a hand in grievance arbitration, an aspect of employment relations at the colliery, district, and national levels. As a result, as Essenberg (1985: 22) reports, the government was involved in the management of the industry and appointed arbitrators.

Importantly, until the 1970s the industry was quite generously subsidized by the government through investment grants. However, since the mid-1970s, the financial situation of coal mining has changed significantly. In 1977 the Labour Government passed the Coal Industry Act which imposed limits on the borrowing powers of the NCB. This policy signaled the first step towards financial reform of the industry. In the early 1980s, the Conservative Government imposed External Financing Limits, i.e. "a maximum amount of new borrowing plus government grants, fixed for each financial year" (Ashworth, 1985: 415), as a part of its more general policy of commercialization and denationalization of state-owned industries. While the toughest measures came with the 1980 Coal Industry Act which mandated that the industry be largely self-sufficient by 1983/84, the scope of possible denationalization was already outlined in May 1978 in a final report of the Conservative party's policy group on the nationalized industries, the so-called "Ridley Plan."

For the coal mining industry, the Ridley Plan proposed formation of worker co-operatives at the pit level as a denationalization strategy. Since the authors expected trade unions' resistance to commercialization of the industry, which "might mean that men would be laid off or uneconomic pits would be closed down, or the whole business sold off or liquidated" (The Economist, 27 May, 1978: 21), the plan also considered strategies to counter unions' opposition. Along these lines, the plan proposed that government "(a) build up maximum coal

stocks, particularly at the power stations; (b) make contingency plans for the import of coal; (c) encourage the recruitment of non-union lorry drivers by haulage companies to help move coal where necessary; [and] (d) introduce dual coal/oil firing in all power stations as quickly as possible" (The Economist, 27 May, 1978: 22). Thus, not only did the two consecutive British governments make efforts to expose the industry to market forces, but plans were also made to prepare the Conservative government for a future confrontation with labor.

### **C. Poland**

The end of the World War II brought about the nationalization of Polish economy, including the coal industry, and increasing degree of state control over all three dimensions of industrial management. Industrial management in coal mining was decentralized immediately after nationalization. However, in 1949 the emergence of a new and powerful actor in the industrial management arena, the Central Planning Commission (CPC) headed by Hillary Minc, centralized some important decision-making processes at the state level.

Specifically, between 1950-1955 the coal industry's autonomy, including particular administrative levels, was gradually curbed by the CPC as it generated more and more economic guidelines and indicators regarding production volume, employment level, productivity, raw material utilization, wages, social service expenditures, and costs (Jaros, 1973: 116). This meant two things. First, it shifted the locus of operational control of state-owned enterprises from the sectorial Ministry of Coal Mining and Energy, the Polish counterpart to the British NCB, to the central planning body. Second, it polarized planning

functions and productive operations. In other words, planning and management became centralized through directives at the state level, and plan execution was separated from decision-making processes and located at the enterprise and mine levels.

In 1956, the first attempt by workers at the reform of the Polish economy occurred. Two basic changes in the relationship between the state and mining enterprises concerning industrial management ensued. First, the enterprise's prerogatives regarding planing, production, investments, employment, and wages were extended. Second, the number of indicators provided by the Central Planning Commission was limited to eight: the value of production; the volume of production of the most important assortments; the total value of wage funds, profits and losses; taxes or state subsidies; state allotments for investments, financial limits on depreciation, and the overall financial budget for the enterprise (Jaros, 1973: 168). Although, the mining enterprises lost part of their decision-making autonomy to associations during the 1970s, the state's nature of involvement in industrial management regarding strategic and production policies largely remained the same. In contrast to British government's efforts to cut coal mining subsidies and expose it to market forces at the end of the 1970s, no such attempts were made in Poland until the end of the 1980s.

### **3. Regulation of Other Aspects of Industrial Relations**

#### **A. The United States**

All three countries' governments have been involved in industrial relations by passing

labor and employment laws, declaring union activities legal or illegal, granting or forbidding the right to strike, and so forth. For example, a United States government agency, the National Labor Relations Board, has been involved in industrial relations in the coal-mining industry in several ways, including adjudicating unfair labor practices, determining appropriate bargaining units in representation cases, and conducting elections. Also, the United States government has intervened in industrial relations through creating ad hoc institutions, such as the Commission on Coal established by president Carter during the 1977-78 coal strike, stepping in during industrial conflicts, or nominating dispute mediators.

## **B. Great Britain**

Until the Thatcher Conservative government passed four major labor laws, industrial relations in Great Britain were characterized by voluntarism and governed by common law. A distinctive feature of British industrial relations in the coal mining industry was the functioning of a tripartite system of conciliation and consultation in which the state played a vital role. In terms of industrial disputes, the first interesting development during the nationalized industrial era occurred during the 1972/73 dispute when the government became involved relatively early (Ashworth, 1986: 334). One of the unintended consequences of this dispute, wherein industrial conflict led to the change of the government, was increased interest, and subsequently involvement, of Conservative governments in industrial relations, especially in the coal-mining industry. Still, since the National Coal Board was not a part of British government structure and, according to law, was a public corporation, the role of the state as an employer was much

more ambiguous than in Poland.

### **C. Poland**

The Polish government's involvement in industrial relations was shaped by the fact that the state acted as the employer and as a side in collective agreements. Practically, this meant that in the case of industrial conflict, the party or the government would generally become a side in this conflict. Furthermore, in addition to entering in collective agreements, the Ministry of Coal Mining would delineate the basic content of collective agreements by listing the points to be included in an agreement, including matters related to the production process such as organization of socialist competition, efficient use of production materials, and so forth.

## **4. Regulation of Union's Internal Affairs**

### **A. The United States**

In the United States, the most important legislation regulating internal union affairs and rights of union members was the 1959 Landrum-Griffin Act. The goal of this act was to strengthen union democracy by requiring unions to hold elections of their local and international officials. In the 1970s, the federal district courts used the Landrum-Griffin Act to grant free elections of district officials to eight districts of the UMWA. As a result, at the end of May, 1972, 12 districts had full autonomy from union leadership (Nyden, 1974: 355).

Combined with the commitment of the new union leadership to grant autonomy to all districts, this signalled the UMWA's most important organizational reform during its post-war history.

### **B. Great Britain**

In Great Britain, until the passage of the 1980 Employment Act, which restricted closed shops, and the 1984 Trade Union Act which required ballots before a national strike, the British government had largely restrained itself from intervening in internal union affairs, a situation which Clegg (1979) calls "the abstention of the law." This does not mean that union's functioning was not regulated, however. For example, the 1906 Trade Union Act protected unions' immunity from civil actions, and the 1965 Trade Union Disputes Act protected individual members of the union from losing their employment contracts (Clegg, 1979: 294-295). In addition, nationalization of the coal industry created an institutional structure which protected the NUM. The NCB, the state agency which managed the industry, gave NUM "quasi-closed-shop rights" and deducted union dues directly from wages (McCormick, 1979: 63). Yet, compared to the U.S., Great Britain represents less regulation of internal union affairs.

### **C. Poland**

In contrast, the Polish state and especially the Party, has been greatly involved in unions' internal matters. For example, despite the fact that trade unions are officially



sanctioned by the state as independent organizations, in reality, immediately following World War II the Party initiated a unified trade union movement whose main functions were established by the Party itself (Kantyka, 1990). Until the emergence of Solidarity, the statuses of Polish trade unions, including the Trade Union of Miners, had to officially recognize the primacy of the Party's rule. The 1949 Trade Union Act gave union recognition rights to the Central Board of Trade Unions (CBTU). This meant that new unions could be established only by the CBTU. Similarly to Great Britain, the Trade Union of Miners' functioning was protected by the state and union dues were automatically deducted from the wages.

## **5. Summary**

Prior to the 1980s, then, the governments of all three countries had been involved in the coal-mining industry's operations through regulating mine safety, the conduct of industrial relations, and the industry's economics. In this regard, it appears that the U.S. government was the least involved in industrial management, the Polish government was the most involved, and the British government fell in-between. Importantly, however, the degree of state involvement changed over time, especially in Great Britain and Poland. In Great Britain, state involvement appears to increase over time, especially towards the end of the 1970s. In Poland, after a short period of centralization and subsequent decentralization of Polish coal-mining's industrial management became the most centralized among all three countries. Importantly, then, contrary to Burawoy's ahistorical image of bureaucratic despotism, the degree of state intervention in the industry has changed over time, with the period between 1949 and 1956

being characterized by the most pronounced degree of state presence at the point of production.

Also, while the Polish government has sheltered the industry from market forces, the British government had sheltered its coal-mining industry from the market only until the late 1970s.. Since then its politics have changed, and the British coal industry began operating more as a private than as a state-owned enterprise. In this regard then, over time, industrial management in the British industry began resembling the United States industry more than a state-run industry.

With regard to centralization of industrial relations concerning internal union matters, it appears that British union's internal politics were the least influenced by the government and Polish the most. Also, while the differences between United States and British governments concerning their intervention in union internal affairs were initially quite pronounced, as the British government became more interested in industrial relations, these differences have diminished. By the beginning of the 1980s the differences were not really big. Thus, despite some differences, in terms of state intervention in the industry and in union activities, Great Britain and the United States appear to be more similar than either of them and Poland.

Importantly, while the divergence between Poland and its two capitalist counterparts, especially Great Britain, could be in part understood by the macro-economic differences, it is also important to note the divergence between the politics of the Polish United Worker's Party (PUWP) which assumed close control over industrial relations and the politics of the Labour Party in Great Britain which rather abstained from intervening in industrial matters. From the relational perspective the similarity between the convergence of the U.S. and Great Britain, or, alternatively, the divergence between Poland and Great Britain, could be attributed to the

politics of social actors. Interpreted along the lines of structuralist perspective, this finding regarding the structural variables provides one more reason for the existence of more similarities in industrial behavior between the United States and Great Britain than for either of these countries and Poland.

## **II. Employers and Industrial Structures**

According to the relational perspective, organizational centralization or decentralization can be conceptualized as processes occurring at different structural levels, rather than as general typologies characterizing socio-economic systems. Along these lines, I defined industrial relations as encompassing, among other things, organizations that directly govern work and employment relations and the long-term industrial policies. Also, I defined the subject matter of industrial relations as the processes of control over industrial management, that is, control over decision-making regarding to production process, employment relations and the strategic dimension of industrial policies. In this section, I will analyze the changes of the industry's organizational framework, especially the centralization/decentralization of collective bargaining, to provide the historical context for changes that occurred in the 1980s and to determine if by looking at industrial behavior in all three countries we can gain a better understanding of centralization/ decentralization processes.

## **1. Background**

### **A. The United States**

During the industry's formative period, entrance into the coal- mining business was relatively easy and, hence, attracted large numbers of entrepreneurs. Strong competition among small coal operators resulted in attempts to cut wages. Indeed, struggles over miners' wages, which accounted for 50 to 80 percent of mining costs, were at the center of many industrial conflicts prior to 1980. Also, while until the 1940s, labor relations were characterized by miners' control over the production process, coal operators' controlled work hours and the size of the workforce. In addition, the institution of the company town bolstered miners' and their families' dependence on employment for survival (Roy, 1907).

### **B. Great Britain**

Until Labour Government's Coal Industry Nationalization Act on 12 July 1946, the industrial relations and governing institutions in British coal mining had not changed much during the twentieth century. In terms of ownership, coal mines were owned by a large number of private companies operating under government supervision which included an element of institutional control, economic subsidy, safety regulations, and a continued interest in the shape of industrial relations, production, and the trade of coal. For example, Supple (1987: 361) reports that both in 1913 and in 1924 there were around 1,400 mining firms and

2,600 mines in Great Britain. The situation changed by 1938 when the "business population" of the industry dropped down to some 1,000 firms and 1,900 mines. Compared to United States bituminous coal-mining, which, prior to World War II, consisted of some 5,000-6,000 mines owned by about 5,000 operating companies (1950 Bituminous Coal Annual: 8 and 12-13), in general, the British coal industry has been characterized by fewer, relatively smaller operations (Supple, 1987).

In term of industrial relations, Supple (1987: 37) also remarks that one of the industry's distinctive characteristics prior to nationalization had been the diversity of working practices and terms of employment. Indeed, some scholars suggest that industrial conflicts during the pre-war years were often the attempts at eradicating these differences at the national level (Church, 1990). In this context, nationalization of coal mining meant a trend towards uniformity in industrial relations, including employment and strategic policies.

If we look at the configuration of institutions governing coal mining--its production regime--even prior to nationalization, the industry had been characterized by a tripartite organization, involving the unions, employers associations, and the state. Thus, by 1939 "although there had been relatively little change in industrial organization, those involved in coal mining had become accustomed to a quite different context for their economic activities" (Supple, 1987: 598). The new context was the degree of state intervention in the industry. Nationalization brought about some changes in the ownership structure, the industry's organization, and in the nature of industrial relations, but the presence of state control over the industry and union participation in its operation did not signal anything radically different. However, the extent of state control and union participation in strategic management were

intensified through joint consultation machinery.

### **C. Poland**

Prior to the World War II, coal mines within the boundaries of Polish territory were owned by German, French and Austrian capital or by the state, especially in the Austrian part of Poland where some coal mines had been nationalized before the Polish government was installed. Although, plans had been made to eliminate foreign capital since 1917, these plans were not realized until 1945 when the Polish government nationalized 78 coal mines. In 1905 and 1918-1919, some of the coal mines located in the Dabrowa Basin were taken over by miners and administered under workers' control for a short period of time. However, as Jaros (1973: 23) reports, workers' committees did not have a clear vision of their long-term goals. Also, during the German occupation, workers' councils were created in several mines in all three major coalfields in Upper Silesia. Thus, even prior to nationalization Polish coal-mining experienced attempts at changing its ownership and allowing workers' involvement in industrial management at the mine level.

### **D. Summary**

Prior to World War II, the institutional histories of the coal-mining industry differed across all three countries. The United States were characterized by lack of industrial institutions, besides the UMWA which was organized in 1890 and restricted at least to some

extent coal operators' domination over the workforce; while similar to the United States, Great Britain was characterized by regional diversity of work and employment practices, in contrast to the United States, British government did intervene in the coal-mining industry; the distinctive feature of Polish industry was the experience of workers' involvement in industrial management at the mine level. From the relational perspective, these historical experiences are important for understanding patterns of workers' activism across national boundaries.

## **2. New Organizational Framework of the Coal-mining Industry Prior to 1980**

### **A. The United States**

During the first two post-war decades, both coal operators' politics and industrial structures underwent some critical changes. In 1950 coal operators and the union signed the 1950 National Wage Agreement, which marked a turning point in the history of coal-mining labor-management relations. At the same time, the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) was formed and the era of centralized, industry-wide bargaining relations began. In terms of scope, contracts between the UMWA and BCOA determine the wage contour and fringe benefits patterns for the industry. However, standardization of national wages across all union mines did not come about until 1960 (Miernyk, 1980: 17, 25 and ff. 68).<sup>28</sup>

A primary reason the BCOA was formed was because coal operators had to deal with a

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<sup>28</sup> Miernyk (1980: 25) notes that the notion of "industry-wide" may be easily misinterpreted. Coal mining has never been fully unionized. This implies that the term "industry-wide" means that the main operators and captive mines sign an agreement which does not cover everyone but can be accepted by small operators outside the association.

strong, centralized union. The creation of the BCOA meant that, instead of bargaining with the union individually or in small, independent groups, the coal operators could consolidate their bargaining resources and unify their bargaining strategy, hence, restrict labor-cost competition among themselves. Also, signing uniform, long-term contracts promised more industrial relations stability than more diversified and short-term agreements. Initially, the BCOA was a confederation of the three previously independent multi-employer bargaining groups--the Appalachian, southern and captive mine operators. For the first fifteen years, these three groups maintained their separate identities and sometimes signed different contracts. However, since around 1965, collective bargaining in the Eastern United States has been conducted essentially on an industry-wide basis and has been largely uniform across the associated operators (Perry, 1984: 78).

## **B. Great Britain**

Given that the British economy remained governed by capitalist principles, one might ask why the ownership of the British coal industry was transformed? Different explanations have been advanced, but two stand out. One important impetus to nationalization was the industrial conflict deriving from miners' negative attitudes about working for private operators (McCormick, 1978: 47). Another significant factor was the technological backwardness of the industry resulting from insufficient investments (Supple, 1987: 667). Nationalization was seen as a solution to the instability in production and industrial relations by eliminating competition and industrial conflicts fostered by private ownership. In fact, nationalization resulted in the



establishment of a bargaining and consultative structures, involving the representatives of the NCB and the NUM.

### **C. Poland**

Immediately after World War II several German-owned enterprises were taken over by the Temporary Polish Government and several other enterprises were taken over by workers' committees. Thus, the government's 1944 decree stating that Polish factories would be managed by three-person committees consisting of a director, a worker representative and a local government representative reflected the overall situation in Polish industry, including coal mining. However, the decree nationalizing the mining industry was not issued until January 1945. Contrary to Great Britain, where only some industries were nationalized, the Polish government took on the enormous task of nationalizing the entire economy, except for very small enterprises and part of agriculture. In the context of the post-war chaos, nationalization and a subsequent centralization of industrial relations were seen as "the only way out of the situation" (Stankiewicz and Montias, 1955:15).

Furthermore, while British nationalization was not connected to an ideology of workers' control, Polish nationalization was tied to the ascendance of a pro-worker ideology and the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as the main ideological principle. For instance, another decree passed in February 1945 granted workers' committees the right to participate in decision-making processes with regard to production norms and wages, and obliged management to report about production outcomes (Golebiowski, 1970: 510). Thus, compared

to Great Britain, the process of nationalization in Poland was related to at least some level of acceptance of workers' participation in industrial management at the enterprise level, but not at the industry level.

#### **D. Summary**

According to the relational perspective, centralization/decentralization processes result from struggles over control of work and employment relations, and strategic industrial policies. In all three countries, the organizational framework of the coal-mining industry went through a series of changes, among which the process of centralization of industrial relations was an important event. The creation of the BCOA in the United States, the NCB in Great Britain, and the Ministry of Mining in Poland meant that the unions had to conduct centralized bargaining. In a long run, this change served to standardize some aspects of employment relations for the industry, such as wages. Further, in all three countries, the process of centralization of industrial relations was intended by the management as a way to stabilize the industry and gain control over it. However, each country created different industrial structures and methods of management to realize this goal.

### **3. Industrial Management**

Theoretical arguments provided by the relational perspective require tracing the processes of centralization/ decentralization of industrial relations. As discussed in Chapter

Two, indicators of centralization of industrial relations include the degree of centralization of industrial management measured by the number of organizational levels where different issues are decided and at what organizational level most decisions pertaining to the processes of production, work, and employment relations and general industrial policies are made. In the following section, I will continue comparing and contrasting the centralization of industrial relations in all three countries prior to 1980.

### **A. The United States**

One of the most important developments among coal companies prior to 1980 was a slow trend towards the concentration of the traditionally decentralized ownership structure of the industry which became apparent at the end of 1960s. This merger activity could be attributed to the fact that coal companies needed to generate the capital necessary to mechanize the mines. While in 1925, for example, the 714 largest mines (10 percent of all mines) produced more than 50 percent of coal, by 1970, 307 mines (5.5 percent of all mines) produced almost 60 percent of all coal (Nyden, 1975: 160). The concentration trend becomes even more pronounced if the top companies are compared. For instance, in 1941 the top 10 companies accounted for 21.4 percent of total coal output and the top 25 companies, 33.4 percent. By 1975, the top 15 companies produced 45.8 percent of total tonnage (Bituminous Coal Annual, 1953; Keystone Coal Industry Manual, 1977). While it is difficult to assess the impact of these changes on centralization of industrial relations, as Miernyk (1980: 9ff) notes, in the context of centralized bargaining, this increasing concentration, affected collective

bargaining politics in the industry "since they [large corporations] largely determine the strategy to be followed by the industry collective bargaining arm, the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA)." Thus, it is quite likely that collective bargaining favored the larger members of the association.

A second significant trend was the entrance of energy conglomerates in the coal-mining industry. This trend accounted for product and profit diversification, on the one hand, and for the fact that "decision making about coal companies became enmeshed in a set of considerations separate from the coal industry" (Couto, 1987: 191), on the other hand. For the union, this meant that it was facing corporations whose profits were coming from different sources, and thus were only partially dependent on the situation in coal mining. In this context, even a prolonged industrial conflict did not present a considerable threat to the company's survival. All in all, these two developments--concentration of the ownership structure and entrance of the energy conglomerates--meant the centralization of decision-making processes that affected a large section of the industry and contributed to the separation of the well-being of the mining communities from the well-being of the "coal" companies.

## **B. Great Britain**

The 1946 Coal Industry Nationalization Act established a management structure and organizational framework for the industry. Accordingly, the director and other members of the Board are appointed by the Minister of Fuel and Power. In terms of the relationship between the Ministry and the Board, the Act gives the Minister the powers to give "directions of a

general character" concerning the Board's functions that could "affect the national interest." The Board was also supposed to seek Minister's approval regarding strategic issues such as "programs of reorganization or development involving substantial outlay on capital account." Also, as Dunkerley and Hare (1991: 395) note, both the government and different ministries developed a variety of channels through which they could control the behavior of nationalized industries. Among these channels they list general macro-economic policies (prices/wages), ministerial guidelines and directives, White papers and special reports. Thus, while the Act somewhat limited the Ministry's day-to-day intervention into the NCB's operations, it placed final approval of strategic decisions in the hands of the Ministry. In this context, the NCB's importance was in restricting union's influence to the industry level. Instead of directly bargaining with the government, the National Union of Miners was negotiating with an "independent agency," whose existence created an institutional buffer between the top state officials and labor.

In terms of industrial management, in the 1970s the NCB's organizational structure was characterized by stability and continuity (Ashworth, 1986: 341-354, especially. 349). This does not mean, however, that there were no shifts among the three organizational levels. During the 1970s, decision-making processes were increasingly centralized at the middle level. Between 1972-1974, following national miners' strike, the new "coalfield areas" were formed through the mergers of distinct coalfields. These new organizational entities took over many issues that were previously the prerogative of pit management. Thereafter, some aspects of strategic matters related to pits' operation, such as financial targets, sources of supplies, contractors of output, were decided at a higher level.

In terms of its organizational structure, since 1967 British coal-mining has had three levels of industrial management: the National, Area, and pit level.<sup>29</sup> The National level, that is, the National Coal Board, negotiates the overall budget for the industry with the Government. It also provides a general framework within which areas and units operate. In terms of the NCB itself, operational, day-to-day matters are carried through management by objectives system. Under this system each level of management--Board, Area, and Colliery--has a set of responsibilities or, put differently, "each level of management gives clear objectives to the managers of the level below" (Parker, 1976: 643). All three levels have long-terms plans and medium-term plans which are reviewed annually.

The Areas are headed by a Director who is responsible to the National Coal Board. The Area management determines production targets for each individual pit in the form of an 18-month action program setting out different physical objectives, including the level of output, employment, productivity, production faces, development work and equipment requirements. The Area is responsible for marketing its own output as well as settling industrial disputes which can not be resolved at pit level. Pit closures are also decided by the Area Director in consultation with the NUM (Nuttal, 1989: 59). Pit managers have considerable autonomy within the Area management structure. For instance, they negotiate pit bonuses with NUM Lodge Secretaries and also decide how output targets are to be achieved. The introduction of the pit incentive scheme in 1976 increased the power of colliery managers relative to Area management, especially with regard to the production processes.

From the outset, then, the structure of the industry was such that the area managers

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<sup>29</sup> This discussion is based on a series of articles on the structure of the National Coal Board which appeared in Colliery Guardian in 1976 and 1977.

were, on the one hand, subordinate to the divisional boards functioning within the NCB, and, on the other hand, in charge of the mine's operations. This, plus the fact that towards the end of the 1970s the two levels of the NCB--Areas and the Headquarters--were operating according to different principles led to tensions between these two controlling systems. For the Headquarters, the financial matters were preponderant, especially in their dealings with the government. In contrast, the areas operated to meet physical indicators among which productivity was the most important (Hopper et al., 1985: 120).

### **C. Poland**

Regional associations can be seen as the Polish counterpart to British Areas. Until its dissolution in 1949, the Central Board of Coal Mining (CBCM) was the Polish equivalent of the NCB. After the CBCM's functions were taken over by the Ministry of Coal and Energy, the upper level of the organizational structure of Polish coal mining diverged from the institutional arrangements existing in the British industry.<sup>30</sup> There was no decentralization of political and operational control. The day-to-day management of the industry became the prerogative of a Ministry--a government body--not an autonomous state agency. However, I posit that, as in the two former cases, from the miners' standpoint, it did not actually matter whether the state, the company, or the corporation managers were the locus of decision-making. In all cases, important managerial functions were separated from the point of

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<sup>30</sup> Before it was liquidated, the CBCM was functionally responsible to the Ministry of Industry. In 1949 the Ministry was divided into 6 branch ministries, including the Ministry of Coal Mining and Energy. After these organizational changes the regional associations became directly responsible to the Ministry.

production and wrestled away from workers.

At the lowest level of industrial management, the mine level, this reorganization meant that coal mine managers lost some autonomy. Associations, which became directly subordinated to the Ministry of Mining and Energy located in Warsaw, functioned to coordinate, supervise and control the operation of the mines (Jaros, 1973: 38). Specifically, Jaros (1973: 32) observes, introduction of this new organizational scheme had three results. First, it limited the autonomy of the coal mines. Second, it undermined the principle of the three-person management, that is, management by the director, a local government representative, and a deputy of the worker crews. Third, the introduction of middle-level industrial management wrestled away strategic decision-making power from the workplace.<sup>31</sup> However, the establishment of worker's councils in 1956 had important implications for locus and level of industrial management at the workplace level. Worker's councils gained influence in decision-making concerning production processes, including work conditions, establishment of quotas and work rules, and employment relations. Thus, at the workplace level, industrial management concerning production processes was at least formally decentralized in the Polish coal industry.

Centralization of decision-making powers in the hands of the association's director began in 1966. The association director acquired the right to dismiss and appoint enterprise directors, to issue orders, and to establish financial indicators and norms. In the second part of the 1970s, several auxiliary operations related to coal mining, such as transportation,

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<sup>31</sup> Also during the first few years of independence from German occupation, the management and structure of supplies, as well as sales and distribution of the output, were gradually separated from the producing units (Jaros, 1973: 47-51).



supplies, and investment activities, began to be concentrated under the auspices of special enterprises functioning within the associations. Thus, in 1975, similar to Great Britain, the organizational structure of the Polish coal-mining industry consisted of only three levels--the Ministry of Mining, associations, and coal mines (Raport of Stanie Specjalnosci, 1984).

#### **D. Summary**

In sum, in the United States, the increasing concentration of production and the entrance of energy conglomerates affected collective bargaining politics in the industry in favor of big producers and reduced their dependence on coal production given their diversified nature. Nevertheless, the threat of a strike became a less effective option for workers. In Great Britain and Poland, industrial organization of coal mining consisted of three levels, with the middle-level providing a buffer between the upper and lower level of industrial management, thus, creating an image of decentralized management while strengthening managerial control. Importantly, during the 1970s in both Great Britain and Poland, the middle level of industrial management gained in importance relative to the workplace. If we view things from the miners' standpoint, it did not really matter whether the state, the company, or the corporation managers were the locus of strategic decision-making as these important managerial functions were separated from the point of production. Yet, while, at the industry level, industrial management was most centralized in Polish coal mining, it also had the least centralized management of the production process at the workplace level.

### **III. Participatory Institutions**

In Chapter Two I stated that the more decentralized industrial relations, the more labor and its representatives are involved in decision-making processes over substantive issues.

Thus, an adequate interpretation of centralization of industrial relations can be provided only if after we analyze the forms of participatory institutions--institutions through which workers can influence the decision-making processes regarding issues of vital interest for their well-being. In this section, then, I will turn to an analysis of participatory institutions in all three countries.

#### **1. Participatory Mechanisms**

##### **A. The United States**

Decision-making processes with regard to strategic policies are located at the company level. While some decisions regarding production processes and employment relations are made at the workplace level, the management is still the locus of these decisions. For example, a typical bargaining agreement between the UMWA and BCOA includes a clause saying that "the management of the mine, the direction of the working force and the right to hire and discharge are vested exclusively in the Employer" (National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement of 1981: 4). Collective bargaining at the industry level is the most important avenue of workers' influence on some aspects of industrial management, especially employment relations and, to some extent, in the area of strategic policies, including pension funds.

Two aspects of strategic policies, technological change and plant closure, are also managerial prerogatives. The union has the right to file grievances and to argue over contractual and legal details. However, since the 1950 contract, the UMWA has been able to influence the creation of and control the activities of pension fund. The 1974 agreement allowed the UMWA to impose certain limits on contracting and subcontracting, another aspect of strategic planning. In this context, the production process appears to constitute the dimension of industrial management wherein the UMWA's influence has been significantly restricted, except perhaps being able to determine the crew size by regulating the assignment of helpers on face equipment.

A distinctive characteristic of labor-management relations in the United States coal-mining industry is the fact that managerial discretion is most constrained with regard to employment relations. For example, workforce reduction procedures, transfers, and the assignment of workers to job classifications occur through seniority bidding by workers. In practice, this means that management can fire or transfer workers only under certain conditions. Also, to create new job classifications or titles or assign workers to job classifications management has to go through the bargaining process, although it has more flexibility within classifications. Work schedules, overtime, safety and health, rest periods, and retraining also have been regulated by collective agreements at the industry level.

Importantly, the idea of workers and unions playing a direct role in decision making at the level of the coal company or mine has never been subject to legal regulation. For example, by protecting workers' right to organize and compelling the employer to bargain in good faith, the National Labor Relations Act regulates labor-management relations in unionized

settings, including the coal-mining industry. However, except the clause 8(a) of the National Labor Relations Act which forbids the employer from interfering with the employees' right to self-organizing, it does not provide a framework concerning the character of labor participation in decision-making.

Yet, the lack of such a legal framework for workers' participation in decision-making does not mean that management is not constrained in exercising its "rights." As is apparent from the above discussion, collective bargaining sets some constraints on managerial prerogatives, especially in the area of employment relations, one of the most important arenas of labor- management struggle in the United States. This means that if management wanted to gain more control over employment relations it would have to wrestle it from the labor. In general, then, industrial management was centralized at the company level, especially with regard to strategic policies and production process. The U.S. miners had say regarding some aspects of employment relations, but the only avenue available to them was through collective bargaining and the only representative organization was the union.

## **B. Great Britain**

Contrary to the United States, in Great Britain collective agreements are not legally enforceable. This arrangement, the "voluntary system" of industrial relations, has been based upon voluntary and decentralized collective bargaining conducted at the workplace level. After the 1947 nationalization of coal mining industry, fragmented collective bargaining over wages continued for some time. In 1955, similar to the United States, the NUM and NCB started

conducting industry-wide wage negotiations for time-workers and since the 1966 National Power Loading Agreement (NPLA), wage-bargaining has been centralized at the industry level (Clegg, 1981: 34). The national wage agreements for the coal-mining industry, usually signed for unspecified duration, standardized procedures for handling disputes and settling grievances and included clauses dealing with certain substantive conditions of employment, such as minimum wage rates, the length of the work week, overtime and shift-working conditions and rates, holiday provisions, and the base for incentive schemes. While differing in their duration, in terms of content, the agreements in British coal mining are very similar to contracts signed between the BCOA and UMW in the United States.

In 1974 formation of the Coal Industry Tripartite Group brought a new element to industrial relations in British coal mining which spanned the 1970s and 1980s. This group consisted of government, NCB, and union representatives. Its initial purpose was to "[c]onsider and advise on the contribution which coal can best make to the country's energy requirements and the steps needed to secure that contribution" (Ashworth, 1986: 354). Through mutual contributions and suggestions regarding strategic issues, the group was to establish the basis for the coal industry's revival, on the one hand, and to develop close working relationships between the NCB and the union, on the other. However, in the 1980s state politics concerning the industry significantly disturbed the operation and the goals of this tripartite organization, especially when the state initiated the drive to wrestle the strategic control from labor and commercialize the industry.

In terms of workers' participation in industrial management, British legislation provided for the existence of joint consultative machinery. In this context, one of the most

interesting features of the industrial relations in British coal mining has been the separation between issues falling within the scope of collective bargaining and joint-consultation. The 1946 Nationalization Act separated wage- from nonwage-related matters and suggested the establishment of consultative machinery at national, divisional, area and pit levels. Throughout the years, the joint consultation mechanism provided the institutional basis for union influence on strategic industrial policies, including opening and closing mines, investments, technological change, managerial system, long-term planning and pension funds. at different levels of industrial organization. NUM's representatives participated in the meetings of the Coal Industry National Consultative Council, welfare committees, pensions committees, on health committees, etc. The union was also consulted when it came to the appointment of a new Board Chair, and the post of Industrial Relations Director was theirs to nominate (Gromley, 1982: 146). Similar to the United States, the union was the most important worker participatory institution, but collective bargaining was not as important for British miners as it was for their U.S. counterparts. Prior to 1980, joint-consultative machinery and the tripartite group were important channels through which labor could influence some aspects of both strategic policies and employment relations.

### **C. Poland**

Contrary to the United States and Great Britain, in Poland there was no formal institution of collective bargaining. Instead, so-called Collective Work Agreements (Układy Zbiorowe Pracy) were signed by the Minister of Coal Mining and the Central Board of the

Trade Union of Miners (TUM). However, similar to Great Britain, an institutional framework for workers' participation in decision-making existed in Poland. While the first legislation on Workers' Councils was passed in 1949, the 1958 legislation expanded their rights. This later act gave to workers' councils the following prerogatives: the establishment of production plans in accordance with the outlines provided by the general economic plan; the determination of enterprise's organizational structures; the assessment of economic performance; the approval of economic balances; the disposition of outdated equipment; the determination of wage schedules; and the distribution of bonuses (Rola, 1977: 296-297). In addition workers' councils gained exclusive rights over: promulgating work regulations and dividing the factory funds (that part of profit left in the enterprise to be shared among the employees) (Ozdowski & Alexander, 1978: 567). Thus, at the workplace level, the Polish workers' councils constituted the official avenue for rank-and-file's influence over the production process and employment relationship. At the same time, similar to the United States and Great Britain, almost all aspects of strategic policies were determined above the workplace level.

Similar to Great Britain, the collective agreements between the coal agency representing the state and the Trade Union of Miners stipulated the wages and conditions of employment. In 1949, the first collective agreement between the TUM and the Central Board of Coal Mining standardized wages across all major coalfields. In general, the content of collective agreements was limited to detailing wage specifications for the employees of mining enterprises, associations and other related institutions. The rights and responsibilities of employees, conditions of employment, hiring and firing procedures, and other work and employment-related issues were included in the Labor Code of 1974 which set the basic

standards for all industries. The Labor Code reinforced the principle of one-person management and assigned hiring and firing privileges to the enterprise manager. Thus, in terms of content, Polish bargaining agreements were more limited than those in British or U.S. coal-mining. Similar to Great Britain they were signed for an unspecified time period, but they were not renegotiated as often.

#### **D. Summary**

The institutional framework for workers' influence on decision-making processes was least developed in the U.S. coal-mining industry and located at the industry level. Centralized collective bargaining between the union and the employers' association was the only industrial institution through which workers could participate in managerial decisions. In this context, since on the labor side, the collective bargaining process was controlled by the union, the degree to which the union itself was a democratic institution affected the relationship between the needs of the rank-and-file workers and the outcomes of the bargaining process.

Compared to the United States, British miners participated in decision-making at more levels of industrial organization and were consulted regarding matters such as pit closures and long-term industrial development. However, similar to the United States, the union was the only organization representing workers' interests. In this regard, the existence of workers' councils in the Polish coal mining industry provided an alternative institutional mechanism through which rank-and-file workers could participate in managerial decisions at the workplace level. Thus, the existence of workers' councils created a counterbalance to the otherwise



centralized industrial management.

## **2. Unions and Union Structures**

Contrary to the structuralist perspective, which does not consider the internal union structure to be an important focus of analysis, the relational perspective views it as directly influencing the relations between labor and employers. Also, my discussion of participatory institutions suggests that unions constituted an important avenue of workers' influence on vital work and employment issues. In this section, I briefly examine the internal union structures, including indicators of centralization such as number of organizational levels and at what level decisions are made and by whom.

### **A. The United States**

The history of the United Mine Workers of America dates back to 1890 when the union was formed out of the merger of the National Federation of Miners and the Knights of Labor.<sup>32</sup> During the first decade following its formation, or more exactly until the 1902 great anthracite strike when the United States President directly mediated a labor dispute for the first time, the union was involved in the basic struggle for recognition. Then between 1902 and the end of

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<sup>32</sup> While there are two other unions--the progressive Mine Workers of America and the Operating Engineers--operating in the eastern and central coalfields, their membership and influence on industrial relations in the industry are minimal. Thus, I omit these unions in the foregoing discussion.

World War I, the union grew and consolidated. After the union strengthened its organizational base, similar to the coalminers' unions in Great Britain and Poland, the UMWA was at the forefront of the movement for labor legislation and political representation (Marks, 1989).

In terms of union structure, the union constitution establishes three organizational levels: the International office, district offices, and local unions. With regard to districts, Article 9, Section 1 of the 1990 Constitution ambiguously says that "districts may be formed with such numbers and territory as may be designated by the International Officers and may adopt such laws for their government as do not conflict with the laws or rulings of the International Union or Joint Agreements." The fact that, as Nyden (1974: 334) notes, "There are no guidelines or restrictions governing the formation of districts in the Constitution" is an interesting phenomenon, considering the importance of districts for industrial relations. For example, districts play a vital role in the third step of the five-step grievance process established by the 1971 contract. The militancy of the district officials would determine whether management would try to push the grievance procedure to the third stage or try to resolve it earlier (Nyden, 1974: 360).

Local unions are the basic organizational units of the UMW. The 1968 Constitution stated that local unions

shall be composed of ten or more workers, skilled and unskilled, working in or around coal mines, coal washeries, coal processing plants, coke oven, or in other industries designated and approved by the International Executive Board (cited in Nyden, 1974: 335).

In terms of handling local disputes with management, two such bodies function in each local union. The first is a three-person Mine Committee which is responsible for the second step in

the five-step grievance procedure. The second is a three-person Safety Committee which can shut the mine down due to dangerous working conditions, if necessary. The duties and rights of both committees are subject to union-employer bargaining in national wage agreements.

The International Constitutional Convention is the most important governing body within the union, and the Executive Officers and Executive Board, which consists of Board members elected from each of the districts, are the supreme executive and judicial powers between the Conventions. When the Executive Board is not in session, the President has the full power to direct union. As a result of these constitutional provisions, the Executive Board functions as the main constraint on presidential powers within the union (Nyden, 1974: 349). Importantly, since Executive Board consists of district representatives, districts are not only important for industrial relations but for relations within the union, as well.

In terms of the decision-making structure within the union, under the Lewis presidency the union became a centralized organization. To achieve almost absolute control over the union by replacing elected local officials by his appointees, Lewis changed one section of the Constitution. Before this change, Article III, Section 2, of the UMWA Constitution read: "Charters can be revoked only by the International President, whose action shall be subject to approval by the International Executive Board." After the change was made this article says that "Charters of Districts, sub-Districts, and Local Unions may be revoked by the International President, who shall have authority to create a provisional government for the subordinate branch whose charter has been revoked" (quoted in Nyden, 1974: 350).

Lewis's successor, Thomas Kennedy (1960-1963), preserved the autocratic control established by Lewis. In 1963, only five of the 27 districts had full autonomy, as indicated by

holding autonomous elections; 3 had partial autonomy, and the remaining were controlled by the president (Nyden, 1974: 350-351). The next president of the UMWA, Tony Boyle (1963-1972) also preserved Lewis' centralized governmental system. As a matter of fact, Boyle proved highly effective in maintaining one of the major pillars of Lewis's autocratic government--trusteeship politics, that is, the appointment of district officials and district delegates to different union committees by the president. In 1971, only 4 out of 23 union districts elected their officers (Perry, 1984: 95).

In 1972, Boyle was defeated by Arnold Miller, who emerged as the leader of the Miners for Democracy movement after its first leader, "Jock" Yablonsky, was assassinated.<sup>33</sup> As Perry (1984: 97) notes, this "election brought to an end the 'Lewis era' of autocratic government in the UMWA and set the stage for a new era in the governance of the union--the 'Miller era'." At the same time, the coal miners "became the first industrial workers in modern history to overthrow an entrenched union leadership" (Nyden, 1974: 328).

With regard to the structure of decision-making, what did the "Miller era" bring about? First, the earlier "top-down" approach to decision-making regarding union-BCOA negotiations, which tended to neglect lower levels of negotiations and excluded the rank-and file from decision-making processes, was abandoned. Instead, Miller established new procedures for contract ratification, including the identification of the issues to be negotiated by the convention and the ratification of national contracts by a bargaining council in which all affected districts were represented, and by a vote of the affected rank-and-file (Couto, 1987: 191). Before this

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<sup>33</sup> Joseph "Jock" Yablonski, the one elected district representative on the international executive board, was a leader of the Miners for Democracy, a reform movement which emerged in 1969. As it turned out, Yablonski was shot on Boyle's order because he ran against Boyle for UMW president.

bargaining council was established, the 120-member National Scale and Policy Committee was the only link between the membership and the negotiators. The role of the 36-member bargaining council, consisting of the presidents of 18 districts and International Board members, was to approve the agreement before it was submitted to the membership for ratification.

Second, the 1973 Pittsburgh convention democratized the union by introducing changes in the union's constitution that protected district autonomy, and provided once again for the election of district officers and representatives to the International Executive Board. With regard to the autonomy of the two lower levels of union organization, the convention decided that dues would be divided evenly among the International, the district, and the local union (Nyden, 1974: 339-341).

As a result of these changes, the three-year contract agreement signed in 1974 was reached under a procedure that involved participation of the districts and rank-and-file of the UMWA in the negotiations. Ratification of the 1974 agreement was accomplished after its terms had been explained to members in a series of regional meetings (Monthly Labor Review, January 1975: 83). This new participatory scheme has enhanced the rank-and-file influence on all those aspects of industrial management that were subject to collective bargaining (see Sections I and II of this Chapter). Thus, the middle-level of union organization was an important arena of struggle in the history of the UMWA. In terms of the institutional means through which rank-and-file members could influence the union politics, at the end of the 1970s, these consisted of elections, conventions, and ratification of all contracts.

## B. Great Britain

Prior to World War II, British miners were represented by the Miners' Federation of Great Britain and Ireland (1889).<sup>34</sup> The creation of the National Union of Mineworkers started being discussed in 1943. However, several areas opposed the dissolution of the established district organizations. Thus, when the National Union of Mineworkers came into existence in 1944, the constituent unions of the old federation became areas of the NUM; their officials became area officials of the new union. At the same time, areas retained some elements of their power, such as collecting money and retaining a sizeable proportion of funds.

McCormick (1979: 62) describes the situation within the NUM as follows:

The formation of the new union did not, however, bring about any radical changes for a long period. This was because power still lay in the coalfields. Many areas had considerable financial reserves, paid benefits and, above all, as long as wages were negotiated locally, the president and the general secretary had to go 'cap in hand' to the areas. The tendency was, therefore, for the union to remain a federation of trade unions [...], with an untidy organizational structure and competing unions.

The areas' access to financial resources facilitated the continuation of divergent union procedures and industrial policies. Thus, while nationalization of the industry went hand-in-hand with the creation of a more unified, or even centralized union, the union security guaranteed by the state contributed to the continued sectionalism in the NUM (McCormick, 1979: 63). As a result, not only was the NUM formed from different unions but remained very much a federation of unions with areas being granted autonomy, including the decisions

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<sup>34</sup> The Miners' Federation of Great Britain and Ireland had consisted of about 40 separate unions (Eaton and Gill, 1983: 24).

regarding strike action.

The NUM consists of 14 geographical areas, a number of industrial or occupational areas, two artificial groupings of craftworkers' associations for national-level representation purposes, and a number of workers who maintain a dual affiliation with both the NUM and one or two other national unions. In terms of its national officials, the NUM has only one level of nationally elected, permanent, full-time union officials. The positions of president and general secretary are regarded as equally important in status and power, although the president is more powerful in practice. The president of the NUM presides at meetings of the Delegate Conference and the National Executive Committee (NEC), performs duties delegated by the NEC, and oversees the proper conduct of day-to-day business for the union. As Eaton and Gill (1983: 25) indicate, there has been a traditional division of power between a right-wing president and a left-wing secretary. The NUM rules do not assign any regular powers or duties to the vice-president who is elected by the Delegate Conference, not by the membership as a whole. The NUM uses the single transferable vote system in electing the two top officials who must achieve an absolute majority (Eaton and Gill, 1983).

The structure of areas mirrors that of the National Union of Mineworkers. There are full-time presidents and secretaries, and beneath them are a number of full-time agents elected by referendum in districts within the areas. This union structure is not conducive to cross-regional communication and cooperation. The Annual Conference, which is attended by area delegates, with each area being entitled "to elect two delegates for the first 5,000 members and one further delegate for each additional 2,500 members," has supreme authority over all members and areas. As a result, the NUM Conference has been usually divided between left

coalfields--Yorkshire, Scotland, South Wales, Derbyshire and Kent--which usually have around 129 votes, and the right-wing areas--Nottinghamshire, Durham, Northumberland, Lancashire, the Midlands, cokeman, craft groups and Colliery Official Staffs' Association (COSA)--which can usually gather around 136 votes. An important aspect of authority vested in the conference is its power to change union rules if two-thirds of delegates are present (Eaton and Gill, 1981: 26).

The relations between union leadership and rank-and-file are quite similar to those in the UMWA. That is, while at the end of 1960s the union did not seem to be overly responsive to workers' demands, at the beginning of the 1970s it radicalized itself. In a more general sense, the NUM has always been much more democratic union than the UMWA or the TUM. The decision-making processes in the NUM have always been relatively decentralized. For example, rank-and-file members voted on such issues as beginning and ending strikes, and accepting or rejecting the agreements between the NCB or the government and the union.

In terms of union density in coal-mining (percentage of organized members to the total number employed in a given industry) in 1949, 86 percent of the miners were organized and by 1979 the density rose to 97 percent (Price and Bain, 1983). These high densities reflect the fact that the NUM was the only recognized union. Thus if a miner wanted to join an union, the NUM was the only available option. In terms of union organization in the bituminous coal industry in the United States, in 1977, 88 percent of all people employed in the East underground coal mines were UMW members (President's Commission on Coal, 1980: 52).<sup>35</sup> In Poland, similar to Great Britain and for the very same reasons, this figure was more than 90

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<sup>35</sup> Among the Eastern states with major coalfields, Virginia is the only right-to-work state.



percent.

### **C. Poland**

In terms of trade union organization, similar to its British counterpart, the Trade Union of Miners was created after World War II and presented some degree of continuity in terms of its rank-and-file membership. Any discontinuity was related to the functions and programs imposed on the new trade unions by the communist regime, especially the idea that the most important function of a socialist trade union is to exhort workers to be more productive because as the worker produces more for the state, s/he produces more for him/herself as well. For example, paragraph 1 of the 1976 statute of the Trade Union of Miners reads

The Trade Union of Miners is a universal and autonomous organization of the working people which participates in formulating and carrying out tasks in the socio-economic development of the country. The Union represents the interests and the rights of workers, and educates the workers with regard to their active participation in the shaping of the developed socialist society.<sup>36</sup>

At the beginning, the organization of the Trade Union of Miners consisted of three levels: the Central Board, the Regional Boards and local unions at the enterprise level. In 1972, 6 out of 12 regional boards were liquidated and in 1973 all the remaining boards were dissolved. Thus, the Union entered the 1980s with a two-level structure, national and local, with 373 locals and 641,000 members. The supreme powers are vested in the National

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<sup>36</sup> In 1976 the Polish constitution was changed. The changes included the official acknowledgement that the era of the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" had been closed and the period of the "Developed Socialist Democracy of the Whole People" has been opened.

Delegate Conference (Krajowy Zjazd Delegatow), the Central Board (Zarząd Główny), the Factory Conference (Konferencja Zakładowa), and the Factory Council (Rada Zakładowa).

The Central Board and the Board of Control (Komisja Rewizyjna) take on advisory functions during the National Delegate Conference. In addition, a Special Conference can be called at any time by the Central Board. The National Conference has the power to establish the program for the union, alter the union rules or dissolve the union. The National Conference decrees are passed by a simple majority if at least two-thirds of the delegates are present. Statute changes or liquidation of the union also require at least two-thirds majority. The Central Board governs the union between conferences, and chooses via open ballot the Executive Committee members, including the president, vice-presidents, and the secretaries. Importantly, then, Polish miners did not have voting right to elect their union leadership.

The factory council of the union and its subordinated sectional/shop-floor councils form the lowest level of the hierarchy. The factory council has a full-time president paid by the enterprise. As defined by the statute, the Union of Miners's tasks at the mine level are very broad and quite similar to tasks of the two other unions. These tasks include representing employees in relation to enterprise administration; increasing productivity; participation in the functions of the worker's councils; enforcement of worker democracy; law enforcement within factory, work safety, work conditions, work discipline, and various social activities such as vacations, factory kindergartens, and canteens.

#### **D. Summary**

In terms of organization, both the UMWA and the NUM consisted of three levels; and the structure of TUM was simplified from three to two levels. While, in general the greater number of organizational levels extends the line of command and creates a more complicated hierarchy, it appears that in this particular context the liquidation of the middle level contributed to centralization of union powers at the national level. Namely, based on the U.S. experience one can argue that strong districts or regional unions can act as a countervailing power to the national leadership. Thus, it is quite likely that the leadership of the TUM liquidated the middle-level of union organization in order to change the structural level of control away from the union membership.

With regard to workers participation in decision-making processes, while all three unions tended to be unresponsive to rank-and-file workers, the UMWA and the TUM represented highly centralized decision-making structure. In this context, the British NUM was the most decentralized miners' trade union. By the same token, the UMWA's centralization resulted in the emergence of a movement for union democracy which succeeded in decentralizing decision-making processes. As a result, the U.S. miners gained more influence on managerial decisions. Thus, at the outset of the 1980s, of three unions, the TUM was the only remaining highly centralized miners' union.

#### IV. Summary and Discussion

Three major points stand out from the analysis in this chapter. First, to determine the adequacy of structuralist versus relational approaches, I posited that since the United States and Great Britain are examples of a capitalist economy according to Burawoy's reasoning, I should find more important similarities between these two countries than between Poland and either them. However, it could also be argued that even though British coal-mining was operating in the context of a market economy, it was nationalized and operated as a state enterprise, that is, an enterprise oriented towards meeting public needs instead of profit. Thus, in line with Burawoy's logic, we should observe more important similarities between British and Polish coal mining than between the United States and either of them. Let me turn, then, to a discussion of state involvement in the operation of the coal mining industry in all three countries prior to 1980.

The developments that took place in Great Britain during the 1970s suggest that the state enterprise system in British coal-mining broke down. Towards the end of the 1970s, the industry started being commercialized, if commercialization is meant as "the search for greater efficiency and productivity, for a strategy more oriented to the market competition, for the increased exercise of managerial autonomy and prerogative" (Ferner, 1988: 153-4). By 1980, the British government's policies resulted in the introduction of two elements of commercialization.<sup>37</sup> First, the state cut or limited subsidies, introduced external financing limits, and started comparing the performance of the NCB with other privately operated, low-

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<sup>37</sup> British coal-mining was just one among many other British industries to be privatized; others included British Leyland and British Steel.

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cost, coal-mining industries in other countries, including the United States. Second, with the 1976 introduction of the new incentive system, mines were allowed to compete among themselves (see Chapter Three), and the union could not take wages out of competition. As a result of these changes, British coal-mining began operating more similarly to a market-oriented industry, such as the U.S. coal-mining, than to the Polish coal-mining. The most important implication of this fact and my conclusion regarding the market situation of the British industry at the end of the 1970s, for my subsequent analyses is that, according to a structuralist perspective, I should find more similarities between U.S. and British industries than between either of these and Polish coal-mining, or more differences between the Polish case and the U.S. and British industries than between the latter two.

The second major point emerging from this chapter concerns centralization/ decentralization. From the structuralist perspective centralization and decentralization characterize political-economic systems; from the relational stance, organizational centralization or decentralization can be conceptualized as potentially variable processes occurring at different structural levels. With regard to the centralization of decision-making processes, the above discussion of the relations between the state and the workplace suggests that industrial management was the least centralized in the United States and the most centralized in Poland. According to the structuralist logic, then, we should observe the highest degree of workers' militancy in Poland and the lowest in the United States. Moreover, in line with the same logic, industrial conflicts in Poland should have a necessarily political character, while conflicts in the United States should be contained within the boundaries of the workplace.

However, as my analysis of labor activism in Chapter Three indicates, Polish miners

were the least militant and the U.S. miners appeared to be the most militant. Importantly, in all three cases, the increase in labor militancy fostered decentralization of industrial relations (Poland 1956), employment relations (Great Britain 1977/78), or internal union affairs (the United States, 1970s). As my analysis of structural variables in Chapter Three indicates, the existence of market- or central-planning-related pressures does not seem to provide a sufficient explanation for these changes in industrial regimes. In both the United States and Great Britain, the industry's worst experiences in terms of losing its market-position occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, and in Poland production was steadily growing. Moreover, if we assume that until the end of the 1970s the structural organization of British coal mining and its separation from market forces was somewhat similar the situation of its Polish counterpart, why was the labor activism of British coal miners so different from that of Polish miners?

The relational approach, which allows for an analysis of centralization industrial relations from the workers standpoint, could be helpful in this regard, especially because it focuses on participatory institutions and internal union affairs, aspects of production regimes ignored by Burawoy. Thus, and this is the third main point coming through the above discussion, despite the differences in the larger, political-economic dimension of nationalization, similar to Poland, British nationalization was not undertaken to establish workers' control over the industry or even allow more worker participation in industrial management. In both cases, nationalization was viewed as a way of forging industrial stability and workers' co-operation. However, in Poland the emergence of workers' councils in 1956 created an alternative platform for workers' participation in industrial management at the workplace level, especially with regard to the production process--an institution which was

lacking in both the British and U.S. systems in which unions were granted the exclusive right to represent workers. As a result, while the industry constituted the most important level of labor influence in the United States and, to some extent in Great Britain, the workplace constituted the most important level of labor influence on decision-making in Poland. It could be, then, that this difference in industrial institutions and the level of control could provide an explanation for the unexpected differences in miners' activism, especially the lower levels of Polish miners' activism as compared to their U.S. counterparts, despite the centralization of the Polish political-economy.

Furthermore, by the end of the 1970s, state involvement in industrial relations, including internal union matters, was the most pronounced in Poland, followed by the United States, and the least pronounced in Great Britain. In terms of union internal affairs, they were the most centralized in Poland and the least centralized in Great Britain. In the 1970s, after its decentralization, the UMWA became more similar to its British than Polish counterpart. This, according to the relational perspective, should have an influence on industrial relations, regardless of the degree of centralization or decentralization of the political-economic system, which according to structuralist perspective is measured by the degree of state intervention in industrial management. Indeed, despite the fact that the political-economic system, was the most decentralized in the United States, the U.S. miners' were the most active in strikes among all the miners' investigated, especially towards the end of the 1960s and in the 1970s (Chapter Three). This high level of miners' activism, as the relational approach suggests, can be more adequately understood by looking at the centralization of union structures.

The historical overview included in this chapter should enhance understanding of the



emergence of new arrangements during the decade of the 1980s by providing a comparative reference point for discerning the processes of centralization/decentralization of industrial relations, and especially changes in the arenas of struggle in the industry, as well as the changes of patterns of labor activism. In the next three chapters my analysis will focus on the main time frame of the present research--the decade of the 1980s which is also the main time frame for Burawoy's generalizations regarding the character of production regimes in socialistic and capitalistic countries.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**COMPARATIVE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE U.S., BRITISH**  
**AND POLISH COAL MINING INDUSTRIES**  
**IN THE 1980s**

In this chapter I will discuss the demographics of the coal mining industry in Poland, Great Britain, and the United States during the 1980s. I begin with a comparative discussion of the changes in the main indicators of the industry's well being. Here, I analyze the similarities and differences in production, employment, technology, productivity, wages, and health and safety trends. Next, I will discuss the cross national trends in the market situation of each industry, with special emphasis on such variables as prices of coal and other fossil fuels, market position of coal relative to other fuels, and the balance between coal supply and consumption. These analyses will allow me to compare and contrast changes in the industry's and labor performance and their economic environments across different political economies.

Specifically, two questions guide this chapter's analysis. The structuralist hegemony thesis posits a convergence in arenas of struggle within monopoly capitalism and their stability across historical boundaries. The first question, then, is to establish what the arenas of struggle were and whether they converged or diverged in capitalist countries and what their historical dynamics were within each country. From the structuralist position, the industry's economic situation is the most important variable determining changes in industrial relations. Thus, the second question is to assess the changes in the market situation of coal-mining industry across all three countries as compared with the situation prior to 1980. Let me begin with examining the economic situation of the coal-mining industry in the 1980s.

## **I. Economic Situation in the Industry**

To determine the adequacy of structuralist hegemony claim, in Chapter III I briefly examined the main arenas of struggle in the coal mining industry in the United States, Great Britain and Poland prior to 1980. From this analysis it appeared that in no industry did the issues of production volume, employment and technological change become important contested arenas at the national union or industry levels. I also found that wages were important contested arenas in the United States and Great Britain, but not in Poland, yet in all three countries miners' wages were high enough to support their families. Finally, despite structural differences in the industry's economic situation, labor productivity was an important contested arena in all three countries.

In the following section, I continue to investigate historical and cross-national similarities and differences in the industry's economic situation and determine the role of the potential arenas of struggle in labor-management relations.

### **1. Production**

I begin with assessing the hegemony thesis by looking at historical changes and cross-national similarities and differences in production patterns as well as industrial behavior in relation to these arenas.

### A. The United States

In both 1981 and 1983 industrial disputes led to a decline in coal output. However, the third labor dispute between the UMWA and the Pittston company in 1989-90 did not have a large effect on overall underground bituminous coal production (see Table 5.1). Similar to Poland and Great Britain, the underground bituminous coal output in the United States fluctuated between 1980 and 1983. In the second half of the 1980s, unlike the two other cases, the output in the American industry steadily grew.

To present a fuller picture of the developments in United States coal mining, it is important to mention the trends in the share of the bituminous coal production coming from the mines operating under the National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement. In 1977, the NBCWA mines produced 330.8 million tons of coal, 47.8 percent of the total coal production. By 1980 while production increased to 364.9 million tons, NBCWA mines' relative share decreased to 44.3 percent of the total. For the next six years, the NBCWA production fluctuated from year to year, but the overall trend was downward. In 1986, the NBCWA mines produced 314.5 million tons, 35 percent of total US production. This decline was mainly due to the decline in the number of companies which the BCOA was authorized to represent.<sup>38</sup> This meant that, compared to the years prior to 1980, the ability of the UMWA to disrupt coal production during a labor dispute decreased, as evident during the Pittston strike in which a smaller

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<sup>38</sup> For example, while in 1981 the BCOA consisted of 143 coal companies, by 1984 this number decreased to 52, and as of February 1988, only 38 companies authorized the BCOA to represent them in the negotiations with the UMWA (National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement of 1984 and National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement of 1988).

Table 5.1: Underground Bituminous Coal Mining,  
United States, 1979-1991

Year	Production (million tons)	% of total	Employment	Number of mines
1979	316.1	40.9	151,364	1,907
1980	337.0	40.9	150,328	1,875
1981	316.0	38.6	151,362	2,008
1982	339.0	40.6	140,877	1,982
1983	299.9	38.5	111,557	1,631
1984	351.4	39.4	111,925	1,754
1985	350.0	39.8	106,988	1,695
1986	359.8	40.6	98,117	1,640
1987	372.2	40.6	89,603	1,563
1988	382.1	40.2	84,564	1,463
1989	393.8	40.2	83,988	1,426
1990	424.5	41.2	84,154	1,422
1991	407.2	40.9	78,050	1,255

Sources:

Coal Data, different years.

Coal Production, different years.

Coal Facts, 1988.

Keystone Coal Industry Manual, 1993: 370

percentage of coal supply was affected.

## **B. Great Britain**

The first half of the 1980s was marked by industrial conflicts which culminated in an 11 month-long dispute between the NUM and the NCB in 1984-85. However, even before the industry started losing tonnage due to the 1984-85 strike, it had already felt the effects of the overtime ban in 1983. Thus, in 1982/83 the output was 104.9 million tonnes compared to 110.3 million tonnes in 1980/81, a 5 percent decrease over two years (Table 5.2). The losses in 1982/83 output through industrial action, which totalled 3.6 million tonnes, were the highest since the mineworkers national strike of 1973-74 when the tonnage lost amounted to 21.3 million tonnes. Very soon these numbers were surpassed. While in 1983/84, 14.8 million tons of coal were lost due to industrial disputes, in 1984/85 the NCB accrued record losses of 67.2 million tonnes (Report and Accounts, 1983/84 and 1986/87).

Coal production continued to slide after the 1984-85 confrontation, falling 18.2 percent between 1985/86 and 1990/91. Given that a series of localized labor disputes took place in British coal mining at the end of the 1980s, at least part of the decline in 1989/90 could be attributed to industrial conflict. Overall, British underground coal mining output dropped 34.4 percent over ten-year period. Importantly, these developments met the expectations of coal mining contraction held by the British Government and the NCB whose major goal throughout the 1980s was to cut coal production.

Table 5.2: Underground Coal Mining, Great Britain,  
1979-1990/91

Year	Output (million tonnes)	Employment	Number of mines
1979/80	109.3	232,500	219
1980/81	110.3	229,800	211
1981/82	108.9	218,500	200
1982/83	104.9	207,600	191
1983/84 (1)	90.5	191,300	170
1984/85	27.6	175,400	169
1985/86	88.4	138,500	133
1986/87	88.0	107,700	110
1987/88	82.4	89,000	94
1988/89	85.0	80,100	86
1989/90	75.6	65,400	73
1990/91	72.3	57,300	65

Notes:

(1) 53 weeks

Source:

Report and Accounts, different years.

### C. Poland

After the turmoil of the 1980-81 strikes, the rest of the decade was marked by the Polish state's unsuccessful efforts to bring coal production to its 1979 pre-strike level. Not only did the industry's production not reach the pre-strike level, but it was not able to surpass the strike-ridden 1980 level (Table 5.3). This decline in coal production, from 201 million tons in 1979 to 193.1 million tons in 1980, was primarily due to strikes and changes in work organization, including the abolition of the four-shift work system, and the abandonment of compulsory overtime and Saturday and Sunday working.

In the context of declining coal production, in 1980 the Council of Ministers passed Decree 118/80. This administrative order established binding production norms within the scope of the National Socio-Economic Plan for the next year. The fact that coal headed this list of products indicated two things. First, it was an expression of coal's importance for the country's economy. Second, it suggested that the government would monitor the industry's performance very closely and use special measures if the coal production decline continued.

Indeed, in 1981 and throughout the decade, the Government undertook various means to enhance coal production, such as institutionalizing strong material incentives, militarizing the industry in the context of martial law, increasing employment, and forcing several organizational changes. Despite these efforts, the expected improvement did not materialize. To the contrary, at the end of the 1980s, after yet another wave of strikes which was followed by the restructuring of the industry and its industrial relations, a significant decline in coal output again occurred. As Table 5.3 indicates, while in 1988 the industry was able to reach



Table 5.3: Underground Coal Mining, Poland, 1979-1990

Year	Output (million tons)	Employment	Number of mines
1979	201.0	367,577	n/a
1980	193.1	376,481	69
1981	163.0	380,925	n/a
1982	189.3	392,161	n/a
1983	191.1	400,614	69
1984	191.6	403,052	n/a
1985	191.6	402,891	n/a
1986	192.1	421,092	n/a
1987	193.0	434,848	n/a
1988	193.0	431,937	n/a
1989	177.6	415,740	71
1990	147.7	387,898	71

## Notes:

n/a not available

## Sources:

Analiza, different years.Rocznik Statystyczny Ministerstwa Gornictwa i Energetyki, 1984.

the 1980 output level, that is 193 million tons, in 1989 output dropped to 177.6 and in 1990 to 147.7 million tons, a 23.5 percent decline over two years.

#### **D. Summary**

All in all, the production trends across all three cases during the decade of the 1980s show similarities and differences. In terms of similarities, during the first half of the decade, coal production trends demonstrate that industrial output bottomed out in all three countries: in 1981 in Poland, in 1983 in the United States and in 1984/85 in Great Britain. This similarity suggests the influence of labor disputes on coal production in all three countries. Then, between 1985 and 1990, the significant increase in coal production in the United States distinguishes it from Poland, where coal production stabilizes with a slight tendency to grow until 1988, and from Great Britain, where coal production stabilized with a moderate tendency to decline. Subsequently, towards the end of the decade similarities appear again. Beginning in 1988, coal production dropped in Poland and Great Britain, and in the United States the decline occurs in 1991.

In contrast to Poland where any coal output losses during the 1980s were considered an economic disaster, for the British authorities the defeat of the 1984-85 strike and production decline were seen positively--it helped to speed up the process of the industry's contraction. Further, the relative decline of output in British industry was greater than in Poland and consistent throughout the decade, whereas in Poland production stabilized between 1982 and 1988. The most important change in the United States was the decrease in the UMWA ability

to disrupt coal production due to declining BCOA membership. Importantly, however, in Poland in the context of stagnating production the role of production volume for industrial relations changed compared to the years prior to the 1980. That is, the increase in production volume became one of the major concerns of Polish managers.

## **2. Employment**

In this sub-section I continue assessing the hegemony thesis by looking at historical changes and cross-national similarities and differences in employment patterns as well as industrial behavior in relation to this arena.

### **A. The United States**

Despite technological changes, employment in coal mining has still been related to output. For example, after World War II, employment growth in the U.S. industry was typified by increasing output. What distinguished the U.S. industry during the 1980s was the existence of two opposite trends: an increase in the underground coal production from 337 million tons in 1980 to 424.5 million tons in 1990, a 25.9 percent increase over 10 years, and a significant decline in industrial employment from 150,328 in 1980 to 84,154 in 1990, a 44.0 percent decrease. Thus, similar to the employment trends in the British industry, the employment in the U.S. coal mining has been in decline. However, since production increase had typically been related with at least some employment growth, compared with both the

earlier decades and across countries, this United States trend represented an exceptional historical pattern in the post-World War II coal mining (Table 5.1).<sup>39</sup> Importantly, this time around the issue of job security became one of the most important arenas of industrial relations.

## **B. Great Britain**

Similar to the United States, at the beginning of the 1980s, British coal mining experienced a significant contraction in the industrial labor force and number of mines. Employment decreased from 229,800 in 1980/81 to 207,600 in 1982/83, and in the aftermath of 1984/85 strike it dropped down to 138,500 workers, a decline of 40 percent compared to 1980/81. In the second part of the 1980s, the workforce was trimmed again. Between 1984/85 and 1989/90, 81,200 people lost their jobs, a 58.6 percent decrease in five years. In terms of number of mines, between 1980/81 and 1985/86, 78 coal mines closed, a 37 percent drop. By the end of the 1980s, only 65 mines remained, 30 percent of the 1980 level. While the number of underground mines also decreased between 1980-1989 in the United States, the 23.9 percent fall was not as precipitous as the 70 percent fall in Great Britain. In Great Britain, the speed at which the process of mine closures proceeded and the determination with which they were accomplished literally decimated the mining workforce. As Sir Robert Haslam (Report and Accounts, 1988/89: 3), a chairman of the British Coal, put it in 1989/90:

Since the NUM strike we are now producing the same coal tonnage: (1) with less than half of the workforce; (2) from half the number of pits; (3) from less than half of the number of

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<sup>39</sup> In terms of the distribution of the decline of employment across the states, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia bore the brunt of the losses (BLS Bulletin, 1980: 1).

coal faces. [...] All this, I believe, represents a restructuring unmatched in depth and speed in any major UK industry in recent history.

As of 1994 the British coal industry consisted of 17 mines employing 10,500 miners. Thus, by the middle of the 1990s, British "King Coal" was dead (Independent, March 4, 1994).<sup>40</sup>

Importantly, since the beginning of the 1980s the issue of pit-closures became the most important arena of struggle in the British coal mining.

### C. Poland

The Polish industry's workforce continued a slow annual average increase of 1.5 percent until 1987. The total growth during the first five years equalled 26,410 employees, and between 1985-1987 another 31,957 workers were added. Compared with the growth observed during the first half of the 1970s, when the hiring of 12,099 employees was accompanied by a 31.5 million ton increase in coal production, the 1980s output suggests a possible change in the industrial relations. That is, a shift from cooperation to conflict and, eventually, to accommodation may have characterized the last years of the 1970s and the first seven years of the 1980s, especially since output was not increasing despite the reintroduction of overtime and Saturday working after 1981. Since 1987, employment in coal mining has been on the decline, from 434,848 in 1987 to 387,898 workers in 1990, a 10.8 percent drop (Table 5.3). In this context, the issue of workforce reduction became a contested arena. But, contrary to the U.S.

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<sup>40</sup> In the same issue of the Independent (March 4, 1994: 9), it was noted that some of the mines closed by British Coal will be reopened by private companies "who are convinced that there is more of a future for coal than recent history would suggest."

and British industries, where the number of mines decreased throughout the decade, the Polish industry expanded, adding two mines to the existing 69.

Compared to both Great Britain and the United States, Poland entered a period of contraction in industrial labor force relatively later. This trend continued into the 1990s and was accompanied by pit closures. During the 1989 Roundtable talks issues of pit closure and the labor force became two of the most important contested arenas (Porozumienia Okraglego Stolu, 1989). Since the Roundtable Talks in 1989, preparations for and actual pit closures have become an integral part of the industrial landscape in Polish mining. In their proposed restructuring program, Andersen and Armstrong (1991) suggest that, in the short-term, 17 out of 71 mines will not be profitable and, in a long-term, 36 or even 53 mines may need state subsidies. If these forecasts are true, and a restructuring program such as the one Andersen and Armstrong propose becomes implemented, Poland, who ranked fourth among the largest coal producers in the world at the beginning of the 1980s, may soon become an importer of coal, a reality already faced by Great Britain.

#### **D. Summary**

Summarizing the similarities and differences in employment trends across the cases, it appears that, in the 1980s, the United States and Great Britain presented a similar pattern of long-term, structural reductions of the workforce, with Great Britain cutting employment at a higher rate. Poland entered the same process late in the decade. In all three countries, the issue of job security became important contested arena, and the issue of pit closures became an

arena of struggle in Great Britain and Poland.

### **3. Technological Change**

In this sub-section, I continue laying the groundwork for assessing Burawoy's hegemony thesis by comparing and contrasting technological change as well as labor and management behavior regarding this issue.

#### **A. The United States**

During the 1980s, coal operators made a significant effort at the more widespread introduction of the longwall system, thereby contributing to the polarization process between "core" and "periphery" mines. Yarrow (1990: 40) describes this trend as follows:

In response to profit squeeze, coal companies have adopted two strategies of mechanization. The large companies have rapidly introduced capital intensive longwall technology from Europe....At the same time there is a contradictory trend toward more primitive technology. While rapidly introducing the longwall, many companies are also subleasing portions of their properties to small, undercapitalized operators who lease second-hand equipment and try to become competitive by cutting corners on maintenance, labor costs, and safety precautions.

In numerical terms, in 1986, 101 longwall systems were operated in the United States, 21 of which were run by one company, Consolidation Coal Co., the nation's second top coal producer (Coal Facts, 1988: 27). In this same year, the longwall system accounted for an estimated 20 percent of underground coal production. By 1990 it accounted for 29 percent of

production, with continuous, conventional, and shortwall mining contributing 63 percent, 7 percent, and 1 percent, respectively (Coal Facts, 1988: 28; Coal Data, 1991: 10). I have not found any indication that these changes became a contested arena of labor-management relations.

### **B. Great Britain**

Interestingly enough, a similar technological polarization between "core" and "periphery" mines has been occurring in Great Britain. As the National Coal Board and later its successor, British Coal, continued to modernize British coal mines, special attention was devoted to introducing two technological programs, Advanced Technology Mining and Heavy Duty Mechanization. These two programs differed with regard to their short-term objectives. The objective of the ATM has been to automate the support functions at the face, while the purpose of the HDM has been to improve face performance by using heavier duty equipment. These programs shared the long-term objective of low-cost coal production. The restructuring policy instigated by the 1980 Coal Industry Act resulted in investments being made in already efficient, long-life mines, thereby contributing to more visible polarization between "core," high-tech, low labor cost, economic pits and "peripheral," low-tech, high labor cost, uneconomic mines throughout the 1980s.<sup>41</sup> However, it was not until the 1985 defeat of the NUM in 1985 that the industry accelerated the introduction of new technologies, especially

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<sup>41</sup> Geographically this polarization occurred between the such coalfields like Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and east Midlands, and South Wales.



heavy duty equipment and microelectronics (Colliery Guardian, June 1986; September 1990).<sup>42</sup>

### C. Poland

In Poland, the 1980s witnessed by increased investments in coal mining, but these did not meet its needs (Gornictwo i Energetyka, February 1987: 9). In 1971-1975, the mining and electricity-generating industry accounted for 16 percent of total investments in the Polish economy; in 1980 this number increased to 33 percent, and in 1986, to 36 percent (Zycie Gospodarcze, 19 April, 1987). However, labor productivity improved only slightly throughout the decade. Also, while aggregate data for the whole industry are not available, based on technological developments in 12 coal mines it appears that, in contrast to the 1970s when the introduction of continuous mining machines constituted the main technological improvement, during the 1980s the focus was on the installation of powered support control systems, a development similar to what was occurring in United States and British coal mining.

Also similar to the United States and Great Britain, polarization between profitable--or developing--and uneconomic--or deteriorating--mines became more pronounced. As Szpilewicz (Zycie Gospodarcze, 10 April, 1988) reports, in 1988 the average cost of coal production in 41 mines exceeded average sale prices, with 4 coal mines in the Lower Silesia region being kept in operation for social reasons only. Using growth as a lens, in 1987 only 16 mines were showing the signs of steady growth in production; in 34, production stabilized and in 16 production declined. However, similar to the United States and Great Britain, the issue

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<sup>42</sup> As Burns et al., (1985) report the NUM was neither informed about nor involved in the decision-making processes regarding the automation of British mines.

of technological change has not become an explicit arena of a labor-management conflict.

Also in all three countries the decisions about technological change were made by management without union or workers' councils involvement.

#### **D. Summary**

While at first sight the issue of technological change does not seem to be a contested arena in labor-management relations during the 1980s, technological change was related to job security and closures. Thus, in the 1980s, technological change became indirectly an issue in industrial relations, and the polarization between high-tech, economic pits and low-tech, uneconomic pits became a major issue during the 1984/85 strike in Great Britain, a discontinuity in contested arenas compared to what I observed prior to 1980.

#### **4. Productivity**

In this section, I continue laying the groundwork for assessing Burawoy's hegemony thesis by comparing and contrasting labor productivity as well as labor and management behavior regarding this issue.

##### **A. The United States**

After a long downward trend, as Table 5.4 indicates, United States labor productivity

Table 5.4: Labor Productivity, Underground Coal Mining,  
United States, 1979-1990 (1)

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Year	Overall output (tons/worker/day) (2)	Overall output (tons/worker/hour)
1979	9.04	1.13
1980	9.86	1.21
1981	10.32	1.29
1982	10.96	1.37
1983	12.96	1.62
1984	13.76	1.72
1985	14.32	1.79
1986	16.00	2.00
1987	17.68	2.21
1988	19.04	2.38
1989	19.68	2.46
1990	20.00	2.50

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Notes:

(1) All employees except office workers

(2) Based on an eight-hour work day

Source:

Annual Energy Review, 1990: 195

showed a pattern of linear growth throughout the 1980s. Specifically, productivity started peaking in 1979 and reached 14.32 tons per worker/day in 1985, an impressive improvement of 45 percent over five years. The industry closed the decade with productivity amounting to 19.68 tons per worker/day and began the decade of the 1990s by exceeding the 20 tons per worker/day barrier for the first time. Overall, productivity in American underground coal mines improved by more than a 100 percent over ten years.

### **B. Great Britain**

In August 1980, Norman Siddall (Colliery Guardian, August, 1980: 313), the chair of the NCB, declared that the introduction of the incentive scheme brought about several positive changes for the British coal mining industry as a whole, including a 2 percent increase in overall productivity. Subsequently, while 1980/81 concluded with a disappointing productivity record, the following year brought about some success stories (Table 5.5). Compared with 1980/81, coalface productivity in 1981/82 improved by 5.2 percent, overall productivity by 3.4 percent, output per face by 3.3 percent, and output per worker year by 3.8 percent (Report and Accounts, 1981/82). This upward trend continued in the next financial year, when output per miner/shift increased another 4 percent. Thus, at the same time that the recession led to reduced energy consumption and consequent coal demand, productivity at NCB coal mines was on the rise (see Section II of this chapter). Overall productivity dropped to 2.61 tonnes as the miner's strike continued in 1984/85, but increased again to a record high 3.4 tonnes in 1985/86.

Since then, British industry, similar to its U.S. counterpart, has experienced significant increases in labor productivity. Between 1985/86 and 1986/87, labor productivity rose by 21

Table 5.5: Labor Productivity, Underground Coal Mining,  
Great Britain, 1979-1990/91

Year	Overall output (tonnes/worker/shift)	Overall output (tonnes/worker/hour) (1)
1979/80	2.95	0.368
1980/81	2.94	0.367
1981/82	3.02	0.377
1982/83	3.06	0.382
1983/84	3.03	0.378
1984/85	2.61	0.326
1985/86	3.40	0.425
1986/87	4.09	0.511
1987/88	4.46	0.557
1988/89	5.03	0.628
1989/90	5.19	0.648
1990/91	5.59	0.698

Notes:

(1) Based on an eight-hour shift

Source:

Report and Accounts, different years.

percent and by further 9 percent the following year. While, as Table 5.5 shows, the improvement in productivity continued until the end of the decade, which closed with 5.19 tons of coal mined per worker/shift, productivity increases slowed to only 3.2 percent over the previous year. Thus after years of "impressive" performance during the second half of the 1980s, the NCB entered the next decade with a mixed picture concerning further productivity increases. Still, the 1980s marked significant 76.5 percent productivity increases in British coal mines.

### **C. Poland**

Similar to the United States, labor productivity in the Polish coal industry began an upward incline after 1982 (Table 5.6). After registering its lowest level--3.23 tons per worker/day--in 1982, labor productivity slowly rose to a peak of 3.43 tons per worker/day in 1985. Still, it has not exceeded the 1979 level of 3.61 tons of coal per worker/day. Thus, compared with the two other countries which established productivity records in the 1980s, Polish miners' productivity remained a problem, even though more workers worked more hours since 1982. Indeed, the situation worsened in the later half of the decade as miners' productivity began to descent, dropping by 6.3 percent over five years to 3.21 tones per worker/day at the end of the decade. As a result, labor productivity became one of the crucial issues in Polish industrial relations.

Table 5.6: Labor Productivity, Underground Coal Mining,  
Poland, 1979-1990

Year	Overall output (tons/worker/day)	Overall output (tons/worker/hour) (1)
1979	3.61	0.451
1980	3.56	0.455
1981	3.23	0.403
1982	3.24	0.405
1983	3.32	0.415
1984	3.35	0.418
1985	3.43	0.428
1986	3.33	0.416
1987	3.25	0.406
1988	3.27	0.408
1989	3.21	0.401
1990	3.10	0.387

Notes:

(1) Based on an eight-hour work day

Source:

Analiza, different years.

Rocznik Statystyczny Kopaln Wegla Kamiennego,  
September 1991 and December 1991.

#### **D. Summary**

The investigated cases represent divergent and convergent trends during the decade. At the outset of the 1980s, fluctuating productivity in Great Britain distinguished it from both Poland and the United States. Then, during the second half of the decade, the United States and Great Britain converged on the upward trend and Poland with its downward trend diverged from both of them. The United States and British trends suggest that a combination of technological change, pit closures and workforce reductions eventually resulted in labor accommodation to managerial effort at increasing labor efficiency. However, similar to the years prior to 1980, in all three countries the issue of labor productivity was an important contested arena because management in all three management in all three countries was interested in increasing labor effort.

#### **5. Wage Systems and Bargaining**

As discussed in Chapter Three, wages became an important arena of labor-management relations in Great Britain and the United States but not in Poland. Also, as discussed in Chapter Four prior to 1980 important changes in wage systems and wage bargaining occurred in some or in all three countries. In this sub-section I discuss changes in the wage systems and wage bargaining processes during the 1980s.



### A. The United States

Two pay systems operate in the bituminous coal mining in the United States. The first pay system specifies single hourly rates for different occupations. The second pay system applies to the mines operating under the UMWA-BCOA contract. Under this system, a single hourly rate applies to groups of occupations. Based on the UMWA-BCOA agreement, underground mining jobs are classified into five grades (National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement of 1988) compared to 9 and 7 grades in Poland and Great Britain respectively.<sup>43</sup>

Historically, the UMWA has opposed incentive pay systems. While nearly 100 companies embarked on the bonus system in the late 1970s, in some cases the plan was halted after a while and as of 1985 "only a handful of the larger unionized companies, such as Consolidation Coal Corporation, Island Creek Coal and Old Ben Coal, continue to function under bonus plans" (Hannah and Mangum, 1985: 92). It appears, then, that the United States mining was relatively "incentive-system free" and that the UMWA successfully resisted the introduction of wage competition among miners covered by the NBCBAs.

Further, while decision-making with regard to pay occurred at the level of industry-wide agreements between the union and coal companies, rank-and-file workers voted on contract ratification. Until 1988, wage claims in the United States were determined for the life of a given contract.<sup>44</sup> With regard to the politics of wage negotiations during the 1980s, the

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<sup>43</sup> These grades include bonder, mechanic helper, shuttle car operator, loading machine operator, and continuous mining machine operator.

<sup>44</sup> The 1988 contract between the UMWA and BCOA allowed for the renegotiation of wages during the life of the contract.

1981 coal settlement in the United States was preceded by a 70-day long strike. Then, both 1984 and 1988 Agreements between the UMWA and the BCOA were signed and approved by coalfield ballot without a national strike, a very unusual situation in the more recent history of collective bargaining in the U.S. coal mining.

### **B. Great Britain**

While similar to UMWA, the NUM opposed the incentive scheme, it was not successful at resisting its re-introduction. The practice of locally-decided incentive systems began in 1977. In terms of wage determination process, in British industry wage bargaining took place both at the industry and workplace levels. At the local level, shop-stewards would informally bargain over the rates with local management. At the industry level, the NUM typically adjusted wage claims every year and had rank-and-file workers vote on the contract. However, the defeat of the NUM in the 1984/85 strike, and the emergence and subsequent recognition of the UDM, an alternative miners' union, which pursued a politics of cooperation with British Coal, placed the latter in a favorable position. As a result, BC was able to reduce the frequency of pay adjustments, strengthen the role of incentives in miners' wages and centralize decision-making regarding wage systems.

In terms of the politics of wage negotiation, while the first two wage settlements in the British industry in the 1980s were simply accepted by coalfield ballots, later the situation changed dramatically, becoming contentious in the next contract round. The approval of the 1982 wage claim was preceded by a national overtime ban. The following year, the NCB

offered a 5.2 percent wage increase which was not accepted by the NUM and an overtime ban began on October 31. After the 1984-85 strike, at the April 1985 meeting of the Joint National Negotiating Committee, the NUM accepted the 1983 offer and the National Coal Board offered a further 5.2 percent increase on top of the 1983 settlement. However, the 1985 offer was not accepted by the NUM and at the end of April 1986 British Coal withdrew the offer.<sup>45</sup>

The formation of the Union of Democratic Miners in 1985 (UDM), brought about significant industrial relations changes in British coal mining, including the creation of new negotiation and conciliation arrangements. Since the NUM neither acknowledged the UDM as a negotiating partner with British Coal nor agreed on the rules regarding the application of the new wage offers, British Coal began unilaterally applying and extending wage offers negotiated with the UDM across all mines. Thus, in September 1986, British Coal "unilaterally applied the 1985 wage increase to all mineworkers not already receiving it" (Report and Accounts, 1986/87: 9). This signified a centralization of decision-making concerning wages, on the one hand, and the utilization of the pay system not only as an incentive but as a punishment as well.

With regard to this latter function of wages, in 1986/87 British Coal signed a two-year settlement with the Union of Democratic Miners, which called for an increase of 4.28 percent on mineworkers' grade rates. Since the NUM continued its overtime ban, NUM miners did not receive any pay raise until the ban ended in March 1988. The importance of the 1986/87

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<sup>45</sup> There might be some confusion regarding the exact date when the name "National Coal Board" was replaced by "British Coal Corporation." While official transformation occurred on March 5 1987 when the 1987 Coal Industry Act received Royal Assent, practically the NCB began trading as "British Coal" in 1986. For the purpose of this work, I use the name "British Coal" in agreement with the chairman's statement which appeared in 1986/87 Report and Accounts in which Robert Haslam refers to the Corporation when he talks about negotiating with the NUM and UDM.

agreement is not limited to this one point. It also spelled the end of annual wage bargaining between the unions and the BC. Facing a weakened union, the BC was able to move closer to the U.S. model of collective bargaining characterized by long-term contracts. Extended wage agreements were seen to lend greater stability to industrial relations in British coal mining. Incentive as a wage component also increased significantly in the late 1980s. For example, in 1989 a face worker's wages could grow from 170 to 280-300 pounds by increasing his productivity and extending the working week to six days (Colliery Guardian, January 1990). In this respect, the British situation bears some striking similarity to that of Poland in the aftermath of the 1980 miners' strikes.

### **C. Poland**

In contrast, to both the UMWA and NUM, the Polish union did not oppose the incentive system. The result, however, was similar to that in Great Britain where incentive system was introduced in spite of NUM's opposition. With regard to wage determination, the TUM signed wage agreements for an unspecified time. While, similar to the U.S., in Poland decision-making with regard to pay occurred at the level of industry-wide agreements between the union and coal associations, the internal union politics were different. In contrast to both the UMWA and the NUM, the TUM did not submit wage agreements for rank-and-file approval.

At the beginning of the 1980s, Polish miners began to engage in industry-wide wage negotiations with the Polish government. In the aftermath of the first wave of miners' strikes

on September 3, 1980, representatives of the Polish government and the Inter-Factory Strike Committee, consisting of 56 enterprises including 28 coal mines, signed the so-called Jastrzebie Agreement. In terms of wages, the Jastrzebie agreement called for (1) the establishment of a cost-of-living adjustment; (2) fair payment of premiums and all bonuses connected with working conditions; (3) equalization of family allowances for all working people with those received by the army and the militia; (4) determination and implementation of maximum and minimum wages; (5) payment of strike wages; (6) exclusion of miners' privileges in the form of the 14th monthly wage from the negative effects of absenteeism, if the latter was justified; and (7) the provision of the coal allowance to be received by all employees of the mining sector, with the amounts varying according to the kind of work performed and the trade unions input (Gornicze Wiadomosci, 1-15 September, 1980). Thus, Polish miners' wage demands displayed a broader concern for social justice than heretofore more narrowly defined wage demands of British and U.S. miners. At the same time, some of their demands, such as the cost of living adjustment, represent common concern across national boundaries.

On November 17, 1980 the Council of Ministry passed Decree 118 which changed some aspects of industrial relations. Namely, under the new arrangement, enterprises were granted the autonomy to establish wage funds based on general standards outlined in the Decree. While coal mining industry was excluded from most provisions granted by this Decree, it received some decision-making ability with regard to the wage fund, which meant that limited mine-level wage bargaining could occur.

In the context of decreasing coal production, on February 26, 1981, the government unilaterally introduced a "mobilization fund"--a special fund created to encourage miners to

work on Saturdays. Miners resisted the implementation of this work incentive. On the 22nd of April, representatives of 64 mining enterprises declared that since all Saturdays are work free, no incentives, including the "mobilization fund," should be used to promote work on Saturdays.<sup>46</sup> The issue of "mobilization fund" brought together otherwise antagonistic members of Solidarity and the old unions. Solidarity opposed the use of material incentives on the grounds that it introduces an overtime bias into the remuneration system, that it disorganizes work at the beginning of the next week, and it undermines family life. The government saw the extension of the working time as the only means to increase of coal production (see, Solidarnosc Jastrzebie, 26 May, 1981 for the report from the negotiations). On April 25, after two rounds of negotiations the February 26 decree was repealed.<sup>47</sup>

On September 11, 1981 the Council of Ministry again tried to introduce material incentives to improve coal production. The Decree 199/81, which gave special privileges to miners who worked on Saturdays, met with as strong, or even more vigorous, opposition as the "mobilization fund." Again, miners rejected these bonuses and instead demanded an increase in their basic wages. During the Second Delegates Convention of the Mining Section of Solidarity, November 6-7, 1981, the 199/81 resolution was criticized and a boycott call was

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<sup>46</sup> Interestingly enough, five days after the introduction of mobilization fund was announced an Agreement was signed between the Minister of Mining and the TUM (Gornik, 16-31 March, 1981). Nothing in this agreement indicates that the TUM was opposed to the introduction of the fund. Also, the fund was introduced in the context of a rhetoric that maintained there was no money for basic wage raises.

<sup>47</sup> Based on newspaper information, I observed that the attitudes towards this issue at the mine level were not homogenous. In some mines, in the course of negotiations among the Factory Committee of Solidarity, the old union, the party, and the director, it was decided that the mine should continue working on Saturdays (see, Gornicze Wiadomosci, 1-15 March, 1981; Gornik, 1-15, October, 1981).

issued. However, the imposition of martial law in December 1981 made any open resistance to the Decree 199/81 impossible, and in 1982 compulsory work on Saturdays was reintroduced. This situation lasted until the second half of the decade when collective bargaining became less centralized and compulsory work on Saturdays was abolished.

#### **D. Summary**

In the 1980s, in looking at incentive schemes, the UMWA which had traditionally opposed such plans accepted localized productivity deals. However, these deals did not become a widespread practice. In contrast, the NUM was not successful at resisting even a more widespread application of incentive system than back in the 1970s. Finally, while the Polish union, TUM, did not oppose the incentive system, at the outset of the 1980s, Polish miners decidedly, but unsuccessfully, opposed two developments: (1) the unilateral imposition of incentive schemes by the government; and (2) a wage structure in which the basic, piece-rate pay was only 40 percent of the overall wage. It appears that, compared with Poland and Great Britain, United States mining was relatively "incentive-system free" and that the UMW successfully resisted the introduction of wage competition among miners covered by the NBCWA. As a result, the trends in all three countries were different: no substantive change occurred in the U.S., some degree of decentralization of wage bargaining occurred in Poland and centralization in Great Britain.

Further, the three countries present both similarities and differences among particular aspects of wage determination process. Great Britain differed from both the United States and

Poland, where decision-making with regard to pay occurred at the level of industry-wide agreements between the union and coal companies. At the same time, the internal politics of the UMW and the NUM render the United States and Great Britain similar as both asked rank-and-file workers to approve the contract. In contrast, the TUM did not submit wage agreements for rank-and-file approval.

The politics of wage negotiations during the 1980s also present some similarities and differences across the cases. While after a period of industrial conflicts, the 1984 and 1988 contract negotiations in the U.S. were accomplished peacefully, the situation in Britain changed dramatically compared to the times prior to 1981, becoming contentious in the next contract round.

## **6. Miners' Wages**

In this sub-section I compare and contrast miners' wages relative to other groups of industrial workers and assess whether wages were an important arena of struggle in any of the countries during the 1980s.

### **A. The United States**

In terms of the relative position of coal-mining wages as compared with other United States industries, after the 1979 Agreement, miners lost their historic wage advantage to steel workers (Table 5.7). This situation lasted until miners regained their earning primacy in 1983.



Table 5.7: Average Hourly Earnings, Coal vs. Other Industries, United States, 1978-1986(1)

Year	Coal	Steel	Auto	Chemicals	All Manufacturing
1978	9.49	9.39	8.50	7.02	6.17
1979	10.26	10.41	9.06	7.60	6.70
1980	10.86	11.39	9.85	8.30	7.72
1981	11.89	12.60	11.02	9.12	7.99
1982	12.66	13.35	11.62	9.96	8.49
1983	13.72	12.89	12.14	10.58	8.83
1984	14.80	12.99	12.74	11.08	9.18
1985	15.24	13.34	13.60	11.56	9.54
1986	15.39	13.73	13.79	11.98	9.73

Note:

(1) in United States dollars

Source:

Facts About Coal, 1988: 42.

The 1984 contract between the UMWA and BCOA provided for a total increase of \$1.40 per hour over the 40 months of contract duration. As a result, in 1988, according to the BLS industry wage survey, the earnings of production and related workers averaged \$14.48 per hour. This meant an increase of 22 percent over the 1982 level. In terms of the union-nonunion differential in underground mines, the former averaged \$15.31 an hour in July 1988, and the latter, \$13.18--a 14 percent difference (BLS Bulletin, July 1988: 1-2)

The 1988 five-year UMWA-BCOA agreement provided for uniform wage increases totaling \$1.05 until 1991. The same agreement provided that negotiations for additional increases could take place after the third and fourth years of the agreement. As a result, between 1988 and 1990 the percentage differential between the average wage in coal mining and in all manufacturing increased from 56.6 percent to 59.2 percent, and then decreased in 1991 to 53.0 percent (Coal Data, 1993: II-3).

## **B. Great Britain**

The average weekly earnings of British miners, as indicated in Table 5.8, have been consistently higher than average earnings of steel, auto and chemical workers, except for the 1984-85 strike years. Yet, the extent of the relative advantage miners had over other workers has slowly narrowed. For example, in 1980 the average weekly earnings of coalminers were 17.2 percent higher than that of steel workers, but in 1989 they were only 16 percent higher. Compared with the average wages of all manufacturing workers, the average wages in mining were 21.8 and 19.9 percent higher than in all manufacturing in 1981 and 1989, respectively.

Table 5.8: Average Weekly Earnings, Full-Time Manual Males,  
Deep Coal Mines vs. Other Industries,  
Great Britain, 1980-1990(1)

Year	Coal and Coke	Steel	Auto	Chemicals	All Manufacturing
1980 (2)	154.8	119.6	117.4	121.6	115.2
1981	152.6	126.3	114.5	129.3	119.3
1982	166.8	140.9	131.8	144.3	134.8
1983	173.7	165.5	143.9	152.1	142.8
1984	n/a	171.9	158.1	168.5	153.6
1985	168.0	193.9	178.7	184.2	167.5
1986	203.1	202.2	186.6	193.6	178.4
1987	223.0	206.4	203.1	204.1	191.2
1988	253.3	221.3	226.6	217.8	206.8
1989	279.6	232.0	247.1	239.7	223.8
1990	296.9	254.3	265.6	267.5	243.7

Notes:

(1) in British currency, pound

(2) 1980 data exclude those workers whose pay was affected by absence. The data for the other years include those workers.

n/a not available

Source:

New Earning Survey, 1980-1990.

### **C. Poland**

With regard to the relation between the average wages in coal mining and in other industries throughout the decade, workers in the Polish coal mining industry appear to be the best paid industrial workers (Table 5.9). Similar to Great Britain, the advantage the miners had over other workers has narrowed overtime. Thus, while in 1981 miners earned on average 45.8 percent more than all other industrial workers, in 1982 the difference was 52.4 percent and between 1983 and 1987 declined below the level of 50 percent. In 1988 the average earnings in the industry were 100 percent more than the national average, but the difference decreased dramatically in 1989 and 1990 to 46.2 and 39.7 percent respectively. Thus, the coal mining industry entered the decade of the 1990s with the lowest earning advantage since 1970, and possibly in the post-war history.

### **D. Summary**

In sum, during the 1980s miners were among the best paid workers in all three countries. Importantly, in 1980/81 the issue of wages became an arena of struggle in Polish coal mining. In Great Britain wages have also increasingly been at issue in industrial relations, whereas in the U.S. coal industry wages did not play a preponderant role in UMWA-BCOA bargaining during the decade.

Table 5.9: Average Monthly Earnings, Coal vs. Other Industries, Poland, 1980-1990(1)

Year	Coal	Electric utilities	Steel	All
1980	10,567	6,378	7,884	6,175
1981	14,207	9,470	9,987	7,689
1982	24,438	14,618	14,628	11,631
1983	24,970	16,772	19,962	14,475
1984	29,131	19,808	22,272	16,838
1985	35,555	23,600	26,478	20,005
1986	43,452	29,653	32,687	24,095
1987	62,080	33,649	38,266	29,184
1988	108,475	60,606	67,049	53,090
1989	384,627	257,900	266,500	206,758
1990	1,708,237	1,266,800	1,385,800	1,029,637

Notes:

(1) in Polish currency, zloty

Sources:

Analiza, different years.

Rocznik Statystyczny, 1981 and 1991.

Przemysl, 1990

## 7. Health and Safety

Before I turn to the discussion of health and safety statistics to assess whether this issue was a potential contested arena in any of the countries during the 1980s let me first briefly mention the difficulties of reporting accidents during the 1980s and the reporting bias present in all three countries. For example, in Poland the definitions of accidents and recording methods became subject to critique with the emergence of Solidarity. The first major criticism was that management, with silent agreement of the old trade unions, was underreporting the accident numbers. The second major criticism was that since the injuries requiring less than three days of absence need not be recorded, the accident statistics were biased downward even further. As a result of these critiques, between 1983 and 1987 minor injuries had been included in the accident statistics. However, Poland was not exceptional in this regard. In Great Britain the definition of serious reportable injuries changed to include a wider range of accidents (Report and Accounts, 1981/82: 22-23). In the United States many accidents are not reported because workers are paid to sit in the office during their shifts rather than draw worker's compensation. In general the underreporting of accidents represents a practical act by coal enterprises to make their safety records to look better.

### A. The United States

In 1979, 114 miners were killed on the job in the underground coal mines in the United States. The worst record was in Appalachia where 100 of the 114 fatalities occurred. The

number and rate of injuries steadily decreased until 1983 and then increased significantly toward the end the decade (Table 5.10). This rapid deterioration of safety conditions which distinguished the trends in the United States from what has been happening in both Great Britain and Poland could reflect management and labors' bending of safety rules to improve labor productivity which also rose during this time.

### **B. Great Britain**

In 1980, the NCB announced that both the number and the rate of accidents in the underground mines fell to their lowest level in recorded history. The following year, as number of surface fatalities increased, the NCB and the NUM used the consultative machinery to revise the industry's policies dealing with surface accidents. Subsequently, as Table 5.11 shows, total accidents declined gradually until 1983/84, when it reached a peak of 32,000 accidents, and started decreasing again after 1985/86. In terms of incidence rate, the trends in British coal mining were somewhat similar to the United States. That is, while the general trend during the 1980s was downward, after an initial period of decline, the incidence rate peaked in 1986/87 and then again dropped steadily until the end of the decade.

### **C. Poland**

Examination of Table 5.12 indicates that the number of injuries continued to rise between 1979 and 1981. While the four-shift work system was viewed as a major contributor

Table 5.10: Underground Coal Mine Injuries,  
United States, 1979-1991.

Year	Fatal	NFD(1)	ND(2)	Total	TIR(3)
1979	114	15,201	2,662	17,977	14.03
1980	99	15,043	2,383	17,525	14.14
1981	121	12,138	1,897	14,156	12.68
1982	95	10,739	1,834	12,668	11.46
1983	51	6,905	1,459	8,415	9.98
1984	97	7,336	1,482	8,915	9.96
1985	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1986	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1987	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1988	52	9,600	2,659	12,263	16.77
1989	68	9,022	2,348	11,414	15.99
1990	66	9,150	2,182	11,377	15.35

Notes:

(1) nonfatal disabling

(2) nonfatal non disabling

(3) total incidence rate per 200,000 employee-hours

n/a not available

Sources:

Coal Data, 1985: II-27

Coal Data, 1993: II-28.



Table 5.11: Underground Coal Mine Injuries,  
Great Britain, 1980-1991

Year	Fatal	Major Injury	Other Injuries	Total	TIR(1)
1980/81	39	n/a	34,383	34,412	71.00
1981/82	33	826	28,608	29,467	62.50
1982/83	44	807	22,815	23,666	52.70
1983/84	22	744	15,637	32,040	42.60
1984/85(2)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	a/a
1985/86	28	704	13,973	14,705	43.78
1986/87(3)	15	930	11,535	12,480	44.20
1987/88	9	718	7,959	8,686	36.02
1988/89	18	684	5,877	6,579	29.31
1989/90	18	597	4,778	5,393	27.27
1990/91	11	492	3,948	4,451	24.67

Notes:

(1) total incidence rate per 100,000 worker/shifts

(2) due to a strike, the 1984/85 accidents statistics were counted for only four areas. Since no useful comparison can be made with the previous year, I excluded these statistics from the table altogether.

(3) in 1986/87, accident reporting regulations were revised, which makes the statistics after that year difficult to compare with the previous years.

Source:

Report and Accounts, different years.

Table 5.12: Underground Coal Mine Injuries, Poland,  
1979-1990

Year	Fatal	Major injury(1)	Other(2) injuries	Total (3)	TIR(4)
1979	170	5,929	4,852	9,551	26,0
1980	127	6,669	6,438	11,200	29.7
1981	105	10,178	14,205	24,488	64.3
1982	151	9,503	12,483	22,137	55.4
1983	102	8,357	8,898	19,965	50.1
1984	91	7,703	7,182	16,134	38.9
1985	129	7,553	6,250	14,327	34.8
1986	113	7,101	6,585	13,799	32.6
1987	108	7,158	6,361	13,627	31.1
1988	94	6,967	5,972	13,033	27.8

Notes:

- (1) major injury involves over 28 days of absence  
(2) other accidents involve between 4-28 days of absence  
(3) due to changes in reporting principles in 1981, since 1983 minor injuries requiring between 1-3 days of absence are included in the total number of accidents.  
(4) total rate of injuries per 1,000 workers  
(5) in 1989 the method of reporting mining accidents changed. Since the 1989 data is not comparable with the previous years, I excluded it from the table altogether.

Source:

Analiza, different years.

to this increase, part of the increase was most likely due to the fact that, in the context of tightening social/union control of workplace relations, management recorded more accidents. Since then, both total injuries and the incidence rate have gone down. Yet, as Table 5.12 shows, fluctuations occurred in particular categories of accidents, especially in the number of fatalities in 1985, major injuries in 1987 and other injuries in 1986.

#### **D. Summary**

In terms of trends in the total number accidents, Great Britain and Poland showed similar one-year peaks followed by downward trend throughout the decade. In contrast, the number of accidents in the United States began increasing towards the end of the 1980s. In all three countries both the reporting practices and the issues of health and safety themselves were potential contested arenas during the 1980s (see also Chapter Six).

### **II. Market Situation of the Industry**

To assess structuralist claims that market factors determine changes in the character of industrial relations, this section examines similarities and differences in the market environment of the coal-mining industry in all three countries. A major purpose of this section is to examine historical changes in each industry's market environment, and to determine if the market environment of British coal-mining industry was more similar to its U.S. or Polish counterparts in the 1980s. Another purpose of this chapter is to determine the extent of changes in market

situation of coal. By relating the observed changes, or their lack, in market situation of coal and state regulation to the changes in industrial relations, I will be able to decide whether the determination of industrial behavior by structural variables proposed by structuralists holds. I will begin with a discussion of the general situation in energy markets in the 1980s and then turn to an analysis of coal prices relative to other fuels.

### **1. General Situation in the Energy Markets**

Signs of a general recession marked the beginning of the 1980s in many western countries, including Great Britain and the United States, and economic problems plagued socialist countries, including Poland. The first signs of economic recovery as measured in energy demand were felt in 1983 and were confirmed in 1984. However, as the International Energy Agency (1985: 12) report said: "Despite the recent revival in energy demand, world energy markets continue to show large overcapacity for virtually all fuels, particularly for oil." The resultant forecast was that all energy sources would experience some difficult times in the years to come. In this regard, then, the coal industry's situation did not differ from the situation in other similar industries.

In western energy markets, the second part of the decade was characterized by a continued abundance of energy supplies, lower prices, and growing demand. The socialist countries' experiences were quite different as both energy prices and demand increased, but not supply. This created difficulties meeting consumer energy needs in some countries, including Poland. Between 1985-1990, 44 percent of world electricity was generated using coal, and the world production of coal grew and actually exceeded the record 3.5 billion tons in 1989. In

terms of the position of the U.S., British, and Polish coal mining industries in the world coal market, the 1980s provided some interesting developments. By 1989 the United States had lost its primacy as the largest coal producer to China, Great Britain moved from the fifth to eighth position among the world's largest producers, and Poland took Britain's place as it lost its fourth position to India (Rocznik Statystyczny, 1991: 542).

## **2. Prices of Coal and Other Fuels**

In this section I begin to assess structuralist claims that market factors determine changes in industrial relations, by looking at variations in the market situation of coal. Toward this end, I will trace changes in coal's relative position in energy markets in each country by looking at coal prices relative other alternative fuels and their regulation by the government.

### **A. The United States**

In the United States, as the prices of other fossil fuels started increasing, the prices of bituminous coal delivered to electric utilities also rose to \$35.50 per ton in 1983, but dropped to \$31.83 by 1987 (Coal Data, 1987: 65). Despite the initial increase, in absolute terms coal remained the least expensive fossil fuel on a Btu basis (Table 5.13). However, it has been "a rule of thumb in the industry that coal's costs must be less than half that of competing fuels to overcome its handling disadvantages" (Hannah and Magnum, 1985:22). If we apply this standard to compare coal with oil, coal held the competitive advantage throughout most of the

Table 5.13: Average Prices of Fossil-Fuels at  
 Steam-Electric Utility Plants,  
 United States, 1979-1991(1)

Year	Coal	Oil	Gas
1979	122.4	298.8	174.9
1980	135.1	426.7	219.9
1981	153.2	533.4	280.5
1982	164.7	483.2	337.6
1983	165.6	457.8	347.4
1984	166.4	481.2	358.3
1985	164.8	424.2	343.1
1986	157.9	240.1	234.4
1987	150.6	297.2	223.5
1988 (2)	146.6	240.5	226.3
1989	144.5	284.6	235.5
1990	145.5	331.9	232.1
1991	145.8	254.2	206.3

Notes:

(1) cost in cents per million Btu

Source:

Monthly Energy Review, December 1992: 105.

decade, with the exception of 1986-1988 when the cost of oil was less than two times that of coal. Compared to natural gas, coal enjoyed a competitive advantage only between 1982 and 1985 (Table 5.13).

However, underground-mined coal also had to compete with coal delivered by western surface mines. Comparing price trends in the different types of coal, the average price of underground mined coal in 1985 was \$32.91 compared to \$19.94 for the surface coal, and in 1989, \$28.44 compared to \$17.38 for the surface coal (Table 5.14). Overall, the price differential between the underground and surface mined has not changed significantly during the 1980s.

## **B. Great Britain**

Similar to the United States, in Great Britain, beginning in the 1950s, coal's share of the industrial market was declining steadily until the late 1970s. However, an almost fifteenfold increase in oil prices from 1970 to 1980 gave coal a competitive advantage (Smith, 1982: 418). At the beginning of the 1980s, the increase in oil prices coincided with a decline in energy consumption and increased competition among coal exporters. As a result, in 1982/83 coal prices fell more than oil prices and the price differential widened to over 50 percent in August 1983 (Noorduyn, 1983: S4). However, this situation did not last long. In 1986 the price of oil collapsed, and British coal lost its competitive advantage.

More specifically, in 1984 comparable fuel prices for electric utilities were 55.31 pounds for coal, 110.27 pounds for oil and 80.45 pounds for natural gas. In the aftermath of the decrease in oil prices, the structure of prices changed as well. Thus, in 1988, coal prices

Table 5.14: Average Prices of Bituminous Coal  
by Type of Mining, United States,  
1979-1991(1)

Year	Underground Coal	Surface Coal
1979	32.75	17.37
1980	33.49	18.51
1981	35.78	20.58
1982	35.76	21.23
1983	34.45	20.45
1984	33.35	20.41
1985	32.91	19.94
1986	30.33	19.17
1987	29.62	18.45
1988(2)	28.97	17.43
1989	28.44	17.38
1990	28.58	16.98
1991	28.56	16.60

Notes:

(1) in American dollars.

(2) since 1988 the data in this table includes anthracite. However, the effect of this inclusion is negligible. For example, if anthracite was included in 1987 data, this would increase the average of the underground price by \$0.01 and of the surface coal by \$0.20.

Sources:

Coal Data: A Reference, 1987: 65

Coal Data, 1993: II-30.



were highest, followed by natural gas and oil. In 1989, oil was slightly, but not significantly, more expensive than coal; throughout the decade, coal has been consistently more expensive than natural gas (Coal Information, 1993: 513).

In terms of changes, coal prices were generally static throughout the decade. On November 1, 1984 list prices for industrial and coking coals were raised by 4.65 percent, which was well below the rate of inflation. Then beginning in 1985, the list prices were kept stagnant until January 1988 when they increased by 2.7 percent. In the summer of 1988 as the prices of oil collapsed, the price pressures on British Coal increased. In this context, British Coal signed another five-year Joint Understanding with the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) on coal supplies and prices, with the latter being cut down by three pounds/ton. Then, for the next two years, in the context of very low oil prices, British Coal froze prices to the CEGB which remained its biggest single coal consumer (Report and Accounts, 1988/89 and 1989/90).

In general, then, if compared in British pounds, during the 1980s energy prices in Great Britain were higher than in the U.S. Indeed, it has been argued, especially in the aftermath of the miners' strike of 1984-95, that British coal was much more expensive than U.S. or Australian coal. For example, in 1982 coal from U.S., Western Canada, and Australia sold at just over 30 pounds/ton, and South African coal was even cheaper. On average, British coal cost about 46 pounds a ton at the pithead; comparable quality coal in the Appalachians cost between 23-27 pounds (Colliery Guardian, May 1984: 161).

### C. Poland

In Poland, in 1981 the average sale price of coal was 451.55 zloty/ton, a decrease of more than 2 zloty/ton compared with 1980. At the same time, production costs rose from 784.62 to 1,115 zloty/ton. With the 1982 imposition of the martial law all Polish mines legally became public enterprises. This meant, among other things, that, similar to Great Britain, coal prices would be defined by central authorities, mainly the Ministry of Finance, as they had been prior to the Decree 199/1981.

However, while coal prices were centrally determined, they were not the same across different categories of buyers. The lowest prices were paid by state-owned concerns and the highest prices were reserved for exports. Of course, in a comparative perspective, the politics concerning the sale of Polish coal were different from both the United States and Great Britain, but were not exceptional. For example, in the United States contract prices of coal were from 25 percent to 100 percent higher than the price offered in spot markets (Hannah and Magnum, 1985: 67).<sup>48</sup> In Great Britain, the CEGB held long-term contracts, the so-called "Joint Understanding" with the NCB. Similar to Poland, coal prices in these agreements were lower than the prices of coal sold in the spot market. In this instance, then, the significant difference is not the fact of within country price variability. Rather, in the United States contract prices were higher than the spot market prices, while the opposite was the case in Poland and Great

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<sup>48</sup> These same authors conclude that the coal market reality in the United States has not been operating according to "free market" principles. Rather, it has been either protected by captive relationships or subject to institutional, long-term contractual regulations (Hannah and Magnum, 1985: 73-74).

Britain due to the politics of state authorities.

Polish coal prices continued to rise throughout the decade, yet production cost still exceeded sale prices. In 1984, the average sale price was 2,531 zloty/ton and the average cost 3,118 zloty/ton; in 1986, 5,191 and 6,316 zloty/ton respectively; and in 1988 the average cost of production of one ton of coal was 9,351 compared to the average sale price of 8,639 zloty/ton (Analiza, different years). The situation worsened in the first half of 1989 when the costs of coal production increased by 96.3% but prices were allowed to increase by only 18.4 percent (Colliery Guardian, January 1990: 28). This trend was contrary to what was occurring in Great Britain where the coal production costs were decreasing (Report and Accounts, different years). Of course, similar to Great Britain and the United States, production costs in some Polish mines were higher than in others, which meant that, in addition to state subsidies, the most efficient mines were subsidizing the least efficient ones.

#### **D. Summary**

In the United States, underground coal operators competed with surface operators as well as with other producers of energy sources in the electricity generation market, whereas in Great Britain competitive pressures stem from alternative energy sources--oil and gas--and from the recognition that foreign coal producers could produce coal at lower cost. Importantly, in both countries, coal mines competed among themselves. By contrast, Polish coal mining did not face competitive pressures in the domestic market. In terms of trends in coal prices and costs, United States coal prices, and costs of its production, declined during the decade. In

Great Britain production costs were increasing long before 1984/85 and began declining in the aftermath of 1984/85 strike. Thus, in terms of price and cost patterns in the second half of the 1980s, the United States and Great Britain present downward trends on both dimensions. At the same time, in both the United States and Great Britain, coal did hold a price advantage for some period of time. At the same time, while slight variability existed, prices were virtually static during the 1980s as central authorities limited British industry's price policies. In Poland, both production costs and sale prices increased throughout the decade, but costs grew more rapidly than the centrally-regulated prices. Thus, while the three cases differ in terms of coal prices relative to other fuels and trends in coal prices and production costs, some important similarities continued to exist, especially between the United States and Great Britain (see also Chapter Three).

### **3. Coal Disposal, Supply and Demand**

In the following section, I will continue to look at variations in the market situation of coal in all three countries. Toward this end, I will trace changes in coal's relative position in energy markets in each country, including coal consumption relative to alternative fuels and total coal supply and demand.

#### **A. The United States**

At the beginning of the 1980s, domestic coal consumption was dominated by electric

utilities, followed by industrial retail, including transportation, residential and commercial sectors, and coke plants. In 1981, electric utilities accounted for 81.5 percent, coke plants for 8.3 percent and industrial retail for 10.2 percent of total coal consumption. This picture did not change radically, throughout the decade. The only major decline in coal consumption occurred in the case of coke plants, which accounted for 4.3 percent of coal consumption in 1990, mainly because of the continued decline of the steel industry. However, the drop in demand from such major users as steel mills was somewhat offset by the increased demand from electrical generation plants. In 1984, electric utilities consumed 7.5 times more coal than in 1950, that is 664.4 million tons of coal, which accounted for 84 percent of total domestic consumption or 76 percent of all coal produced. By the end of the decade, electric utilities accounted for 86.2 percent of total domestic consumption (Table 5.15).

Exports of coal from the United States peaked at 113 million tons in 1981. Subsequently, coal exports fell as low as 78 million tons in 1983 but attained 95 million tons in 1988 and 106 million tons in 1990 (Annual Energy Review, 1990). Again, difficulties in coal production due to industrial conflicts experienced by competitors in coal markets, particularly Poland, Australia, and China, contributed to this growth in American exports.

Coal consumption has been keeping pace with production (Table 5.16). While consumer stocks fluctuated throughout the decade, they show a general downward trend from 185,274 in 1981 to 146,087 million net tons in 1989 and, then, increased to 168,210 in 1990. Given these figures, it would be difficult to conclude that the industry was suddenly facing more adverse conditions than at any other time over last 15 years. What was different was the fact that the underground bituminous coal industry became almost entirely dependent on the

Table 5.15: Coal Consumption by Market, United States,  
1979-1990(1)

Year	Residential & Commercial	Industrial	Exports	Electric Utilities	Total
1979	8.4	145.1	66.0	527.1	746.5
1980	6.5	127.0	91.7	569.3	794.4
1981	7.4	128.4	112.5	596.8	845.1
1982	8.2	105.0	106.3	593.7	813.2
1983	8.4	103.0	77.8	625.2	814.4
1984	9.1	117.8	81.5	664.4	872.8
1985	7.8	116.4	92.7	693.8	910.7
1986	7.7	111.6	85.5	685.1	889.8
1987	6.9	112.1	79.6	717.9	916.5
1988	7.1	118.2	95.0	758.4	978.7
1989	6.2	117.5	100.8	766.9	890.6
1990(2)	6.3	114.7	105.8	771.5	1,001.2

Notes:

(1) million tons

(2) preliminary

Source:

Annual Energy Review, 1990: 189 and 191.

Table 5.16: Coal Supply and Demand Balance,  
United States, 1981-1990(1)

Year	Production(2)	Total supply(3)	Total demand(4)	Difference(5)
1981	823.8	826.8	845.1	-18.3
1982	838.1	838.9	813.2	-25.7
1983	782.1	783.3	814.4	+31.1
1984	896.0	897.2	872.8	-24.4
1985	883.6	885.6	910.7	+25.1
1986	890.3	892.5	889.8	- 2.7
1987	918.8	920.5	916.5	- 4.0
1988	950.3	952.4	978.7	+26.3
1989	980.7	983.6	991.4	+ 7.8
1990	1,029.1	1,031.8	1,001.2	-30.6
1991	996.0	999.4	996.6	- 2.8

Notes:

(1) million tons

(2) total domestic production

(3) including imports

(4) including domestic consumption and exports

(5) difference between total supply and demand

Source:

Coal Data, 1993: III-3

electric utilities market, where it faced increasing competition from Western coal and other fuels.

In terms of demand for coal, it was steadily, but slowly, growing. By 1985 coal accounted for 23.6 percent of total energy consumption. It followed oil, whose share declined from 45 percent in 1980 to 41.8 percent in 1985, and natural gas, whose share declined slightly yet was still greater than that of coal (Table 5.17). In the second part of the decade, after oil prices collapsed in 1986, oil's market share jumped to 43.4 percent and then declined slowly throughout the rest of the decade. After holding a slightly greater share of this market than gas, towards the end of the decade, coal dropped to third position again with 23.4 percent of energy market share in 1990.

### **B. Great Britain**

Similar to the United States, total energy consumption in Great Britain started declining at the outset of the 1980s. In both countries, consumption bottomed out in 1984 and in 1985 signs of growth emerged. In 1981/82 the domestic demand for coal fell below the 1979/80 and 1980/81 levels. Yet, the total demand for coal that year was higher than the year before due to a significant increase in exports, from 4.7 million in 1980/81 to 9.4 million in 1981/82.<sup>49</sup> Coal production, however, constantly outstripped demand. In 1980 total coal supply outstripped demand by 10.7 million tons, by 5.3 million tonnes in 1981 and by 9.8 in 1982. This allowed

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<sup>49</sup> The increase of British exports in 1981 was related to the US miners' 72 day strike, the decline of exports from Poland and the miners' and dockers' strike in Australia.



Table 5.17: Energy Consumption by Major Source,  
 United States, 1980-1990(1)

Year	Coal	Oil	Natural gas	Other
1980	20.3	45.0	26.9	7.8
1981	21.5	43.2	26.9	8.4
1982	21.7	42.7	26.1	9.5
1983	22.5	42.6	24.6	10.3
1984	23.0	41.9	25.0	10.1
1985	23.6	41.8	24.1	10.5
1986	23.3	43.4	22.5	10.8
1987	23.4	42.8	23.1	10.7
1988	23.5	42.7	23.1	10.7
1989	23.3	42.1	23.8	10.8
1990	23.4	41.3	23.8	11.5

Notes:

(1) percent of consumption

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1991:  
 562.

large coal stocks to be built, in a large part deliberately, as a hedge against the expected confrontation with the NUM. Thus, coal stocks reached a record 53.3 million tonnes at the beginning of 1983. Starting in 1983/84, with the overtime ban and subsequent strike by the NUM, for the next three years total coal demand exceeded total supply. Stocks fell rapidly and by 1985/86 stood at 31.2 million tonnes. By the end of the decade they stood at 34.6 million tonnes which, similar to the United States, was less than at the beginning of the 1980s (Tables 5.18 and 5.19).

Despite the fall in the overall energy consumption in the first half of the decade, coal preserved its position as the single most important component of the British energy market. Coal's share of energy consumption has improved since 1980/81 when it surpassed oil (Tables 5.20 and 5.21). However, the situation reversed towards the end of the 1980s, when, in the context of growing energy consumption, coal started losing ground to oil and other sources of energy combined.

As in the United States, utilities were the largest consumers of coal in Great Britain. In 1980/81, electric utilities bought 82.9 million tonnes of coal (70.4 percent of total consumption); in 1985/86, 88 million tonnes were sold to electric utilities (76.1 percent of total consumption); by 1989, while electric utilities consumed only 75.8 million tonnes, they accounted for 80.3 percent of total coal sales. Clearly, the relative importance of the electric utilities market increased over time. The fall in demand for steel, which began in 1972, was still perceptible in 1980. As Table 5.22 shows, coal sold for coking declined throughout the 1980s. Since the British Steel was the NCB's second largest customer, this decreased demand was crucial in the overall decline of inland coal consumption. Contrary to the United States, the electric power industry did offset the losses that coal experienced in other markets. Yet,

Table 5.18: Coal Supply and Demand Balance,  
Great Britain, 1980-1990/91(1)

Year	Production(2)	Total supply(3)	Total demand(4)	Difference(5)
1980/81	126.6	135.7	125.0	+ 10.7
1981/82	124.3	131.5	126.2	+ 5.3
1982/83	120.9	127.3	117.5	+ 9.8
1983/84	106.0	114.0	121.0	- 7.0
1984/85	43.0	55.0	68.0	- 13.0
1985/86	104.5	119.0	121.0	- 2.0
1986/87	103.0	118.0	115.0	+ 3.0
1987/88	99.6	113.0	117.7	- 4.7
1988/89	103.9	119.0	111.0	+ 8.0
1989/90	92.5	110.0	112.0	- 2.0
1990/91	91.6	108.5	110.8	- 2.3

Notes:

(1) million tonnes

(2) production, including surface mining

(3) total supply, including imports and others

(4) total demand, including exports

(5) difference between total supply and demand

Source:

Report and Accounts, different years.

Table 5.19: Coal Stocks at End Year held by NCB and Consumers, Great Britain, 1980-1990/91(1)

Year	NCB stock	Consumer Stock	Total
1980/81	20.9	17.5	38.4
1981/82	24.9	18.6	43.5
1982/83	24.9	28.3	53.3
1983/84	21.3	24.5	45.8
1984/85	19.2	13.5	32.7
1985/86	8.3	22.9	31.2
1986/87	9.8	24.7	34.5
1987/88	5.8	24.0	29.8
1988/89	9.7	27.7	37.4
1989/90	9.1	22.5	34.6

Notes:

(1) million tonnes

Source:

Report and Accounts, different years.

Table 5.20: Energy Consumption, Great Britain,  
1979-1989/90 (1)

Year	Coal	Oil	Gas	Other	Total
1979/80	128.3	133.6	70.2	15.9	348.0
1980/81	120.4	116.8	69.9	15.6	322.7
1981/82	116.9	113.1	72.8	15.8	318.6
1982/83	110.3	108.1	72.1	19.5	310.0
1983/84	111.8	106.5	77.1	20.4	315.8
1984/85	66.7	146.0	78.9	22.7	314.3
1985/86	118.4	104.1	84.1	23.9	330.5
1986/87 (2)	112.4	111.7	84.0	23.9	334.7
1987/88	116.0	110.6	83.1	21.4	336.2
1988/89	109.2	116.6	79.4	25.3	337.8
1989/90	108.9	120.0	81.3	27.7	341.8

Notes:

(1) million tons of coal or coal equivalent

(2) totals since 1986/87 include electricity imports which were 2.7 million tonnes of coal equivalent in 1986, 5.1 in 1987, 5.3 in 1988, and 3.9 in 1989.

Source:

Report and Accounts, different years.

Table 5.21: Structure of Energy Market,  
Great Britain, 1980-89/90

Year	Coal as % of total	Oil as % of total	Other as % of total
1979/80	36.9	38.4	24.7
1980/81	37.3	36.2	26.5
1981/82	36.7	35.5	27.8
1982/83	35.6	34.9	29.5
1983/84	35.4	33.7	30.9
1984/85	21.2	46.4	32.4
1985/86	35.8	31.5	32.7
1986/87	33.6	33.3	33.1
1987/88	34.5	32.9	32.6
1988/89	32.3	34.4	33.3
1989/90	31.9	35.1	33.0

Source:  
Report and Accounts, different years.

Table 5.22: NCB Coal Disposal by Market, Great Britain,  
1980-1989/90(1)

Year	Power Stations	Coke Ovens	Industry	Others(2)	Exports	Total
1980/81	82.9	8.8	9.0	12.3	4.7	117.7
1981/82	82.0	8.4	8.7	11.7	9.4	120.2
1982/83	86.2	7.6	8.8	10.9	7.1	120.6
1983/84	75.5	7.4	8.5	10.3	6.8	108.5
1984/85	29.9	1.5	7.0	5.1	0.5	44.0
1985/86	88.0	5.6	8.8	10.1	3.3	115.7
1986/87	79.5	4.5	8.7	8.7	2.2	103.6
1987/88	80.2	4.2	8.8	8.2	2.2	103.6
1988/89	79.5	3.7	8.3	6.8	1.8	98.5
1989/90	75.8	3.9	7.9(3)	4.1	2.6	94.3
1990/91	74.3	2.7	7.6	3.6	2.1	90.3

Notes:

(1) million tonnes

(2) others includes domestic, and until 1989 domestic includes domestic household, naturally smokeless and domestic manufactured fuel plants.

(3) since 1989 the BCC combined coke oven and manufactured fuel plant markets into one category.

Source:

Report and Accounts, different years.

the pattern of sales in the first half of the 1980s recorded some changes, but no big swings, except during the strike years. The more significant changes were observed in the second half of the 1980s.

### **C. Poland**

While I was not able to obtain exact data on the structure of energy consumption for Poland, it appears that the underground-mined coal not only was the dominant source of energy, but was one of the most important fuels in Polish economy, representing 65 percent of total fuel supply. In terms of coal disposal by market, or, more appropriately in the Polish case, by industrial/economic sector, similar to the two other cases, electric utilities, as Table 5.23 shows, accounted for the biggest share of coal consumption, and this share has been increasing throughout the decade. Conversion of the numbers in Table 5.23 into percentages indicates that the share of coal consumption by electric utilities increased from 30.1 percent in 1980 to 33.9 percent in 1985 and 35.47 percent in 1989. The remainder of the yearly coal production was distributed as follows: industrial sector, 22.8 percent in 1980 and 21.5 percent in 1989; exports 15.27 percent in 1980 and 16.0 percent in 1989; other sectors, including residential and transportation, 19.0 percent in 1980 and 14.8 percent in 1989; and coke plants 12.7 percent 1980 and 12.0 percent in 1989.

In terms of balance between coal supply and demand, the Polish situation has been radically different from that in the United States and Great Britain (Tables, 5. 16, 5.18 and 5.24). That is, contrary to the other cases, the Polish industry has not shown signs of



Table 5.23: Coal Disposal By Market, Poland, 1980-1989(1)

Year	Electric utilities	Coke plants	Industrial	Others(2)	Exports	Total(3)
1979	55.82	25.50	45.68	36.35	41.65	205.00
1980	59.90	25.32	45.28	37.88	30.35	198.73
1981	55.07	23.04	39.07	33.79	15.01	166.08
1982	55.99	22.16	43.07	38.56	29.13	191.86
1983	62.66	21.72	40.85	29.91	35.29	193.24
1984	64.29	21.25	38.84	27.35	42.82	196.18
1985	66.54	20.30	42.08	30.49	36.06	195.62
1986	56.53	21.19	42.10	31.71	35.01	195.54
1987	67.79	22.17	41.73	33.91	30.22	195.82
1988	64.94	22.54	41.87	33.71	32.34	195.40
1989	63.51	21.55	38.45	26.59	28.94	179.05

## Notes:

(1) million tons

(2) including residential and transportation

(3) the sum of individual numbers may not add to the total due to independent rounding

## Source:

Analiza, different years.Rocznik Statystyczny Kopaln Wegla Kamiennego, 1989.

Table 5.24: Coal Supply and Demand Balance,  
Poland, 1980-1989(1)

Year	Production	Total supply	Total demand	Difference
1980	193.1	195.7	198.7	-3.0
1981	163.0	165.6	166.1	-0.5
1982	189.3	191.9	188.9	+3.0
1983	191.1	193.2	190.4	+2.8
1984	191.6	193.2	194.5	-1.3
1985	191.6	193.5	195.6	-2.6
1986	192.1	194.4	195.5	-1.1
1987	193.0	195.7	195.8	-0.1
1988	193.0	195.4	195.0	+0.4
1989	177.6	179.0	179.0	0.0

Notes:

(1) million tons

Sources:

Analiza, different years.

Rocznik Statystyczny Kopaln Wegla Kamiennego, 1989.

overcapacity. Rather it has been barely produced enough coal to meet domestic needs while also trying to sell to foreign consumers.

#### **D. Summary**

While energy consumption in Great Britain and the United States was different at the beginning of the decade, with coal being the primary energy source in Great Britain, at the end of the decade, the energy consumption pattern was similar in both countries: coal lost to oil and other sources of energy in Great Britain and to oil as well as gas in the United States. Thus, during the 1980s, Great Britain's energy consumption became more like that of the United States as coal gave way to other fuels. Also, coal supply and demand balance in the United States and Great Britain show similar pattern throughout the 1980s. Compared to the United States and Great Britain, the structure of coal consumption in Poland has been more diversified and coal more evenly distributed across different sectors. Also, in contrast to its British and United States counterparts, the Polish residential market has been an important coal consumer during the decade. Similar to the United States, exports constituted a significant share of total demand for coal. Importantly, while the U.S. and British coal-mining industries faced competitive pressures, no radical changes occurred in the U.S. coal's market situation during the 1980, and in Great Britain significant changes occurred only in the aftermath of the 1984-85 strike.

### III. Summary and Discussion

In relation to my research questions, three major points emerge through my discussion of the economic situation of the coal-mining industries in the 1980s. First, according to the structuralist hegemony thesis, we should observe convergence in contested arenas between Great Britain and the United States and no variability in contested arenas across historical boundaries. In this context, my analysis of different aspects of production process suggests that in all three countries job security became contested arenas in labor-management relations during the 1980s, a change compared with the years prior to 1980. Further, another similarity emerged across national boundaries, in addition to the fact that the issue of labor productivity continued to be an important arena of struggle in the three countries during the 1980s. As before, miners were among the best paid workers in all three countries in the 1980s, but in 1980-81 the issue of wages emerged for the first time as a contested arena in Polish coal mining, suggesting that, contrary to the structuralist claim, contested arenas varied under socialism. The findings concerning incentive systems, especially the fact that it was not widely institutionalized in the U.S., indicate divergence between the United States and Great Britain, on the one hand, and similarity between Great Britain and Poland, on the other hand. Also, while the UMWA did not contest managerial prerogative regarding pit closures, instead it focused on job security, pit closures became a contested arena in British and Polish industries.

All this suggests that, first, contrary to the structuralist proposition, contested arenas show variable patterns of convergence and divergence across economic systems. Second, contested arenas varied over time in all three countries. Thus, an important question becomes

whether the changes overtime occurred due to changes in markets? In this context, if my analysis of coal markets shows relative stability in market situation of coal, this would suggest that market variables cannot provide sufficient explanation of historical changes in contested arenas.

Second, before I turn to the summary of the findings regarding the structuralist market-control hypothesis, let me briefly discuss the issue of productivity in relation to the consent hypothesis. The structuralist perspective maintains that the 1980s were characterized by labor consent to managerial strategies. In Chapter Two, I established that "labor productivity" can be used as an indicator of labor consent. My findings in this chapter suggest that, labor productivity has significantly increased in the United States and Great Britain and stabilized in Poland. Taken at face value, this finding supports Burawoy's claim concerning labor consent under hegemonic regime and his thesis about differences in industrial behavior across socio-economic systems.

However, some of the impressive increases in labor productivity in the United States underground mining can be attributed to a combined effect of workforce reduction and technological change, especially the use of the longwall system, and in Great Britain they can be attributed to the combined effect of closure of inefficient pits and workforce reduction. If so, then Burawoy's argument concerning the existence of labor consent-- labor's participation in their own exploitation--cannot alone adequately explain productivity increases at an industry level. Moreover, if productivity increases in U.S. and British coal mining can be at least partly attributed to technological change and pit closures, respectively, then the Polish data suggests that Polish miners' behavior during the 1980s was similar to that of British and U.S. miners.

That is, similar to its British and U.S. counterparts, Polish miners were unwilling to increase their work effort and Polish managers could neither boost labor productivity through technological progress nor by pit closures. As a result, labor productivity remained approximately the same throughout the 1980s.

It might be the case, then, that actors' behavior was similar across all three cases, but that, Polish management encountered more constraints to their productivity drive than its British or U.S. counterparts. Since from the point of the state authorities, as the example of 'mobilization fund" indicates, the increases in labor productivity as well as overall production volume was crucial, these constraints could have been either technological or historical-institutional in nature, including the Solidarity movement and the existence of workers' councils. Such obstacles did not exist in the United States or Great Britain. Importantly, these elements of industrial relations are focus of the relational framework, but are not crucial for Burawoy's explanation of historical and cross-national variations.

Third, from the structuralist perspective, the coal-mining industry's economic situation, that is, its competitive position in relation to other energy sources, is the single most important variable determining changes in industrial relations and industrial behavior. In this regard, my discussion of market variables in Chapters Three and Five suggests three things. First, while the market situation of underground bituminous coal mining in the United States and Great Britain changed in the 1980s, the change that occurred in the first part of the decade was not too radical compared to the 1950-1970. Importantly, the change in Great Britain, wherein coal lost its primary position in the energy market in the aftermath of the 1984-85 strike was due to actors' politics, especially the politics of the state and the NUM. Thus, the market situation of

coal in Great Britain in the 1980s was as much the outcome of a long trend as it was the result of the actors' politics whose cumulative articulation occurred in the 1980s. In this context, if the structuralist market-control hypothesis is correct, then during the 1980s we should observe more stability or fewer changes in industrial relations in the United States and Great Britain than prior to 1980, and continuity in contested arenas in Poland. However, my data indicate that industrial relations in all three countries in the 1980s were characterized by more instability and changes in contested arenas than the preceding years when coal's situation in the energy markets worsened considerably.

Second, during the 1980s the British industry continued to face competitive pressures similar to the United States (Winterton and Winterton, 1993). The British government, which continued to impose financial limits on the industry, on the one hand, but controlled sale price increases, on the other hand, acted as market forces. Also, towards the end of the 1980s, after the Central Electricity Generation Board was privatized, the Coal Board had to actually decrease coal prices to maintain its position in this market. While the Polish coal industry also came under pressure from state authorities, this pressure was intended to increase production and the government was willing to subsidize the industry, whereas the British government's ambition was to cut the subsidies and increase efficiency. In this regard, then, the situation of British coal mining was actually closer to the situation of its U.S. and not its Polish counterpart. This, according to Burawoy's logic, should be reflected in industrial relations and actors' behavior.

Third, with regard to other market variables, the United States and Great Britain show more convergence than either of these countries with Poland. Thus, during the 1980s, Great

Britain's energy consumption became more like that of the United States, and the coal supply and demand balance in the United States and Great Britain show similar pattern throughout the 1980s. In contrast, the structure of coal consumption in Poland has been more diversified and coal more evenly distributed across different sectors. The convergence in the market situation of the U.S. and British coal industries continued, and even deepened, in the 1980s. In this context, then, the most important question becomes if, after twenty years of convergence in structural variables, industrial politics and patterns of class struggle also converged in these two countries.

A related question is whether, in the context of continued divergence between Poland and its capitalist counterparts, the social processes that occurred in Poland during the 1980s also show divergent trends. To address these issues, in the next chapter I will compare and contrast patterns of conflict and accommodation in the American, British, and Polish coal industries during the 1980s. In this context, I will further examine potential arenas of struggle exhibited in three major miner's strikes that occurred in the countries during the decade.



## CHAPTER SIX

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MINERS' ACTIVISM IN THE UNITED STATES, GREAT BRITAIN AND POLAND DURING THE 1980's

Thus far the data suggest that, at the structural level, the British coal industry is more similar to its U.S. than Polish counterpart. Accordingly, if the structuralist argument is correct I should observe more similarities in labor activism patterns and arenas of struggle in the United States and Great Britain than in either of these countries and Poland. Further, if the structuralist consent hypothesis is correct I should observe a shift from conflictual to consensual industrial relations both in the United States and Great Britain but not in Poland. Finally, if the structural gender hypothesis is correct, I should not find a relationship between labor activism and gender, including such aspects of gender as ideology of masculinity and family wage.

To address these issues, this chapter focuses on similarities and differences in rank-and-file activism during the decade of the 1980s. I begin with a discussion of general patterns of miners' activism throughout the decade. Here I compare and contrast the main indices of strike activity, including the number of strikes, workers involved, and workdays lost. Next, I analyze three miners' strikes in Poland, Great Britain and the United States which occurred during the 1980s and had far-reaching consequences for the shape of industrial relations and industrial management. To determine the adequacy of structural or relational explanations of worker's activism, I compare and contrast patterns of the actors' behavior, arenas of struggle, the factors underlying the politicization of industrial conflict, and the forms of workers' consciousness. Specifically, I analyze these four dimensions of labor activism by looking at 1) the contexts in

which strikes emerged; (2) the dynamics and loci of miners' mobilization; (3) the main issues in the disputes; (4) the course of the disputes; and (5) the conclusion of the 1980-81, 1984-85 and 1989-90 strikes. I conclude with a discussion of the ways in which structuralist and relational perspectives are helpful in understanding the similarities and differences in labor activism analyzed in this chapter.

## **I. A Comparative Overview of Patterns of Miners' Activism in the 1980s**

### **1. The Comparative Demographics of Labor Collective Activism**

In this sub-section I will explore the statistics on collective labor activism for all industries and coal mining industry in all three countries. If the structuralist thesis is correct, then, I should observe convergence of labor activism patterns between the U.S. and Great Britain, decline in labor activism in the British and U.S. industries, and the highest level of labor activism in Poland. Also, I should observe divergence of labor activism between Poland and its two counterparts. From the relational perspective collective labor activism should not converge; instead it would show various and changing patterns of conflict and accommodation.

#### **A. The United States**

In the United States, at the beginning of the 1980s, as Table 6.1 shows, the number of strikes involving more than 1,000 workers had significantly declined, from 187 in 1980 to 96

Table 6.1: Strikes With More Than 1,000 Workers  
Involved, United States, 1979-1990

Year	Number of strikes	Workers involved	Workdays lost
1979	235	1,021,000	20,409,000
1980	187	795,000	20,844,000
1981	145	729,000	16,908,000
1982	96	656,000	9,061,000
1983	81	909,000	17,461,000
1984	62	376,000	8,499,000
1985	54	324,000	7,079,000
1986	69	533,000	11,861,000
1987	46	174,000	4,469,000
1988	40	118,000	4,364,000
1989	51	452,000	16,996,000
1990	44	185,000	5,926,000

Source:

Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1992: 420.

in 1982, a decrease of 48.6 percent over 2 years. While the decline continued during the rest of the 1980s, it was not as dramatic as at the outset of the decade. Between 1982 and 1989, the number of large strikes dropped from 96 to 51, a decline of 46.8 percent. If we look at two other indices of strike activity, number of workers involved and days lost, we will also notice a downward trend despite fluctuations from one year to another.

In this context, let me recall that about 94 percent of strikes are erased from the figures which report strikes involving 1,000 workers or more and which occurred in the United States after 1982 (see Chapter II). This creates a real impediment to a meaningful analysis.

However, the data available indicate that, during the 1980s, the number of large strikes significantly declined. This, in turn, may suggest that, as Burawoy purports labor consent characterizes the new industrial relations. However, two questions can be asked in this regard. First, if new industrial relations are consensual, why after periods of decline did strike activity increase on all strike indices in 1986 and 1989? Second, can a change in the strike patterns be misleadingly interpreted as decline?

Let me focus on the second issue now. The data in Table 6.1 suggest that, during the 1980s, a lower number of strikes tended to involve more workers per strike and last longer. For example, during the first half of the 1980s, on average 6,068 workers were involved in each of 571 large strikes which lasted, on average, 127,448 worker days. Between 1985 and 1989 an average of 6,157 workers were involved in each of 260 strikes which lasted on average 156,806 worker days. Thus, a cursory look at numbers indicates that labor activism, as measured by three different strike indices, declined significantly during the 1980s.

However, if we consider the five-year averages, a different trend emerges.<sup>50</sup> Instead of many large strikes, we can see fewer, larger and longer strikes. What these data may suggest is that, in a changing political economic context, unions and rank-and-file workers embarked on new strategies and practices. Indeed, for example, selective strikes against particular companies became a popular trade union strategy, including the UMWA.

Unfortunately, the change in reporting strikes appears also to have devastating effect on the data for the number of strikes in coal mining industry (Table 6.2). These data have little analytical value for understanding the trends in collective labor activism in this industry during the decade. What this table does suggest is that the Pittston strike was the longest, that is accounting for more idle days, than four different strikes between 1982 and 1988 combined. Also if we consider that, at a certain point, 45,000 workers were involved, we may conclude that it was the largest coal miners' strike action in the 1980s. In turn, this suggests that even, if the middle of the decade was characterized by cooperation or consent, industrial conflict characterized both the beginning and the end of the 1980s.<sup>51</sup> Importantly, this pattern is more in line with the relational than structuralist hypothesis.

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<sup>50</sup> Also, the comparison by rows, that is when we take the indicators as a whole per year, and not separately, yields similar results.

<sup>51</sup> However, based on other sources, especially press reports, one could argue that miners were quite active on a smaller scale as well. For example, in May 1988 the United Mine Workers Journal reported that almost 2,000 workers at more than 30 companies were on selective strike.

Table 6.2.: Strikes With More Than 1,000 Workers Involved,  
Coal Mining, United States, 1982-1990

Year	Number of strikes	Workers involved	Days lost
1982 (1)	2	2500	4,200
1983	0	0	0
1984	1	2600	148,000
1985	1	2700	550,400
1986	0	0	0
1987	0	0	0
1988	0	0	0
1989 (2)	1	1600	744,100
1990	1	1700	56,100

Notes:

(1) strike data for 1980 and 1981 for coal mining industry are not available

(2) except for July when, as it is estimated, for a short period of time 45,000 workers participated in the strike

Source: Author's own calculations Current Wage Developments, different years.

## B. Great Britain

Despite presenting the similar type of political economy and experiencing the same type of anti-labor, conservative politics at the state level, aggregate strike trends in Great Britain in the 1980s show a different pattern compared with the United States.<sup>52</sup> The number of strikes decreased from 973 in 1980 to 657 in 1989; despite quite significant fluctuations from one year to another, the number of workers involved remained essentially the same, 789,900 in 1980 and 731,300 in 1989; and the number of workdays lost decreased significantly from 11,910,000 in 1980 to 3,559,000 (see Table 6.3). However, in the context of the rest of the decade, the year 1980 was an exceptional one with regard to the number of workdays lost. If we drop this year out and compare 1981 and 1989 it appears that the total duration of strikes has not changed drastically over these eight years. Importantly, and similar to the United States, the aggregate strike data show that even in the context of a general decline some years stand out, implying existence of varying levels of conflict and accommodation.

Given the problems with strike data outlined above as well as general problems with cross-national comparability (see Jackson, 1987), one must be very careful drawing conclusions. However, some general observations can be made. First, in terms of labor activism as measured by basic strike indices, changes in trends during the 1980s in Great Britain were less dramatic than those in the United States. Second, if we compare the data on number of strikes in Tables 6.1 and 6.3, it appears that radical changes in the recorded number

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<sup>52</sup> Grint (1991: 169) observes that, traditionally, most strikes in Great Britain were unofficial. This historical pattern changed for a while with the imposition of Thatcher's legislative restrictions. However, towards the end of the 1989 unofficial strikes have again been observed in Great Britain.

Table 6.3: Strikes, All Industries and Services,  
Great Britain, 1979-1989

Year	Number of strikes	Workers involved	Workdays lost (1)
1979	2,080	4,608,100	29,474,000
1980	1,262	789,900	11,910,000
1981	1,280	1,437,900	4,196,000
1982	2,734	2,381,900	7,916,000
1983	1,255	540,600	3,593,000
1984	1,154	1,404,900	26,564,000
1985	813	725,800	6,343,000
1986	983	655,300	1,852,000
1987	899	857,100	3,476,000
1988	725	724,800	3,752,000
1989 (2)	808	731,300	3,559,000

Notes:

(1) the number of workers involved and workdays lost is rounded to the nearest thousand.

(2) the data is for stoppages, 12 months to November, 1989; thus, there is an overlap with November and December of 1988.

Source: Employment Gazette, different years.



of large strikes occurred in 1982 and in 1985 in the United States and Great Britain, respectively. Importantly, we do not know what the strike trends in the United States or the cross-country comparison would have been had the recording definition not changed in 1982 (Chapter Two).

In terms of average changes during the first and the second part of the decade, between 1980 and 1984, on average, 852 workers engaged in each of 7,685 strikes which lasted an average of 7,049 workdays. During the second half of the decade, on average, 873 workers engaged in each of 4,228 strikes which lasted an average of 4,489 workdays. In this regard, then, Great Britain and the United States also appear to differ. That is, contrary to the United States, the pattern of strike activity in Great Britain changed from fewer workers being involved in a greater number of longer strikes to more workers being involved in a fewer number of shorter strikes.

Much better data are available for examining British miners' activism in comparison to the United States. As Table 6.4 indicates, the number of strikes in the industry declined from 289 in 1980 to 151 in 1989; the number of workers involved declined from 84,000 to 29,300; and the number of workdays lost dropped from 151,000 to 57,000. These raw numbers, however, do not tell us the whole story. While the number of strikes in coal declined by about 47 percent in other industries this decline was around 32 percent. This suggests a more radical decrease in this indicator of collective labor activism in the coal industry than in all other industries combined. However, rather than reflecting worker consent, the root of this decline may well be in the events of the 1984-85 strike and the industrial restructuring which occurred in its aftermath.

Table 6.4: Strike Activity, Coal Mining, Great Britain,  
1979-1989

Year	Number of strikes	Workers involved	Workdays lost
1979	298	53,100	113,000
1980	289	84,900	151,000
1981	294	95,900	232,000
1982 (1)	389	225,900	432,000
1983	319	122,600	471,000
1984 (2)	78	279,900	22,264,000
1985	150	186,800	4,220,000
1986	267	71,300	112,000
1987	252	90,100	204,000
1988	167	98,800	223,000
1989 (3)	151	29,300	57,000

Notes:

(1) from January to December 1982

(2) these figures include estimates for workers involved but working away from collieries and workers indirectly affected

(3) the data is for stoppages, 12 months to November, 1989; thus, there is an overlap with November and December of 1988

Source: Author's own calculations based on Employment Gazette, different years.

Indeed, if we compare the years before the 1984-85 strike with the years following it, we get the following pattern: between 1980 and 1983 on average 409 miners were involved in each of 322 labor disputes which lasted an average of 996 workdays; between 1986 and 1989, on average, 345 workers were involved in each of 209 disputes which lasted an average of 712 workdays. What we see from these statistics is a decline in the average number of workers involved and workdays lost in the aftermath of the 1984-85 strike. The strike fractured the NUM, and coupled with the decimation of the industry which occurred in the aftermath of the strike, miners had little reason to expect positive outcome from a strike.

### **C. Poland**

Strikes were illegal in Poland until 1989, so no official strike statistics are available for the decade of the 1980s. Existing descriptions or analyses of industrial relations in Poland suggest that, after the illegal strike waves in 1980-81, industrial peace apparently reigned until 1988 when a second large wave of strikes occurred. While it is difficult to reach conclusion with regard to the collective labor activism in Poland, based on cursory data I would venture that after a period of accomodation which followed the imposition of martial law, Polish workers' militancy increased at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. In this context, however, we must bear in mind that the liberalization of the labor law changed recording practices and strike activities themselves.

Polish coal miners appear to have been much more militant at the beginning and at the end of the 1980s than at any other time. First, they became involved in strikes during the

1980-81 period. Then, they joined the steel workers who began labor disputes in 1988. Since that time, miners have been involved in several other strikes. In 1990 workers in the coal-energy sector became one of the most militant parts of the working class, second only to the railroad workers (Rocznik Statystyczny, 1991: 104), as they staged 35 strikes involving 67,828 workers and lasting 51,112 days. However, based on these data one cannot conclude that Polish miners were more militant than their U.S. or British counterparts.

#### **D. Summary**

While the cursory character of some data and gaps in other statistics on collective labor activism call for a very careful conclusion, they still suggests a few things. First, it appears that at a general level the structuralist prediction regarding the shift from conflictual to consensual industrial relations may hold in relation to the aggregate declining trend in labor activism in the United States and Great Britain. However, the sudden outbursts of labor activism in both countries at different points in time pose a problem for the consent hypothesis. Second, in line with a structuralist expectation, both the basic indices and the averages suggest some similarities in collective labor activism in Great Britain and the United States. Yet some important differences are also present, especially regarding duration of strikes.

In terms of the coal-mining industry, based on available data I would not conclude that important similarities in labor activism exist between the United States and Great Britain, nor that significant differences exist between these two countries and Poland. However, I would not argue that a pattern of convergence and divergence supportive of the relational thesis exists

either. Thus, based on these data it is difficult to reject or maintain the accuracy of either contending hypotheses.

In terms of gender hypothesis, I did not find anything that would suggest a connection between changes in miners' activism and gender, except one possible explanation of change in the U.S. miners' activism as compared with the 1960s and 1970s. As Yarrow (1990: 49) puts it: "Perhaps most dramatic is the change in emphasis on the two criteria of manliness. While in 1978 the stress was on a miner's ability to face down the boss, now it is on how hard a worker one is. Thus the definition of masculinity has become less combative." However, the available data did not enabled me to decide the validity of this contention. In general, then, these findings support claims coming from both theoretical perspectives. To determine their relative adequacy an investigation of other dimensions of labor activism is needed.

## **2. The Comparative Demographics of Individual Labor Activism**

As I noted in Chapter Two, labor turnover and absenteeism can serve as proxies for individual worker's activism or accommodation at the point of production. Unfortunately, I was able to obtain satisfactory data on labor turnover and absenteeism only for British coal mining. cursory data were available for Polish coal mining, and I did not find any relevant data for the United States underground bituminous coal industry. Faced with this problem and already aware that the strike data were insufficient, I decided to omit the analysis of the individual labor activism. Instead, I conducted an analysis of the major strikes which occurred in Poland, Great Britain, and the United States during the 1980s. The purpose of this analysis

is to identify similarities and differences in contested arenas across national boundaries.

## **II. A Comparative Analysis of Miners' Strikes of 1980-81, 1984-85 and 1989-90**

The 1980-81 strikes in Poland, the 1984-85 strike in Great Britain and the 1988-89 Pittston strike in the United States were the single most important events for the future of industrial relations and industrial management in the coal mining industry in each country during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>53</sup> To examine these strikes in relation to Burawoy's's hegemony hypothesis I asked following questions: (1) were the most important arenas of struggle similar or different across the cases?; and (2) did the variations in structural arrangements, including the relationship between the state and the workplace, lead to specific variations in workers' consciousness and forms of conflict? In order to examine the relational hypothesis about the importance of the relationships between workers and unions, I asked what the relations between unions, managers, and rank-and-file workers were before, during the course of, and after the strikes. Finally, to examine the gender hypothesis, I looked at the role of gender as an explanatory variable.

### **1. The Context**

In this sub-section I analyze the similarities and differences of the contexts in which

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<sup>53</sup> In this section I changed the order in which I discussed the countries with regard to all the other variables. This change is based on my decision to preserve the historical sequence in which these three strikes occurred.

each strike emerged.

### **A. Poland**

On the first of July, 1980 meat prices significantly increased in Poland. The first strike erupted the same day in a mechanical enterprise, PONAR, in Tarnow. On the 4th of July scattered strikes occurred in several factories across the country. Despite the fact that the waves of strikes continued for seven weeks and encompassed 81,000 workers in 177 factories (Nowe Drogi, 10-11, 1980), the Communist Party decided not to bow to workers' demands and to keep the food price increases. This decision, and a promise to increase wages to striking workers, were announced on the 13th of August. The next day, two departments of the Lenin Shipyard went on strike and presented their first demands to the shipyard authorities. On August 16th, shipyard management agreed to raise wages. In response to this promise, Lech Walesa, who had become the leader of the striking workers, called the strike off and workers started leaving the shipyard. Only coincidence kept the strike from ending that day.

The coincidence was that in the same afternoon a group of workers from other striking enterprises showed up in the shipyard. From what they said, it appeared that workers' wage demands in other plants were not guaranteed. As a result, the shipyard workers decided to continue their strike in sympathy with other workers in northern cities. Further, the visit of the delegates from strike-bound plants spurred the formation of the Inter-Factory Strike Committee (IFSC) and a list of demands was drawn up. Between the 18th and 21st of August the sympathy strikes continued spreading throughout the northern region of Poland. On the August

19, 253 plants joined the IFSC. Despite the Government's attempt to end the conflict by arresting 14 members of one of dissident groups on the 21st of August, by August 22, 388 plants had joined the Strike Committee. By August 26 the strike encompassed the whole country, including coal miners who joined other striking workers relatively late. However, while the Polish strikes of 1980 emerged mainly in response to price increases and spread over the entire country as an act of solidarity among workers, Polish miners' participation in the Solidarity movement was also related to the industry-specific grievances, including the imposition of four-shift work organization in the late 1970s (Rola, 1981).

## **B. Great Britain**

The eruption of a national miners' strike in 1984 had been preceded by an attempt to foster a national strike in 1981. This first strike attempt was prevented primarily due to the conciliatory approach of Thatcher's Government. While mine closures had been an integral part of industrial relations in the coal mining industry since the 1960s, the early 1980s marked a shift from a more "patient approach to pit closures" (Ashworth, 1985: 418) to quite aggressive industrial policies wherein closures were decided without NUM consultation. In this context, in January 1981, Derek Ezra announced the closure of 23 pits. In response to this announcement, unofficial strikes broke out in some coalfields, including South Wales and Kent, and some areas of the NUM, including Derbyshire and Scotland, voted to strike the following week (Ashworth, 1985: 450).

Facing the possibility of a national strike, Prime Minister Thatcher urged David



Howell, the Energy Secretary, to convene a meeting between the union and the National Coal Board, the so-called Coal Industry Tripartite Group. During the meeting on February 18, Howell promised to look at proposals reducing imports of coal and reconsider the financial constraints imposed on the industry by the Government. In return, Derek Ezra, the Chairman of the NCB, withdrew the closure notice and Gormley, President of the NUM, asked miners who had already gone on strike to return to work.<sup>54</sup>

The appointment of Ian McGregor as the Chairman of the NCB heralded the beginning of a new era of industrial policies in the industry. Ian McGregor has lauded himself for practicing an American--that is, anti-union--approach to industrial management and was well known for his role in restructuring the British Steel Corporation (BSC), especially for severing the relationships between the BSC and the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC), replacing national with plant-level bargaining, and breaking consultations with the unions.

As the chairman of the NCB, McGregor (1986: 121) acknowledged that his main concern was the fact that the NUM had dominated the industry and had assumed an adversary stance against the management of the NCB and the government.<sup>55</sup> One way of dealing with the

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<sup>54</sup> Two points need to be made here. First, as Ashworth (1985: 418) notes, by October 1981 nine pits were closed as a result of local agreements and two years later almost all of the 23 mines were closed. These data suggest the possibility that the biggest problem was not the issue of closures per se but rather the way in which the decisions were made and closures accomplished. At least in part, the responsibility for the shift in the NCB's policy of closures lies with the Government's aggressiveness in imposing tight financial constraints on the industry. Yet, as a result of the February Agreement, the Coal Board's external financial limit was raised to 1.117 million of pounds and the proportion of money it received in grant was increased to 574.8 million of pounds, compared with 253.9 million of pounds the previous year (Reports and Account, 1981/82: 6).

<sup>55</sup> More specifically, McGregor was perplexed by two questions : 1) "how had a trade union been allowed to achieve a position of such power and invulnerability? And why did the government allow itself to challenge the NUM when it had no way of withstanding a long

NUM's excessive power was to break down the consultative machinery functioning at the NCB from nationalization. As McGregor (1986: 237) notes his objective was to stop this consultative system, curb the union's access to information and "to reassert the NCB's responsibility to manage the enterprise effectively."

Interestingly, the other major figure in the 1984-85 strike, Arthur Scargill, President of the NUM, also had a very negative view of the consultation system created in the coal-mining industry. According to Scargill, this system "helped to create an overall acceptance of the rundown" in the 1950s and 1960s. Also, in terms of industrial management, Scargill opposed workers' control through their involvement in management decision-making. He argued that real control "is more likely to be won through free collective bargaining, which maintains the separate organizations of the working class and allows them to exercise sanctions" (Scargill and Kahn, 1982: 10). The difference between the two actors was the contrast between McGregor's managerial and Scargill's syndicalist approach to industrial relations. If the clash between these two approaches was not the reason for the emergence or defeat of the 1984-85 strike, it certainly shaped its course in significant ways, including the transfer of decision-making powers regarding strikes from rank-and-file workers to the higher echelons of union organization.

In all, the 1984 strike emerged in the context of continued pit closures and the realization by the British government and the NCB that to finalize the restructuring of the industry along the lines of a capitalist enterprise, they had to deal with the NUM.

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dispute?" (McGregor, 1986: 122).

### C. The United States

Background for the Pittston strike was shaped by two developments: (1) the union's institutionalization of the strategy of selective strikes made during the 1983 convention; and (2) the politics of the Pittston company, which sought to give management more freedom to manage the mines and decentralize collective bargaining in the coal-mining industry. Since I will discuss changes in union strategies in more detail in Chapter Six, let me now focus on the second development. In 1986, Pittston began an industrial relations strategy called "double breasting." To engage in "double breasting" means that the same company, in this case Pittston, operates both unionized and non-unionized mines, and transfers its union-controlled mines to its non-union subsidiaries. Subsequently, in 1987 the company left the BCOA. As the President of the Lebanon Coal Group said (Coal Week, February 22, 1988), the BCOA-UMWA agreement "favors significantly the highly productive steam coal producers and penalizes severely the less productive underground metallurgical coal producers like the Pittston Coal group Companies." When the contract expired on February 1, 1988, Pittston ceased making pension and health-benefit contributions to the Health and Retirement Funds and cut off health-care benefits to about 1,500 pensioned and disabled miners and their families. Pittston took this action in opposition to centralized bargaining which standardized wages, benefits and rules of employment across all the companies bound by the Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement. These aspects of company politics, plus its double-breasting strategy, were opposed by the union and 300 miners who voted to begin striking at Pittston mines.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Double-breasting is a recent corporate practice of taking profits coming from union mines to acquire or develop non-union ones.

## **D. Summary**

In sum, while on the surface, each of the three strikes arose for different reasons--as sympathy strikes in Polish case, the pit closures in Great Britain, and the withdrawal of a coal company from the industry-wide health and pension funds--the emergence of these three strikes shares an important similarity. In each case, the strikes emerged in the context of unilaterally-made decisions by management with regard to issues having direct impact on miners and their family lives. With regard to the latter similarity, if we look at the interactions between household and paid employment we can observe that in all three cases industrial policies to which workers responded through strikes endangered the existing work-family nexus by decreasing miners' and their families standard of living. Importantly, the fact that miners' joined other striking workers rather late indicates that they were not at the forefront of Solidarity movement. In fact, it was rather astonishing that miners went on strike at all.

## **2. The Dynamics and Locus of Miners' Mobilization**

In this sub-section, I continue to analyze labor activism by looking at the similarities and differences in the strike dynamics and the locus of miners' activism.

### **A. Poland**

While almost the whole country had already been experiencing strikes, on the 17th of

July 1981, the regional newspapers in Silesia informed the public that the mine "Wujek" was the first in Poland to fulfill the production targets of the five year plan. Even in August, when the workers in shipyards were getting ready to negotiate with the government, the daily newspaper of the Party Committee in Katowice, "Trybuna Robotnicza," was still proudly announcing that miners continued working. However, this state of affairs did not last long. By the 28th of August the "Manifest Lipcowy" mine (July Manifesto) in Jastrzebie went on strike. Within a short period of time nine other mines ceased working and within the next few days the strike encompassed at least 50 of 69 mines (Rola, 1981: 147).

Yet, miners' solidarity with other Polish workers, especially the fact that they decided to go on strike, was somewhat surprising. Miners enjoyed a relatively privileged status and also tended to see themselves as different from other types of workers. This sense of being apart has contributed to the Polish miners' generally low propensity to strike and to the fact that, except for the strikes in 1956, miners have not participated in any of the major post-war, working-class uprisings in Poland.

In this context, three factors appear to be important in understanding why miners eventually joined the strikes of 1980. First, it is important to understand the situation in the "Manifest Lipcowy" mine where the first strike broke out. Second, we must understand the general situation in the industry: the context in which other miners decided to follow suit.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Not all coal mines went on strike or joined the Inter-Factory Strike Committee in Jastrzebie. For example, by September 3 only 43 coal mines joined the IFSC at "Manifest Lipcowy" (*Gornicze Wiadomosci*, October 16-31, 1980). A newspaper *Gorniczy Stan* published by Workers' Self-Government at "Czerwona Gwardia" mine did not mention a word about strikes even in its September issues. Based on the available sources, the "Czerwona Gwardia" mine did not join the strike despite the fact that it was also a subject to the introduction of the four-shift system.

Turning to the first factor, some accounts of the August 1980 events indicate that, in general, relations between management and workers in the "Manifest Lipcowy" mine were very bad. This situation was worsened by miners' growing resentment of management's unwillingness to talk with them about the situation in the country in general, and in the mine in particular (Solidarnosc Jastrzebie, August 25, 1981).

Second, at the end of the 1970s the coal industry went through a process of major organizational restructuring. The introduction of a four-shift work system in 29 coal mines (see Chapter Three), conflicts with supervisory personnel, the lack of free Saturdays and Sundays, problems with acquiring food, and difficulties with commuting to work were the main sources of workers' discontent toward the end of the decade. Third, particular conditions, including challenges to miners' "masculine pride" raised by workers in the shipyards,<sup>58</sup> helped to transform discontent into militancy, an unusual occurrence in the post-war history of industrial relations in Polish coal mining.

Importantly, then, the 1980/81 strike in Polish coal mining emerged as a "spontaneous" rank-and-file movement prompted by their grievances at the point of production (Maslyk, 1982), on the one hand, and gender understood both in terms of a conception of masculinity and in terms of interaction between paid employment and household which was endangered by the introduction of the four-shift work organization.

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<sup>58</sup> The trains coming from the North were "decorated" with the scornful comments about Silesians' masculinity.

## B. Great Britain

In October 1983, in response to the pay offer and McGregor's managerial style, branch and lodge representatives of the NUM voted unanimously to start an all-out overtime ban.<sup>59</sup> In March 1984, miners began the longest strike in the history of the British coal-mining industry in Great Britain. The strike was prompted by the announcement of the closure of Cortonwood pit. Earlier, at the end of February, Ian McGregor called all the area directors to Hobart House. As McGregor (1986: 167) recalls "Our interview with George Hyes, the South Yorkshire area director, was the same as the others in all but one respect. We gave him his target, which was to cut 500,000 tonnes out of his 7.6 million annual capacity." Faced with such a dictum, Hayes suggested the closure of Cortonwood pit. Thus while the decision was made centrally, the announcement was made locally on March 1 without following the accepted procedure for announcing closures (McGregor, 1986: 167). At their emergency meeting, Cortonwood miners unanimously decided to fight the closure and ask other branches in Yorkshire to support them (Wilsher et al., 1985: 45).

Despite the fact that eight out of fifteen pits voted against the strike at the South Yorkshire NUM branch meeting, on 6 March all pits in the area were either on strike or picketed. The same day, without a ballot a special council meeting of the Yorkshire area ordered without a ballot strike action in the entire area from 9 March (Ottey, 1985: 58-59). The Scottish Area council also ordered a strike; the miners called for a vote and voted against

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<sup>59</sup> Despite all the divisions that emerged among rank-and-file workers and between some miners and the NUM during the strike, this overtime ban was observed throughout the strike and even in its aftermath (Wilsher, et al., 1985: 35).

the strike. However, by 9 March Scotland was on strike too (McGregor, 1986: 176). The same day, the executive of the NUM voted to sanction the strikes in Yorkshire and Scotland and extend approval in advance to other areas. On 10 March strikes were called in Durham and Kent as well; other areas were due the following week.

Between 9 and 23 March union ballots were held in several areas. In no area was the required 55 percent of votes for strike action met (Table 6.5). Based on an analysis of the distribution of votes in the Lancashire Area branches, Howell (1989: 112-113) concluded that two general trends were clear. First, craft branches were less pro-strike than pit branches. Second, there was generally greater support for the strike in the west of the coalfield. As a possible explanation for these differences, Howell points to the age distribution of the miners. The western pits had a relatively high proportion of young miners whose redundancy payments were not too large relative to older workers.

Thus and importantly, while similar to Poland, the strike began as a rank-and-file movement, from the very beginning it was opposed by many miners. Yet many miners in such areas as Nottinghamshire and Lancashire who continued to work were pressured by flying pickets from Yorkshire to join the strike against their will. On 27 March, eight areas leaders met to discuss their opposition to the strike tactics used by the NUM and issued a statement which encouraged miners in areas not taken over by strikes to continue working.

On 12 April, the NUM executive meeting defeated the move to hold a national strike ballot. This decision was postponed until the delegate conference that took place on 19 April. However, while the delegate meeting declared the strike national, non-striking miners continued



Table 6.5: Results of Area Ballots, National Union  
of Mineworkers, Great Britain, March 1984(1)

NUM Area	For a Strike	Against Strike
Cumberland	22	78
North Derbyshire	50	59
Lecestershire	11	89
Midlands	27	73
North West	41	59
Northumberland	52	48
North Wales	32	68
Nottinghamshire	27	73
South Derbyshire	16	84
Durham Enginmen	15	85

Notes:

(1) percentages

Source:

Report and Accounts, 1983/84.

working.<sup>60</sup> Eventually, this division between striking and non-striking miners, or, put differently, the lack of solidarity across strategically important coalfields, was essential for what was to follow in the course of strike, including several unintended consequences for the union. The fact that the strike was ordered without a ballot was used by the conservative government and press in their anti-union rhetoric. Importantly, it was also used by union members, who argued that the procedure was not democratic, since the union members were denied their say in deciding strike action. Thus, union members themselves used this to foster legal actions against the union, and eventually to create an alternative union.

### **C. The United States**

The emergence of the 1989/90 miners' strike in the United States occurred under different circumstances than those in Poland and Great Britain. When negotiations over the new contract between the UMWA and Pittston started, Pittston demanded several concessions from the union. These concessions included change in the cost structure of the Health and Retirement Funds so that workers would pick up some of the costs themselves, more flexible work rules and job classifications, including a phase-out of helpers on continuous miners, and flexibility to increase the work day and week to go to a 24-hour/day, seven day/week production, mandatory overtime, and liberalized subcontracting rules. For its part, the union

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<sup>60</sup> The first issue voted (187 in favor with 59 against) during the conference was the change of Rule 43 to provide a simple majority in a ballot vote for national strike (Ottey, 1985: 115). The second issue on the agenda was the national ballot. The resolution put forth by the Kent area against a ballot passed by 69 against 51 votes. This reaffirmed the NUM's decisions from 8 March and 12 April ordering strike actions in areas under Rule 41 as official.

demanded fully paid health care, enhanced jobopportunity, and job security. The union also made a legal move by filing a lawsuit against the "double breasting."

Subsequently, similar to NCB, Pittston made several moves that were perceived by the union as an effort to push for a strike. The moves included: (1) the refusal to include health care and pension benefits into the next contract; (2) the elimination of grievance arbitration; (3) the refusal to check-off union dues; and (4) breaking off bargaining on November 9, 1987, accompanied by the so-called "best and final" offer (United Mine Workers Journal August, 1988). However, despite these developments, the selective strike against the company was not called by President Trumka until April 5, 1989.

One reason for Pittston's push for, and the union's resistance to the strike had to do with existing labor law, specifically the precedent set by President Ronald Reagan who, in 1981, fired air-traffic controllers and replaced them with non-union workers. By following Reagan's example, an employer could get rid of the union or at least threaten the union workers. Thus, before 1981 strikes were used by the union to get the right contract; in the 1980s, companies did not need use the lockout to resolve "labor problems;" instead, they could use a strike to break the union. In this vein, Pittston tried to create the perception that UMWA engaged in an economic strike which in turn would allow to hire replacement workers. In its effort to implement this strategy, in January 1989, Pittston started advertising in local newspapers for "full-time replacement workers." However, this maneuver was prevented by the NLRB ruling that the strike was caused by unfair labor practices.

In the meantime, the union used a set of new, innovative tactics, such as public campaigning against Pittston, and prepared the strike in a truly grass-roots manner. On the one

hand, for the next fourteen months miners worked without a contract and negotiations continued. On the other hand, however, local unions at Pittston, district offices, auxiliaries, the International, and UMW retirees were preparing for strike by organizing themselves, conducting a campaign against the company, and building support for the union and solidarity across the coalfields (see, for example, United Mine Workers Journal, May 1988, August 1988).

#### **D. Summary**

In sum, in terms of the organizational locus of strikes, in both the Polish and the British cases, the strikes began as "spontaneous" rank-and-file actions, whereas in the Pittston case the strike was called by the union. However, contrary to Great Britain where, from the beginning, the problem was how to extend the strike to the rest of the coalfields, in Poland and the United States, as the later events will show, the unions's problem was how to prevent miners from engaging in wildcat/sympathy strikes. But before I compare and contrast the politicization of these three industrial disputes and workers' consciousness, I will first analyze the main issues involved in each of three strikes.

### **3. The Main Issues**

In this sub-section I will explore the similarities and differences in major arenas of struggle by looking at the main issues in the 1980/81, 1984/85 and 1989 strikes.

## A. Poland

On 3 September 1980 the so-called Jastrzebie Agreement was signed between representatives of the Inter-Factory Strike Committee at the "Manifest Lipcowy" mine and Polish Government.<sup>61</sup> While the Jastrzebie Agreement supported all the demands included in the Protocol of Agreement concluded at the Gdansk Shipyard on 31 August, it also entailed demands specific to the coal industry (see Wiadomosci Gornicze, 1-15 September, 1980).<sup>62</sup> Specifically, the Agreement stated that the miners fully supported the 21 demands submitted by the strikers in the coastal region, especially the demand concerning independent trade unions. Importantly, similar to the Gdansk Agreement, the Jastrzebie Agreement did not emphasize the need for workers' self-management. This fact distinguishes the events of 1980 from what occurred in Poland in 1956 and points to the importance of past struggles in shaping workers' consciousness.

In 1956, Polish workers focused on workers' participation in enterprise management through the institution of workers' councils. In 1980, the demand for independent trade unions became the central issue in the strikes and the interest in workers' council did not emerge until early 1981. One reason for this difference was the fact that, in the meantime, workers' councils were coopted into the system and served as an managerial arm. Instead of trying to reform an institution of increasingly mariginal utility to Polish workers, they focused on the

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<sup>61</sup> When the Jastrzebie Agreement was signed on the 3 of September, at least 92 enterprises belonging to the mining industry were on strike (Rola, 1981: 147).

<sup>62</sup> The third separate agreement signed during the August-September strikes is the Szczecin Agreement of 30th of August. By 20th of October, miners submitted around 5000 demands and proposals regarding the mining industry.

creation of an independent association of a national, as opposed to local, character.

Miners' more specific concerns mostly dealt with the broad decision-making arena concerning employment relations and focused on four general issues: wages, living and social conditions, management and work organization, and health and safety. Since I have already discussed the wage demands in Chapter Five, I will simply say here that the wage demands suggest the existence of two distinctive elements in miners' consciousness. On the one hand, they express miners' concern with the society's departure from the principles of social justice, understood in terms of social equality. On the other hand, however, there is a strong concern with fairness, understood in terms of the appropriateness of social differentiation based on the fact that not everybody works in the same environment and makes the same contributions to society.

With regard to management and work organization, it was agreed that (1) all Saturdays and Sundays would be work-free as of January 1981, and the principle of voluntary work on legally work-free days will be observed as of 1 September 1980; (2) the four-shift system of work would be abolished in three coal mines as of 15 September, and in other coal mines in accordance with workers wishes; (3) overtime work would be done only on a voluntary, full-pay basis; (4) supervisory employees would work no more than eight hours, with exception of plantmanagers and higher employees; (5) administration employment figures would be analyzed and administration would be reduced to meet essential needs; and (6) the ban on employing workers to work for the benefit of plant management must be observed. In terms of health and safety, it has been agreed that the trade unions would increase control over the health services

and would have right to decide which diseases would be classified as occupational diseases.<sup>63</sup>

As the above outline of the main points of the Jastrzebie Agreement suggests, while Jastrzebie Agreement supported the Gdansk Agreement and its demands, including the formation of independent trade unions, both Inter-Factory Strike Committees tried to create a vision of the non-political character of the strikes. Neither Agreement contains anything that could be seen as a challenge to the leading role of the Communist Party or to management's right to manage, nor is there anything conclusive about workers' councils or workers' self-management.<sup>64</sup> David Ost (1990: 2) observes that Solidarity engaged in the "politics of anti-politics" characterized by a deliberate rejection of the state as the target of opposition and development of alternative understanding of politics: "one that focused on civic activity within society rather than on policy outcomes within the state."

## **B. Great Britain**

In the case of the British strike, one of the major issues during the negotiations between

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<sup>63</sup> In addition the Agreement specified that a mixed Commission composed of representatives of the Government, voivodship authorities and the Inter-Factory Strike Committee will supervise the implementation of the agreement and inform the workforce about the progress. In terms of the future of the Works Strike Committees and Inter-Factory Strike Committee, these will first be transformed into plants' Workers' Commissions and the Inter-Factory Workers' Commissions, and, then, will be dissolved after the democratic elections will be held in the new trade unions. Finally, the Inter-Factory Strike Committee ordered the strike to end and work to resume on 4 September 1980.

<sup>64</sup> As a matter of fact, to my knowledge, the only public document issued in August-September of 1980 in which the term workers' self-management is mentioned is the Communiqué of the Main Council of the Polish Episcopate issued on 27th August 1980. In this document the right to association, to the independence of the worker's representative bodies and self-management is listed among other "inalienable rights."

the NCB and the NUM was related to the 1974 Plan for Coal. The Plan for Coal, a tripartite agreement signed by the NCB, the unions, and the government, was an outline of a national policy regarding coal production until 1985. The Plan specified several issues related to the strategic dimension of industrial management and production process, such as the output targets, the level of demand, and the level of investment. The President of the NUM, Scargill, wanted to stop the NCB from unilaterally rewriting the Plan for Coal, and pressured the Board to withdraw from the closure program, based on the fact that the Plan did not include provision for closure of uneconomic pits. The NCB Chairman, McGregor, wanted not only to get rid of uneconomic capacity and bring the industry closer to the market, he also wanted to acquire the unilateral right to decide about pit closure. Thus, conflict over the right to close uneconomic pits and the right to manage the industry were the major issues during the strike. In both cases, the managerial right to manage was constrained by the existence of the conciliation and consultation machinery, especially at the industry level.

Importantly, the British miners' strike was also related to miners' broader concern with the issue of social justice. That is, the strike was fundamentally about the right of the Coal Board to unilaterally rewrite a tripartite agreement and to change the life chances of thousands of miners.

### **C. The United States**

The main issues in Pittston strike were related to Health and Pensions Funds and double-breasting, issues falling into the strategic arena of industrial management. However, as



discussed in Section 2 of this chapter, Pittston demanded several concessions from miners-- concessions which if agreed by the union would allow the managers to shift control over certain employment-related issues away from labor. In one sense then, it is possible to state that the British and American strikes were dealing with demands related to the strategic arena, and the Polish and American strikes were both related to issues in employment relations. Further, if we look at the demands made during the Pittston strike we will see that they were as much about social justice as they were about the meaning and benefits of unionization or the future of collective bargaining. Thus, in Pittston case, the dispute was about the right of "a company to abandon their responsibilities to old people and disabled miners," on the one hand, and the right of a company located outside of the coalfields "to impose economic conditions--to determine the survival, really--of the people who live there" (see, for example, United Mine Workers Journal, October 1989: 13-14).

#### **D. Summary**

The fact that all the strikes were related to a concern with social justice points to an overarching similarity across all three cases. Further, in all three cases the social justice concerns were intertwined with issues of industrial management. Also, the pattern of similarities in contested arenas between the United States and Poland, on the one hand, and between the United States and Great Britain, on the other hand, suggests a more complex patterns of similarities and differences in arenas of struggle that the structuralist perspective allows for.

#### **4. The Course of the Disputes**

One dimension of Burawoy's hegemony versus bureaucratic despotism thesis is his contention that workers in socialist countries are exceptionally unified in their actions and have superior class-consciousness, while workers in capitalist countries, especially the United States, lack the "traditions of solidarity." As Fantasia (1988: 4) argues "the view that class consciousness is a sensibility alien to American society has been an overwhelming theme in the sociology of American working class." In a similar vein, Burawoy argues that, due to the centralization of social organization in socialist societies every industrial dispute has an inherently political character, whereas in capitalist countries the politicization of industrial conflicts is an exceptional phenomenon.

However, as should already be apparent, class-consciousness is not the sole prerogative of workers in socialist countries and conflict politicization, rather than being pre-determined by the relationships between the state and the workplace, is a result of encounters between actors, occurring in a specific historical context. In the discussion that follows, I will continue my analysis of hegemony hypothesis by looking at some of the activities and collective interactions among rank-and-file workers, unions and the state in the course of the disputes.

##### **A. Poland**

In the case of the Polish strike, by claiming that the "postulates threaten the foundations of People's Poland" and "threaten the essential security of the country," from the outset the

Party apparatus attempted to construct the 21 demands as directly undermining the country's political-economic system. In this context, Solidarity chose to pursue the "politics of anti-politics," denying any type of challenges against the leading role of the Party.

Yet, with the Supreme Court's ruling regarding the registration of the unaltered Solidarity's charter, two new developments occurred. First, the registration moved the conflicts between the workers-- including miners--and the authorities from the domain of labor law to the domain of workers' demands regarding employment relations. In this regard, the issues of free workdays and "mobilization fund" established by the government to encourage work on Saturdays became the arenas of fierce confrontation between the government and the miners. Second, the court's decision also institutionalized a trade union organization which was perceived by the authorities as the alternative center of power. Importantly, the possibility that, in turn, the union would create another alternative power center regarding industrial management in the form of workers' councils appeared to be too dangerous to the government and the party. In fact, during the II Delegates Convention in November, 1980, the union expressed its support for the formation of Employees' Self-Government. This first substantive move on the part of the union regarding the issue of self-management signaled the possibility of an attempt at transforming Polish industrial relations and decentralization of industrial management to the enterprise level. This was the first challenge to the state's managerial authority in the industry.

## **B. Great Britain**

In contrast to Solidarity's politics of "self-limiting revolution," the NUM, especially its leader Scargill, was emphasizing the political character of the dispute. After the 1981 confrontation between the Thatcher government and the NUM, which I have discussed at the beginning of this Chapter, the NUM president, Arthur Scargill, commented that, "It is got to be recognized that the government merely avoided an actual confrontation" (Adeny and Lloyd, 1986: 2). This confrontation materialized during the 1984/85 strike. Contrary to the Thatcher government's assertions that it was not involved in the dispute and that the NCB must negotiate for itself, the state became a side in the conflict by setting the legal and financial contexts. For example, the government cut strikers' benefits and the dependents' supplementary benefit. This had a negative effect on miners' families. As union benefits went directly to miners, and only indirectly, if at all, to their families, miners' families were experiencing hardship (Rose, 1984).

Also, McGregor's handling of the NACODS dispute resulted in Thatcher's intervention. This intervention resulted from Thatcher's fear that if the NACODS staged a strike, the entire underground operation would be brought to a halt. She said: "Well, I'm very worried about it. You have to realize that the fate of this government is in your hands, McGregor. You have got to solve this problem" (cited in McGregor, 1986: 281). As a result, McGregor did not take as hard a stance in the NACODS dispute as he did in that with the NUM.

Also, contrary to Poland where the independent unions enjoyed a large degree of

support from rank-and-file, two of the most damaging developments to the NUM during the 1984-85 dispute were the legal charges against the union brought about by some miners and their instigation of the back-to-work movement. Also, the support from other unions which could have blocked supplies of coal going to the NCB's two biggest customers, the Central Electricity Generating Board and the British Steel Corporation, was central to the 1984-5 dispute. Even McGregor (1986: 254-255) acknowledged that keeping the miner's strike from becoming a national trade union issue was one of the most important objectives for the government and the NCB. Lack of unity among miners which was successfully manipulated by the NCB, and lack of concerted action on the part of the other unions accounted for the failure of the miners' strike.<sup>65</sup>

### **C. The United States**

Also in the case of Pittston strike, federal and state involvement in the dispute had many dimensions. First, since April 13, 1989 Virginia State Court Judge, Donald McGlothlin Jr, had been issuing injunctions limiting the number of picket lines and then on several occasions fined the union for contempt of court. Second, the Commonwealth of Virginia became directly involved in the strike when its Governor, after pledging neutrality in the strike,

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<sup>65</sup> Even the Triple Alliance among the unions of the mining, steel and transport industries based on the assumption of their common interests failed. The lack of support from the steel union was due to the fact that the NUM had given them little support during the steel strike of 1979 when Scargill told the steel union that, unless it opposes the closure itself, they could not expect support from the NUM (McGregor, 1986: 262; New Statesman, 29 June, 1984). Besides ISTC, another weak link in the Triple Alliance was the Transport and General Worker's union (TGWU) which had too little control over the independent owner drivers or small non-union firms of lorries which replaced the work normally done by British Rail.

sent state troopers to protect the replacement workers. Third, towards the end of the strike, the Secretary of Labor for the U.S. intervened in the dispute by appointing a supermediator and a special commission to investigate health care and pension issues in the industry. Fourth, on July 11 the United State House Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations announced that it would investigate the dispute.

At this point, let me to quote one of the conclusions reached by this committee. On August 4, the Subcommittee published a report which concluded that while it

"could be years" before court orders Pittston to correct these [unfair labor] practices...the typical striking miner "has seen union officials jailed and is confronted each day with a massive display of state police and company security forces who are present for the express purpose of assuring that the company can continue to operate without interruption" (United Mine Workers Journal, November 1989: 18).

As it appears from the above quote, the state and the legal system were involved directly in the dispute, although this intervention had a character of a double standard. The legal system was regulating and intervening more directly in the behavior of the union than that of the company.

Besides that, two most important events occurred in June and September 1989. In June wildcat sympathy strikes broke out across coalfields east of the Mississippi. Forty five thousands miners went on strike to show their support to and solidarity with the striking Pittston miners. While President Trumka authorized these strikes by using memorial days for this purpose, a Federal Judge issued an injunction against them. On July 17 miners who engaged in this grassroots movement across the eastern coalfields returned to work at the urging of UMWA president Trumka. Thus, similar to its Polish counterpart, Solidarity, the UMWA's problem during the Pittston strike was to assert its control over the rank-and-file workers by

averting the wildcat strikes. In contrast, in Great Britain the problem was with creating and maintaining miners' solidarity across different coalfields.

In the meantime, some of the BCOA members started talking about dropping out of the association whose existence did not protect them from the consequences of industrial conflict (Swasy, 1989). Interestingly enough, while the solidarity among the coal operators was weakened, the labor solidarity was on the rise. The spread of sympathy strikes was one of its signs and the opening of "Camp Solidarity" was the other one. In fact, this camp became not only a place where strikers could be housed and fed, but also a symbol of a broader social base and appeal of the coal strike as well as of its international aspect.

On September 17, the Pittston strike acquired another dimension. That day, 98 striking miners and a United Methodist minister, all Pittston shareholders, took over one of the Pittston's preparation plants, Moss No. 3. The message behind this move was to direct public attention to the fact that miners who were the shareholders in Pittston had not only the right to a better treatment by the company, but were also co-owners of its operation. Importantly, then, they were not sitting in as exploited workers but as owners of the means of production who felt that injustice had been done. However, from the standpoint of the company, these miners broke the law and, as one Pittston manager reportedly said "they were `terrorists' who could not be negotiated with under the conditions" (Coal, November, 1989). While the take over lasted only 3 days, because the miners left the plant in compliance with an order issued by U.S. District Court Judge, this event resembles the tactic of sit-ins used by Polish miners during the 1980-81 strikes.

## **D. Summary**

As my examination of the course of the disputes suggests, politicization of all three strikes needs to be seen in terms of the processes whose course and direction are shaped by encounters between actors involved, especially rank-and-file workers, management, the union, and the government. This, in turn, suggests the existence of an important similarities across all three cases despite structural differences. Further, in all three cases, the relationships between the unions and rank-and-file and among the latter were crucial for the outcomes of the strikes. Importantly, the behavior of Polish and U.S. miners, especially the solidarity that developed in both cases, contains more similarities than the behavior of either and their British counterparts. This observation goes against the structuralist prediction saying that we should observe more similarities between U.S. and Great Britain than between either of them and Poland. In terms of gender, the above analysis suggests that it played an important role in the three government's tactics to break the economic well-being of miner's households.

## **5. The Prologue**

### **A. Poland**

The imposition of the martial law which occurred on December 13, 1981 not only marked the temporary end of Solidarity movement and delegalization of independent trade unions, but it also brought an abrupt end to the attempt at the radical remodeling of industrial



management initiated by the emergence of employees' self-management groups earlier in 1981.<sup>66</sup> In general, two reasons stood behind their creation. In some cases, their formation was related to the boycott of the Conferences of Self-Management (KSR) by the local Solidarity activists. In this case, Employees' Councils were established from the initiative of the workers or other actors, including the mine directors who wanted to fill the decision-making vacuum, especially with regard to the approval of production plans, created by the dissolution of the Conferences of Self-Management (Gornik, 16-30 April, 1981).<sup>67</sup> If the local Solidarity activists did not boycott KSR's, the new self-management bodies were established by adding Solidarity's representatives to the existing institution of KSR (see, Gorniczny Trud, March 1981). This position represented by some Solidarity's members was "balanced" by another extreme position which presented a negative stance towards any type of workers' councils or the issue of co-management, in general.<sup>68</sup>

On September 25 1981, Polish parliament passed two Acts which were crucial elements of the economic reforms to be implemented as of January 1, 1982. The history of the Act about the employees' self-government provides an important insight into the dynamics of

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<sup>66</sup> Jermakowicz (1981: 1) estimates that in July 1981, employees' councils functioned in 15 percent of the enterprises.

<sup>67</sup> The name of the new self-management body was also a subject to the debate. Indirectly, the debate was over who could participate in the self-management bodies. The Act of 25 September talks broadly about the employees' self-management.

<sup>68</sup> As a matter of fact, it appears that, with regard to the issue of co-management of economy, Solidarity's position evolved over time. At the outset, its leadership was strongly opposed to any type of Solidarity's involvement in economic management. Later on, some of the experts working with Solidarity or its leaders expressed views which were more favorable to the union's participation in the economic management (see, for example, Zycie Gospodarcze, 48/80; Literatura, 1 January, 1981).

political processes that occurred in Poland at the time. The struggle occurred in the context of two--Government's and Network's--proposals of the self-government act. The major differences between these two proposals were: (1) the relation between the founding agency, the director and the self-management body in terms of who has the right to nominate the director; and (2) the relation between the director and the self-management body in terms of who has the right to manage the enterprise.

With regard to the first point, whereas the Government would rather see the appointment and dismissal of the director being the prerogative of the founding agency, the Network saw it as the right that should be given to the self-management body. With regard to the second point, the Government's position was that the role of the employees' self-management should be limited to its participation in management, whereas the Network's proposal posited that this body should actually manage the enterprise.

Eventually, some of the members of Polish Parliament resisted the pressures imposed by the concept of the "party discipline," and passed an Act about self-management without the conservative changes proposed at the last moment by the members of the Party Deputies Club.<sup>69</sup> As a result of this defiance, the final Act was closer to the spirit of the Network's than Government's proposal. However, even more interesting was a comparative study of 73 statutes of employees' self-management councils conducted by Jermakowicz (1981). According to this research, the content of the statutes can be seen as revealing some of the expectations held by the rank-and-file workers with regard to the desirable direction of industrial relations reform. The result of the analysis of the statutes written before the Act was passed revealed

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<sup>69</sup> The party line with regard to the prerogatives of the employee's self-management became more rigid during the III Plenary Session of the Central Committee of PUWP.

that their content was much closer to the Network's than to the Government's proposal.

Interestingly enough, while 97 percent of the statutes gave the right to appoint and dismiss the director to the self-management body, the only two statutes that gave this right to the founding agency in line with the Government's proposal were two coal mines.

As the struggle around the Act of self-management suggests, at this point the Party not only faced dissent among its members but also the possibility of losing its control over industrial management. Thus, the imposition of the martial law in December, 1981 saved Party's centralized control over industrial management and prevented the employee self-governing bodies from playing an important role in the processes of decentralization of industrial management signaled by the Act of the Employee Self-Government.

## **B. Great Britain**

November 1984 marked a turning point in the 1984-5 dispute. First, during that month the back-to-work movement was born. Second, leaders of the Nottinghamshire NUM, who from the beginning of the dispute resented the centralization of decision-making processes regarding strike action by the national union leadership, resumed area level, talks with the NCB, which, in line with national union policy had been boycotted for 12 months (Financial Times, 27 November 1984). Yet, in December the back-to-work movement had lost momentum (Report and Accounts, 1985/86). This was due to the announcement made by TUC that they were going to negotiate a final settlement with the Department of Energy on the 14th of December. However, the final negotiations were eventually handled by the NCB and the

settlement between TUC and NCB was signed on 13 February, 1985. The NUM found this settlement unsatisfactory. As a result, on February 28 the strike was over without a signed agreement.

### **C. The United States**

On February 19, 1990, 1,700 rank-and-file miners who struck Pittston approved the labor accord between the union and the Pittston Coal Group (PCG). However, a memorandum of understanding between Pittston and UMWA which specified the rate of the company's contributions to the 1974 health plan was not circulated to the rank-and-file. This part of the agreement was voted by the trustees of the UMWA pension and health plans.

In terms of the union's control over different aspects of employment rules and the production process, the contract stated that the new PCG mines would be worked by a minimum of 80 percent of laid off union miners. Also the union secured some type of control over Pittston's nonunion holdings, whose nonunion labor force was allowed to grow to a limited degree. After the limit of nonunion jobs is reached, the jobs were to be filled in four-fifths by designated union workers. The union also acquired similar rights to non-signatory PCG operations and to contract mining operations (Monthly Labor Review, May 1990).

In terms of production process, the union agreed to continuous operations and flexible work schedule, including a 28-day shift rotation which increased employment by requiring the company to put on a fourth crew and the provision that UMWA members may work four 10-hour days in the basic work week. In terms of other aspects of scheduling, the UMWA

retained control over work on idle days or on the sixth or seventh consecutive days under the four 10-hour days schedule. No UMWA member could be required to work on idle days or on the sixth or seventh consecutive days. It was estimated that, as a result of these changes, Pittston could save between \$2 and \$3 in labor costs per ton of coal (Monthly Labor Review, May 1990).

In terms of economic security, the Pittston Agreement guaranteed 100 percent health care, pension benefits identical to those contained in the 1988 industrywide agreement, and three annual wage increases of 40 cents per hour, and if the union gains a wage increase in a successor national coal agreement, the same increase would be awarded to UMWA members at PCG operations.

In general, on many issues, the final language of the Pittston accord was the same as the 1988 national agreement. What this meant was that despite the company efforts to sign an independent contract which would be significantly different from the 1988 coal agreement, the union was able to prevent the institutionalization of a very different independent agreement--the decentralization of collective bargaining on Pittston terms (see United Mine Workers Journal, March 1990: 9). This is not to say, however, that either side was an uncontested winner in this dispute; both made concessions to the other.

#### **D. Summary**

As the above discussion suggests, the outcomes of the three strikes varied significantly. The Polish miners' strike, which was a part of the broader workers' movement ended with the

imposition of martial law and delegalization of trade unions; the British strike ended with a defeat of the NUM and without an agreement; and the Pittston strike was finalized without a winner as both sides made concessions. At the same time, however, it is important to recognize that divergence of outcomes across cases was shaped by the differences in the relationships between rank-and-file workers and the unions. It is only by looking at these relationships that we can fully understand the "compromise" reached in Pittston strike, the defeat of the British miners, and the imposition of the martial law in Poland, which was the state response to the concerted action on the part of the Solidarity and the Network to pass the Act on Self-Management which would curb the state control over industrial management.

### **III. Summary and Discussion**

To recall briefly, in Chapter Five, I argued that, at the structural level, the situation of British coal industry is more similar to the situation of its U.S. than Polish counterpart. Accordingly, if the structuralist argument is correct we should observe (1) a steady decline of labor activism in the United States and Great Britain which should also represent lower levels of labor activism than Poland; and (2) more similarities in arenas of struggle in the United States and Great Britain than in either of these countries and Poland. In this context, the main purpose of this chapter was threefold. First, I sought to compare the levels and historical trends in labor activism across national and historical boundaries. Second, I sought to compare arenas of struggle across historical and national boundaries by analyzing the major strikes that occurred in the three countries. Third, I attempted to find the reasons behind varied patterns of

similarities and differences and relate them to the two explanatory frameworks. In summary, then, let me, first discuss the similarities and differences in the levels of labor activism across all three cases.

While the cursory character of the strike data which I discussed at the outset of this chapter require careful interpretation, they nonetheless suggest a few things. First, while in a general sense both the national and industry-specific data for the United States and Great Britain appear to support the structuralist prediction regarding the shift from conflictual to consensual industrial relations, the fact that in some years labor militancy intensifies as compared with the previous years supports the relational claim about the existence of changing patterns of conflict and accommodation. On a different level, however, the history of the Pittston strike and the growing intensity of miners' activism in Great Britain during the second part of the decade challenge the structuralist assertion about the decline in industrial conflicts.

Based on very cursory available evidence I would suggest that, in all three countries industrial relations in coal mining in the 1980s were characterized by a change from conflict to accommodation and to conflict again. However, if we consider that in both Poland and the United States the conflict peaked at the beginning and at the end of the decade, at least with this regard, the pattern of conflict and accommodation in Polish coal mining appears to share more similarities with the U.S. than British counterpart. At the same time, Polish miners seem to be the least militant when compared to U.S. or British miners, though their militancy cannot be seen as a predetermined phenomena. Rather, as the discussion in this chapter suggests, after the experience of mobilization in the context of Solidarity, towards the end of the decade Polish miners became militant again. If we view socialism as an ahistorical, centralized system, how

are we going to explain this change in Polish miners' militancy? Alternatively, if we consider the politics and processes that occurred in the industry during the 1980s, including struggles over work organization, work time, the wage system, and the changes in the paid-employment-household nexus, we certainly move one step closer toward understanding this change.

The analysis of three major strikes that occurred in the coal-mining industry in each country during the 1980s isolated the following questions: (1) were the most important arenas of struggle similar or different across the cases? and (2) did the variations in structural arrangements, including the relationship between the state and the workplace, lead to specific variations in workers' consciousness and forms of conflict politicization? In order to examine the relational hypothesis about the importance of the relationships between workers and unions, I asked what the relations between unions, managers, and rank-and-file workers were during the course of the strikes. Finally, to examine the gender hypothesis, I looked at the role of gender as an explanatory variable.

In terms of the first point, the great issue and similarity between the 1980/81 and 1984/85 disputes in Poland and Great Britain was the struggle over "who will manage the industry." While in the United States this issue was not posed in so obvious terms, the defeat of the Pittston strike would give, at first, Pittston and consequently other companies more freedom in managing the mines. Indeed, one unintended consequence of the British miner's strike was the recognition of management's retention of the right to manage. Likewise, an unintended consequence of the Polish strike was the imposition of the martial law and the temporary delegitimation of trade unions and employees' councils, resulting in the re-assertion of the managerial right to manage. Since all three strikes occurred in different structural



contexts, where does this similarity come from? According to the relational position, this similarity can be related to the managerial responses to labor activism, ensuing from struggles over control of industrial management.

In terms of the second issue, one of Burawoy's main points regarding the character of industrial conflicts under capitalism and socialism is that, in the former case, industrial conflict is contained and localized by the factory regimes, in the latter case, it spills beyond a given locality and into to the arena of state politics. However, none of the strikes discussed above were contained by the respective factory regimes. Quite the contrary; in each case, the conflict involved the intervention of the state managers or representatives. Moreover, in each instance workers' demands had characteristics of what I would call social unionism, that is, unionism concerned with improving or preserving the living standards of both union members and of the working class in a more general sense. And in all three cases, workers' struggles linked the activities of industrial unions with life in local communities. In fact, although in Great Britain the solidarity was fragmented, still all of these strikes sparked amazing solidarity among diverse groups of people, thus spilling over the boundaries of factory regimes.

Third, concerning the relational hypothesis, the structuralist perspective would look at the relations between the unions and the state in order to explain differences or similarities in the course and outcomes of industrial conflict. In contrast, the relational perspective directs our attention to the interactions between the unions and rank-and-file workers. Importantly, in all three strikes discussed above, rank-and-file solidarity, the relations between rank-and-file workers and their respective unions, support of the community and other groups, and cooperation among different unions was the key to the strikes outcomes. Compared to the

other major post-war miner's strikes in British coal mining, the union leadership called for 1984-85 dispute. In contrast, the 1980-81 strikes in Poland were initiated by rank-and-file workers. And the UMWA had mobilized grass-roots support for the 1989-90 strike before it began. Thus, the behavior of Polish and U.S. miners, especially the solidarity that developed in both cases, contains more similarities than the behavior of either and their British counterpart. This finding goes against the structuralist prediction saying that we should observe more similarities between U.S. and Great Britain than between either of them and Poland. Moreover, it appears that in each case, state actions were not an independent variable; instead, they were shaped by and shaped in significant ways labor activism and unions' behavior.

In this context, one could argue that the most important difference between the 1980/81, 1984/85 and 1989/90 strikes were the reasons for their defeat or success. For example, it could be argued that while Polish workers were defeated by the State, the NUM was not so much defeated by the Thatcher government or by miners themselves as by the interactive effect of the government's manipulation of the divisions within the union. One reason for this was the increasing centralization of decision-making power within the NUM, combined with decreased autonomy of the areas, which made the union a less democratic institution. Yet, if we consider the fact that the emergence of Solidarity was actually related to the centralization of decision-making powers in Polish trade unions and their authoritarian character, it becomes possible to argue that similar to the UMWA, the official Polish trade unions were defeated by rank-and-file workers.

Finally, based on gathered evidence gender does not appear to be an independent variable which shaped miners' actions or produced certain industrial relations outcomes. What

I did observe was the fact that gender, understood both as a property of actors and an aspect of social organization, played at least some role in miners' activism across all three cases.

Moreover, the British government targeted the economic well being of miners' households to break the miners' strike. Certainly, the gender aspect of labor activism and industrial politics needs to be investigated more in depth.

In terms of industrial management outcomes, in all three countries, in the aftermath of these three strikes new control schemes and industrial structures have been introduced or formed. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, in each case, the intent of these new control schemes appears to be not only to harness workers' cooperation but also to weaken their unions or other forms of workers' participation in industrial management.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### TRANSFORMATIONS OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN THE U.S., GREAT BRITAIN AND POLAND IN THE 1980s

The main thesis of this research is that changes in industrial relations are not structurally pre-determined, that is, cannot be understood adequately by focusing on surrounding structures only. Managements, unions and rank-and-file workers play an important and sometimes even decisive role in the processes of industrial transformation which are both similar and different across national boundaries. Toward this end, in Chapter Five, I suggested that compared with the decades between 1950 and 1970, the 1980s were quite uneventful in terms of changes in energy markets, but experienced three big miners' strikes which had important consequences for the industry.

In this last chapter, I analyze the processes of industrial transformation that occurred during the 1980s, and especially in the aftermath of the miners' strikes, in the coal mining industries of the United States, Great Britain, and Poland. First, I discuss UMWA's politics subsequent to the changes it went through at the end of the 1970s, as well as the rank-and-file-induced changes in union structures in Great Britain and Poland. Second, I explore industrial relations changes, including collective bargaining, that occurred in the coal mining industry in all three countries in the aftermath of miners' strikes.

#### **I. The Transformations of Union Structures**

One of the weaknesses of the structuralist perspective is its neglect of the influence of

labor activism on the internal union structure and on the character of the relationships between unions and employers. In contrast, the relational perspective focuses on labor activism and the relations between union and rank-and-file workers in order to understand changes in industrial relations. According to the latter, labor activism and the character of internal union structures affect industrial relations, regardless of the degree of centralization/decentralization of the political-economic system.

In Chapter Four, I argued that, after a wave of U.S. miners' activism against the UMWA which led to a decentralization of decision-making processes within the union, internal unions structures were more centralized in Poland than in U.S. The latter was closer to the British than the Polish case. In this section, I compare and contrast centralization/decentralization of union structures in the 1980s, especially such indicators as the number of organizational levels and at what level decisions are made and by whom.

#### **A. United States**

After the rank-and-file militancy against the UMWA which resulted in changes of internal union politics in the 1970s, the relations between the rank-and-file workers and the leadership of the UMWA have remained largely cooperative. However, cooperative relations cannot be taken for granted. The UMWA leadership introduced changes which limited rank-and-file miners' involvement in decision making processes, on the one hand, but tried to assure rank-and-file support for some of the union's actions, on the other hand. The elimination of the bargaining council is an example of the first tendency to limit rank-and-file influence on the

outcomes of bargaining and using the special delegate conference is an example of the second effort to assure miners' approval of leadership actions. At the same time, the union undertook several actions to strengthen its position vis-a-vis coal operators, including adopting the selective strikes strategy, transferring the right to call such strikes from the International Executive Board to the President, and affiliating with the AFL-CIO. Below, I discuss the important consequences of these changes for the bargaining structure in the industry.

Two of the above changes were made during the 1983 general convention in the context of the 1984 contract negotiations. First, the elimination of the bargaining council, an intermediate structure between union members and the negotiating team which emerged in the context of the Miners For Democracy movement, simplified the bargaining structure within the union itself, on the one hand, but limited miners' direct influence on issues negotiated and on contract approval, on the other hand. Under the new structure, the membership brings forth the bargaining issues to the union district conferences which, then, present the membership demands to the negotiating team. After the tentative agreement is reached, its content is presented to union representatives at district conferences which conduct local union contract explanation meetings. The explanation meetings are subsequently followed by coalfield ballots and contract ratification by rank-and-file. Second, institutionalizing the selective strike strategy and the International selective strike fund, a move which surprised many coal operators, made possible collective bargaining decentralization so that one or more companies which refused to sign the contract could be individually targeted for selective strike and contract negotiations (United Mine Workers Journal, January, 1984). As a result, local strikes, consisting of fewer workers and, potentially, lasting longer, replaced industry-wide strikes, involving more miners

but of shorter duration.

To assure rank-and-file's greater role in setting the union's agenda and to unify the membership behind the union, in 1986, in an unprecedented action, the UMWA called the first Special Convention in its history to discuss the issues and goals for the forthcoming 1987 and 1988 contract negotiations with the BCOA and the possibility of merging and affiliating with other unions, especially re-affiliating with the AFL/CIO (United Mine Workers Journal, October, 1986). Among the resolutions, the most important include the departure from concessionary bargaining and the emphasis on contract negotiations providing workers with "job opportunities and economic security." The convention also removed a cap from the selective strike fund and approved possible affiliation or merger with another union (Coal Week, November 3, 1986). Both these decisions and the direct involvement of rank-and-file workers in discussing bargaining issues aimed at strengthening unity within the union as well as the UMWA's position vis-a-vis coal operators in upcoming negotiations.

Then, in 1988 the UMWA attempted to make yet another strategic move, that is, to merge with the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAWU). This merger, however, was not accomplished. Two reasons for the rejection of the UMWA's offer were restrictions put on OCAWU by the UMWA and the fact that the miners' union was not affiliated with the AFL-CIO. When the re-affiliation with the AFL-CIO was realized in 1989, the talks about the creation of a unified front vis-a-vis energy producers resumed but nevertheless the merger has not occurred.

Additionally, the UMWA had several other choices to make and problems to face during the decade. For example, during the 1990 convention, one of the most preponderant

issues was the question of union growth or, more exactly, the possibility of union destruction in light of the decline in the number of active miners covered by the UMWA-BCOA agreement from 135,000 in 1979 to 45,000 in 1992 (Hearing before the Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations, 1993: 12). Another important and interrelated issue that the union faced at the outset of the 1990s was the growth of non-UMWA coal among UMWA signatories from 19 percent in 1985 to 38 percent in 1992 (Hearing before the Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations, 1993: 28). At the same time, changes in the structure of the coal mining industry created a situation wherein the union's survival required it to "develop the ability to make the effective and timely changes necessary to preserve the integrity" of union organization (United Mine Workers Journal, April-May, 1990). One such change suggested by Trumka during a meeting of the leaders of the major mining unions from Australia, Germany, Great Britain, South Africa and the United States was that miners' unions begin developing a global strategy to counter the operations of such multinationals as Shell, Exxon or DuPont.

Thus, as a result of the earlier experiences of rank-and-file militancy, the UMWA curbed some aspects of the rank-and-file miners' influence on decision-making processes within the union, while maintaining some of the Miners For Democracy themes. At the same time, the Pittston strike reaffirmed the importance of rank-and-file for the union's success in strike action. Further, in the context of changing structure of the industry, the union decentralized its strike strategies, on the one hand, and tried to create a more unified front by merging with other unions, affiliating with the AFL-CIO and globalizing its strategies.



## **B. Great Britain**

In the aftermath of the 1984-85 strike, the structure of the NUM went through considerable changes, including rewriting of the Rule Book. The Rule Book had seen little alteration since its initial formulation back in 1944. The proposed changes involved reforming the National Executive, which was not realized, and the expulsion of the Nottinghamshire Area, site of the UDM. The restructuring strategy, which involved the mergers of small, right-wing Areas was opposed by defenders of the Areas' autonomy. However, the issue was not abandoned, and before the July 1985 National Conference occurred, Areas had to consider the proposed changes in the Rule Book.

The most important changes included: (1) alterations in Rule Eleven which, in line with the 1984 Trade Union Act, required re-election of all voting members of the NEC. This rule was to be re-written so that the National President would have no vote in the National Executive, therefore, the President's re-election would not be required; (2) the incorporation of Rule 5b which would permit associate membership and thus would extend the grass-root union base by integrating members of such auxiliary bodies as the Women's Support Groups; (3) the adoption of Rule 26c so that the NEC had "the power to call industrial action by any group of members whether in one or part of one or more than one Area and such action shall be deemed to be declared official" (Howell, 1989: 182).

Despite the controversial nature of these new rules, they were eventually accepted, with the exception of the associate membership clause. The April 1985 announcement of a new

NUM rulebook strengthened the Nottinghamshire claim that Scargill was centralizing and formalizing decision-making, curbing the autonomy of the Areas, increasing the security of the officials, and thus making the union undemocratic. For example, the new Rule 26c, was viewed as creating a more centralized union that took the strike initiative away from Areas and individual members. From this perspective, the new Rule Book changed the Area/National balance, even though the coalfield ballot was still required to call a national strike (Adeny and Lloyd, 1986). Two days after the Rules Revision Conference took place, the Nottinghamshire Area Council voted by 228 to 20 to quit the NUM (Howell, 1989: 183). The breakaway movement was thus taking an institutionalized form. In mid-October, Nottinghamshire voted decisively to quit the National Union; on a 90 percent poll, the margin was 17,750 to 6,792--72 percent for breakaway (Howell, 1989: 186). In 1987, UDM organized 17.6 percent of the total workforce (Taylor, 1988: 224).<sup>70</sup> Thus, the NUM went through a process of decision-making centralization. As a result, the NUM experienced rank-and-file opposition which led to the formation of an alternative union, a situation similar to what occurred in Poland.

### **C. Poland**

Solidarity emerged from a bottom-up movement among Polish workers, including miners, formed in the opposition to the strongly centralized, alienating old unions and state

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<sup>70</sup> The breakaway movement lost its momentum when it appeared that only individuals and not Branches could leave the area union. According to the law, "so long as some Agecroft miners [NUM's branch] wished to be NUM members, then they would constitute a Branch" (Howell, 1989: 188). In this case, then, the use of legal procedures, which was a characteristic of the NUM Right for many years, contributed to halting the secession movement.

authorities (see Chapter Six). Given this context, one might expect the structure of Solidarity would be as simple as possible to avoid unnecessary intermediate levels, and be largely characterized by local autonomy to assure a great degree of rank-and-file influence in decision-making.

However, from the outset union politics have been characterized by tension between its commitment to industrial democracy and centralistic tendencies. For example, during the first Convention of Delegates of Katowice voivodship, the organizational structure of the Region went through two major changes: (1) it was resolved that the Regional Presidium could create intermediate--municipal--structures between the Regional Headquarters and Factory Committees to assure that the decisions made by Headquarters were realized and to help Factory Committees with legal and social activities; and (2) it was decided that the newly chosen unified Silesia-Dabrowa Regional Board would take over the activities and possessions of the MKR Jastrzebie, MKZ Bytom, MKZ Katowice, MKZ Tychy, ZR Tarnowskie Gory as well as of the Regional Headquarters of Silesia and Dabrowa Basin.<sup>71</sup> Thus, after the first half a year of its functioning, the Silesia-Dabrowa Region went through a process of centralization.

Also, the centralistic tendencies within the union prevailed at the national level. For example, the first National Convention of Solidarity focused on the nature of powers within the union. Eventually, Karol Modzelewski's and Lech Walesa's idea of the strong central authority of the Coordinating Commission won in the context of a compromise. This compromise preserved the duality of powers--local and national--in the context of a stronger authority held by Coordinating Commission (Zwozniak, 1990: 185).

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<sup>71</sup> This Convention met in three rounds 6-7 July, 27-31 July and 5 August.

However, the imposition of martial law halted the independent trade union movement in Poland. Solidarity and all the other unions were delegalized. It was not until October, 1982 that the new legislation concerning the trade union movement in Poland was passed. Even though this legislation was institutionalized by the communist regime, its content indicates that it was strongly influenced by the experiences of 1980-81 and the Solidarity trade union movement. For example, Articles 1 and 2 of the new trade union law emphasized the self-managing and independent nature of the unions from the Government and employers. Yet, according to Article 3, trade unions were obliged to recognize the public ownership of the means of production, to respect the over-riding interest of the socialist state, the leading role of the PUWP, and Poland's international alliances. At the same time, according to the document, workers should be able to freely join the union, with exception of some occupational groups, such as officials of the Ministries of Defense. In contrast to the 1980 legislation, the new trade unions were not allowed to create regionally-based structures. Instead, they had to be organized along sectoral lines.

In terms of goals, the document defined trade unions' role as representing and defending workers' rights and interests in relation to work conditions and wages. Also, through their participation in social and economic life, the trade unions should help the development of the socialist state and democracy. Consequently, trade unions should promote better production and work organization, negotiate workers' working conditions with the employers, and participate in implementing economic plans.

The right to strike was included in the legislation but viewed as a last resort, only to be used after other methods for settling disputes have been exhausted. However, the requirement

that the majority of workers vote in favor before a strike is called imposed significant difficulty on starting strike action. Moreover, the Act provided a list of essential services (e.g. the food industry, education, banks, oil and gas pipelines, and water and energy services) for which strike action was either prohibited or required that strike leaders cooperate with management and military authorities. Political strikes, Article 44(5) said, were out of the question.

The law also delineated the scope of trade union activities at the plant level. First, the trade union was to adopt a position vis-a-vis management and workers' self-management authority concerning work rules, bonuses and rewards, a timetable of working hours and annual leave, and matters relating to the workers' social and welfare needs. The trade union's second task was to cooperate with the enterprise manager in matters relating to upgrading skills and rationalization processes. Third, the trade union was to supervise compliance with labor law provisions, especially those governing occupational safety and health. Interestingly, the new law did not provide the right to negotiate at the plant level.

Other provisions of the new law included: (1) secret elections to trade unions; (2) the right to express opinions on legal provisions, bills, economic and social plans, and other decisions affecting the rights and interests of workers; (3) participation in preparatory work on decisions of fundamental importance for workers; (4) the right to submit suggestions regarding the adoption or amendment of a legal text; (5) signing of collective agreements at the national level covering all workers engaged in a particular field of work, irrespective of whether they are members of the union.

Finally the Act specified that trade union activity would be resumed gradually. That is, before 31 December 1983, the trade union could not organize at sectoral level; up to 31

December 1984, only one trade union organization could operate in any establishment; and unions could resume inter-union organizational activities and associations only after 31 December 1984. Thus, the 1982 trade union legislation provided for union pluralism and decentralization of union structures. The intent was to prevent the emergence of strong unions in general, and especially of unions in the tradition of Solidarity which would constitute an alternative to the "official" unions which were formed starting in 1983. Thus, similar to its British counterpart, the Polish government was not only interested in dismantling Solidarity which acted as an oppositional union, but also in keeping unions weak in general.

As a result of this legislation the Federation of Mineworkers, along with two other mining sector Federations, was formed in 1983. Soon enough, it turned out that to bargain with the centralized state agencies, these independent Federations had to form the so-called OPZZ, the National Consensus of Trade Unions. Thus, two-years after official unions had been created they began centralizing. Three years later, the functioning and the politics of these unions were challenged by the emergence of yet another wave of strikes in the steel-mill "Nowa Huta" in April 1988 and followed by a miners' strike in August.

Thus, in August 1988 a new wave of miners' strikes broke out in the coal mining industry, including the "Manifest Lipcowy" mine well known from the events of 1980. The main demand of the 1988 strikes was the legalization of Solidarity. In January 1989, Solidarity accepted the government's offer to participate in "Roundtable" talks; the first meeting took place on February 6, 1989. The "Roundtables" were divided in different sections, including a section on trade union pluralism and the coal mining industry. In the section on union pluralism, talks focused on whether Solidarity should be legalized on a one-time nationwide

basis or, as the representatives of the reformed union, OPZZ, demanded it instead be registered "from below" in individual workplaces, one by one. Of course, the OPZZ, which emerged in 1983 as an official "business union" and claimed 7 million members in 1989, was interested in postponing and even hindering the legalization of Solidarity. Despite the OPZZ's resistance, the Solidarity delegates achieved their goal--Solidarity was to be legalized on a nationwide basis.

Thus, similar to what happened with the UMWA in the 1970s and the NUM in the 1980s, the Trade Union of Miners experienced miners' militancy directed against itself at the beginning of the 1980s. As a result, first Solidarity in 1980 and the Federation of Miners Unions in 1983 were created. As I will discuss in the next section, the delegalization and subsequent relegalization of Solidarity in 1989 had important consequences for the reshaping of industrial relations, especially collective bargaining.

#### **D. Summary**

Although the times, circumstances and outcomes differed, the UMWA, NUM, and TUM experienced similar internal rank-and-file revolts in opposition to the centralization of decision-making processes within the unions in the 1970s, 1980-81 and 1984-85, respectively. In the United States, after experiencing rank-and-file militancy aimed against their own union, the 1980s politics of the UMWA leadership entailed efforts to foster and maintain good relations with union members and to build a unified front against the coal operators. For example, the 1986 Special Delegate Conference decided to include new contested arenas in

collective bargaining negotiations by including job and economic security and focusing attention on the questions of labor solidarity and union survival. In Poland such militancy resulted in the creation of independent trade unions, and in Great Britain the UDM was formed as an alternative to the NUM.

Importantly, despite the already discussed differences in their political-economies, both in Great Britain and Poland union pluralism was institutionalized in the 1980s. In contrast and despite its similarity to Great Britain, the United States did not experience such a change and the UMWA retained its position of the dominant bargaining agent in the U.S. coal-mining industry. These worker-induced changes, or their lack, in union-workers relations had important consequences for industrial relations.

## **II. Transformations of Other Aspects of Industrial Relations**

Theoretical arguments provided by the relational perspective require tracing centralization/decentralization of industrial relations. In Chapter Four, I suggested that, during the 1970s, increasing concentration of production and entrance of the energy conglomerates in the coal-mining industry meant an increasing separation of the locus of strategic decision-making from the point of production; and in Great Britain and Poland the middle-level of industrial management gained importance relative to the workplace. At the same time, while strategic industrial management was most centralized in Poland, the existence of workers' councils provided a relatively decentralized decision-making processes regarding the production process.



Further, I suggested that while in the United States the union was granted the exclusive right to represent workers through collective bargaining and in Great Britain the NUM was granted the right to represent workers through collective bargaining and joint consultation machinery, in Poland the existence of workers' councils provided an alternative institution for workers' participation in industrial management at the workplace level. I also suggested that a focus on participatory structures can help explain patterns of labor activism in all three countries.

In this section, I analyze the effects of labor activism and of changing relations between rank-and-file workers and their unions on changes in industrial relations in the aftermath of the miners' strikes.

#### **A. United States**

The 1980s was a period of significant change in the structure of the coal mining industry in the United States. First, the number of underground coal mines declined visibly during the 1980s, yet, overall bituminous coal production increased. This suggests an increase in the average size of underground coal mines. During the same period of time, the concentration of coal production has also grown. In 1991, major coal producers, that is, firms producing more than 3 million tons of coal yearly, accounted for 77 percent of total coal production compared to 57 percent in 1976 (The Changing Structure of the U.S. Coal Industry, 1993: vii).

In terms of the share of the industry's output accounted for by the top four coal

producers, by 1991 it was less than in 1976, 22 percent compared to 25 percent. In terms of the distribution of market shares in different regions, in 1991, Appalachia appears to be the most competitive region as its top four largest producers accounted for about 23 percent of total production. In the Interior Region competition was somewhat weakened by the fact that the top four firms accounted for 38 percent of total coal production in the region (The Changing Structure of the U.S. Coal Industry, 1993: viii).

However, the four most significant changes in terms of industrial structure were (1) the decline of the independent coal companies by more than half over the past fifteen years: 17 percent in 1991, compared to 35 percent in 1976; (2) the entrance of foreign capital into coal production; (3) the intensification of mergers which have shifted coal production to large, diversified firms even more; and (4) the exit of oil and gas companies from the coal industry.

In terms of the second point, regarding the influx of foreign capital, in 1976 only one major coal producer was controlled by a foreign company, accounting for 1 percent of total coal production in the United States. By 1991 eight large coal producers, representing 14 percent of coal output, were controlled by foreign companies (The Changing Structure of the U.S. Coal Industry, 1993: viii). Further, between the end of the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s, only 2 mergers were reported annually. In 1988, the EIA reported 10 mergers; in 1989, 20 mergers; in 1990, 10 mergers; and, in 1991, eleven mergers (The Changing Structure of the U.S. Coal Industry, 1993: 9-10).

The above changes in industrial structures, including the entrance of product diversified multinationals in the coal-mining business, meant centralization of long-term industrial policies at the level of the company's multinational headquarters and creation of a more elaborate

hierarchy of command. By the same token, it appears that pluralization of decision-making occurred at the collective-bargaining level in the context of the creation of two, multi-employer bargaining structures and decentralization of decision-making occurred at workplace level in the context of new labor-management cooperative schemes which had been introduced by some coal companies.

Specifically, collective bargaining between UMWA and BCOA did not go through major changes until the end of the 1980s, when flexibility was introduced into contractual relations between the union and coal operators. The introduction of the contract reopener clause to the 1988 agreement allowing discussions on wages and pension benefits to be reopened with individual companies and the practice of signing separate agreements with companies already bound by a contract.<sup>72</sup> Further, toward the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s an important development occurred in the coal mining--the pluralization of collective bargaining in the industry, moving from one multi-employer bargaining structure to two, multi-employer bargaining structures. The breaking away of the Pittston company from the BCOA in 1986 (Chapter Six), and the establishment of an alternative bargaining structure in the aftermath of the Pittston strike in the form of the Independent Bituminous Coal Bargaining Alliance (IBCBA) fall into this category. Since I have already discussed the Pittston accord, let me now focus on the meaning of the UMWA-IBCBA pact for the structure of collective bargaining.

The conclusion of the Pittston strike with mutual concessions by management and labor

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<sup>72</sup> For instance, in 1991, the UMWA signed an agreement with the Pittston Coal Group for a new surface mine in West Virginia. This agreement was not required by the Pittston accord and actually differs from it (Coal Week, August 12, 1991)

indicated that the UMWA was able to foster a concerted action against coal operators and continued to be an important industrial relations actor. In this context, independent, medium-sized coal operators, including Westmoreland Coal, the Drummond Co., Jim Walter Resources, and U.S. Steel Mining Inc., decided to create IBCBA--a separate bargaining structure which would organize those coal operators who were interested in developing union-based approaches to labor-management relations. The IBCBA's role in the U.S. industrial relations was instituted in 1993, during conflict-ridden contract negotiations with the BCOA. The UMWA started conducting parallel negotiations with the IBCBA and signed an interim agreement with its four member companies.<sup>73</sup>

Several elements of the IBCBA agreement, which covered around 7,500 active UMWA members, were meant to forge a new partnership between coal companies and miners. The agreement protects the full level of health benefits, guarantees that all new jobs will go first to the UMWA members, includes a clause for "special local circumstances," and establishes a labor-management cooperative program, the so-called Labor-Management Positive Change Process (LMPCP) to end the adversarial relations in the industry.

In contrast with other company-mandated cooperative programs whose goal, according to the UMWA's leadership, was to undermine the union, the distinctive feature of this program is that it is neither being imposed by management onto the workforce nor aims at union-busting. Instead, it empowers miners and local officials to sit and talk with management, is based on union's presence and preserves the functioning of such contractual procedures as the

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<sup>73</sup> In 1992, the UMWA conducted a survey of its membership who overwhelmingly stated that their goals for the new contract were :(1) job security; (2) maintaining full health care benefits; and (3) a greater say in what goes on in the workplaces (United Mine Workers Journal, August-September, 1993).

grievance procedure.<sup>74</sup> President Trumka (United Mine Workers Journal, July 1993: 2) summarized the significance of the IBCBA agreement by saying: "This pact is a milestone in the history of labor-management relations in the coal industry." The IBCBA chief negotiator H. Douglas Dahl (United Mine Worker Journal: August-September 1993) stated that "We all win with this agreement. Employees who have job security are clearly the most productive workers."

In this context, two issues deserve attention. First, it is difficult to evaluate the rank-and-file response to this program, because, as was the case with some other contracts (see Coal Week, April 8, 1991), this accord was not submitted to the miners for ratification. Second, the IBCBA pact and some of its provisions, such as the one mentioned above, do not seem to receive a warm welcome by the BCOA. Based on the statements made by Joseph P. Brennan, the President of the Bituminous Coal Operators' Association, during the congressional hearings on the state of labor-management relations in the coal mining industry, it appears that the BCOA felt threatened by the possible pluralization of bargaining. Brennan (Hearing before the Subcommittee on Labor-Management Relations, 1993: 67) said:

Labor management collaboration at the local level as a substitute for a negotiated competitive contract is not a panacea...It is something to be approached using the institutional structures that have served us so well in introducing improvements into labor management relations

Brennan's insistence on the importance of centralized, national bargaining seems to be based on two main rationales. First, the pluralization of collective bargaining threatens the BCOA control over the bargaining process or even its existence as the BCOA's main role,

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<sup>74</sup> The first program of this type was institutionalized at U.S. Steel Maple Creek in 1991, that is, before the interim agreement was signed.

among other things, was to decrease competition among the coal companies. Second, national bargaining encourages the existence of strong union leadership. Pluralization of collective bargaining could weaken the importance of central union leadership and generate labor unrest when some districts and local unions would secure concessions that others would not get.

Yet, despite the opposition coming from the BCOA, collective bargaining relations in the U.S. coal-mining industry changed in the aftermath of the Pittston strike. The outcomes of the change reflected the UMWA's ability to influence the shape of industrial relations in the industry. In this case, the change encompassed (1) organizational pluralism characterized by creating two collective-bargaining structures, or decision-making centers; and (2) workplace-democratization by establishing new mechanisms for workers participation.

## **B. Great Britain**

Subjecting coal mining to market mechanisms in Great Britain began in the aftermath of the 1984-85 strike as stringent financial control by the government and NCB replaced production targets. However, in contrast to Poland, where the radical restructuring of coal mining was hampered by the active resistance of labor unions and rank-and-file workers, after the defeat of the NUM, industrial restructuring proceeded quite rapidly in Great Britain. In this context, the main question is how, if at all, changes in industrial policies affected the locus of decision-making.

First, the British government, especially the treasury and different ministries, maintained their involvement in the industry as they received powers allowing them to decide

about the entrance of private capital into nationalized industries, an aspect of strategic decision-making. Second, the "New Strategy for Coal" was formulated during 1985/86 without the input from the NUM. Michael Butler, finance director of British Coal, summarized the main features of this strategy: (1) concentration on production at low-cost collieries and from coal reserves with the potential for low-cost output; (2) pits which cannot be planned to produce coal at an operating cost of less than 1.65 per GJ would not be considered viable, and in the longer term, continuing pits would be expected to achieve a cost of less than 1.50 per GJ.; (3) continued investment in projects like Selby and other developments at new and existing collieries designed to exploit reserves capable of being worked at low cost (Colliery Guardian, January, 1987). The introduction of stringent financial controls of the operation of the British coal-mining industry expended the top-bottom strategy of commercialization that had begun in the 1970s.

Thus, if the union lost its influence over decision making processes in the industry, on the one hand, the government took over decision-making concerning the long-term industrial policies, on the other hand. Importantly, the exclusion of the NUM from strategic decision-making also meant that British Coal acquired unilateral decision-making powers concerning several issues regarding the production process and employment. Moreover, following the defeat of the NUM strike, management no longer was constrained from establishing a new managerial regime wherein decision-making power could be decentralized to the local level, which after the breakdown of union influence on the strategic level became an important locus of control.

To undermine the power of the union at the workplace level, managers developed two

strategies. First, British Coal made it more difficult for lodge officials to operate on a full-time basis. Second, managers adopted a policy of direct communication with workers, including letters, videos, teletext messages and a company newspaper (Richardson and Wood, 1989: 42-43). Thus, by hampering union activities and broadening communication with workers through so-called "total quality management," the managers increased their control over the workforce. This, in turn, allowed management to introduce modifications in work practices, such as limiting the extent of custom and practice (time-keeping and absenteeism), reducing overmaning, and increasing subcontracting. Management also tried to increase control over labor allocation within pits, which had previously been ruled by seniority, and to deal with grievances on the spot (Richardson and Wood, 1989: 42-43). As a result, while decision-making processes with regard to several aspects of production process and employment were shifted to the workplace-level, they were simultaneously controlled by the pit managers who became the sole locus of decision-making.

While the NUM tried to resist the changes, its resistance was not successful for three reasons. First, in February of 1987 the National Executive Committee opposed any localized changes in work practices proposed by the British Coal. At the same time, however, the South Wales Area declared that, in the context of continued closures, it could not reject the British Coal proposal to introduce a six-day work week and greater labor flexibility. Thus, the first obstacle to successful resistance was lack of cooperation across and continued fragmentation of areas within the union.

The second obstacle was the establishment and subsequent recognition of the Union of Democratic Miners which meant the miners were divided into between two antagonistic unions.



Specifically, in the absence of a negotiated agreement and the emergence of the UDM new conciliation procedures institutionalized union dualism and management's right to manage in 1986/87 (Taylor, 1988). The most important features of the new conciliation scheme were: (1) the NUM and the UDM would negotiate separate agreements, which would cover all the employees at the units where either union had a majority, with joint machinery to negotiate pay and conditions; (2) collective bargaining would take place at three--national, district, and colliery--levels; (3) a member of the minority could take his/her grievance directly to management; (4) dismissal cases would be handled by the Industrial Tribunal; and (5) each union was obliged to respect a miner's choice to belong to one of the unions (Taylor, 1988: 226).

Third, for British Coal, the spirit of cooperation which underlaid the emergence of the UDM offered better prospects of managerial control than the syndicalist attitude represented by the NUM under Scargill. Not surprisingly, then, British Coal was more willing to work with the UDM than with the NUM and eventually exclude the NUM from decision-making processes altogether. This occurred in 1987 after a new disciplinary code was rejected by the NUM and resulted in unofficial strikes in the Yorkshire coalfield (Taylor, 1988: 229). As a result, the relations between the NUM and NCB and later with the British Coal (BC) were dismantled almost entirely. British Coal would negotiate pay and work conditions only with the UDM. Even at the end of the 1980s, the NUM would not recognize the UDM and British Coal would negotiate only with one, the majority union at any one pit. Thus, as should be apparent, British Coal did not have to consult the NUM on major issues regarding the industry, including pit closures, anymore.

While institutionalization of the UDM as the second union in the British coal-mining could be seen as resulting in organizational pluralism, that is in a change similar to what occurred in the United States, in reality it was not the case. Rather, the creation of the UDM, whose politics were characterized by a cooperative spirit, meant centralization of decision-making processes with British Coal, especially after the existing relations with the NUM, including consultative machinery were dismantled. The most important elements of the new industrial relations in British coal mining were the reduction of the NUM's decision-making authority at the strategic level and the assertion managerial prerogative in its place. Thus, it appears that the movement toward privatization in British coal mining did not involve decentralization of decision-making. Rather, strategic aspects of decision-making were centralized at the state and British Coal levels, and control over such aspects of industrial management as work rules shifted to workplace level. However, in contrast to the United States where participatory programs were not established to undermine union influence, in Great Britain decentralization of some aspects of decision-making processes to the workplace level shifted control away from labor to management and was introduced to undermine the remaining union power.

### **C. Poland**

While the imposition of martial law put an abrupt end to the institution of independent trade unionism in Poland, it could neither turn the clock of history back nor entirely halt the social processes sparked by the emergence of Solidarity. In the realm of industrial relations,

one of the most important outcomes of the 1980/81 strikes was the recognition of the existence of antagonistic social classes--workers and state managers--in socialist societies, and the acknowledgement of conflictual industrial relations, including conflicts over wages and other conditions of employment.

However, until unions were allowed to operate at the national level, they could not bargain with the Polish government. Not surprisingly, then, soon after the trade unionism was legalized in Poland in the form of trade unions federations, a centralized union structure emerged to conduct negotiations with the government. Interestingly enough, after the new unions, including the Federation of Mineworkers, began forging horizontal links and centralizing at the national level, the coal mining industry also entered a processes of centralization.

Specifically, in the context of re-emerging industry-wide unions, in 1984, the Coal Mining Ministry issued orders (*zarzadzenie*) to establish seven coal mining companies, or *Gwarectwa*. From a legal point of view, this meant that the coal mines had lost their enterprise status. This decision was contested not only from a standpoint of its compliance with the main assumptions of Polish reforms which emphasized self-management, self-government and autonomy, but on the grounds that it by-passed worker's councils. While it has been impossible to document the administrative processes which resulted in the creation of the *Gwarectwa*, a survey from both coal-mining management representatives and the employers of the *Gwarectwa* indicates that the initiative came from the central administration, not from the enterprises themselves (Grabowski, 1990: 50). As a matter of fact, different forms of pressure were used, such as promises of tax reduction, preferential salaries, or supply of scarce means

of production, to facilitate the centralization process.

However, a more thorough understanding of why Gwarectwa were formed can be derived by examining another key institution in industrial relations in Poland--employee self-management. First, bear in mind that after the demise of the independent trade unions, Employees' Self-Governments provided an institution which bridged the decade of the 1980s in Poland. While the imposition of martial law put an end to employee self-management, in June 1983 the Minister of Energy agreed to reinstate employees' self-government bodies in the coal mining industry. As a result, an institutionalized form of employee participation in managing mining enterprises was rejuvenated. In fact, in many Silesian coal mines, the self-management movement provided an institutional realm in which the extent members of Solidarnosc could embark on legal political activity.<sup>75</sup>

The creation of Gwarectwa did not lead to the liquidation of employees' self-management bodies. It did present, however, a more subtle way of controlling workers and managing industrial relations. The formation of Gwarectwa centralized the previously decentralized form of industrial management in which smaller organizational units had a legal status. With the transfer of the legal status from the enterprises to Gwarectwa, not only did Gwarectwa take over the functions of the enterprise, but decision-making in the employees' self-government was moved from the local to the company level. As a result, such issues as long- and short-term planning, profits distribution, investments, and work-rules for enterprises ceased to be decided at the local level. Rather, they were decided at the "Gwarectwo" level and the mine-level employees' self-government became the agencies of the central body. Of

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<sup>75</sup> Ruszkowski (1991: 7) indicates that, according to a 1985 report, Solidarity held seats in 43 percent of worker's councils.

course, the workers themselves opposed this use of industrial reorganization as a means of labor control. This time, however, the resistance did not take the form of strikes but was expressed in miners lack of enthusiasm in the creation of the new, self-management bodies at the Gwarectwa level.

Further, 1986 legislation passed by the Polish government redefined the rules of collective bargaining between the new, official trade unions and the government. According to this legislation, collective bargaining was voluntary, but its extent was centrally delineated as it could not conflict with the central socio-economic plan (Związkowiec, April 15, 1986). While it is difficult to talk about the practical impact of this legislation on the decentralization of industrial relations,<sup>76</sup> it was a first step in undermining the governments' monopoly on decision-making processes with regard to wages. Thus, when the strike broke out in the coal mining industry in August 1988, two important reasons behind it were: miners' demand to legalize Solidarity and to decentralize collective wage agreements, by which they meant to introduce enterprise-specific wage systems and the possibility of negotiating wages at the enterprise level (Gornik, September 1, 1988). As a result, similar to Great Britain and the United States, the Polish industry entered the 1990s with decentralized wage agreements. Similar to Great Britain, re-instating Solidarity's legal status resulted in trade union pluralism and inter-union competition and rivalries.

In terms of industrial structures, in 1987, a new organizational structure was created in

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<sup>76</sup> In fact, its practical impact was almost negligible. Until 1988, only two collective agreements were signed. While one reason was the complexity of the procedure, the other reason was the unions' resistance to participating in collective bargaining whose rules were unilaterally defined by the state without due consultation with the unions. For example, the Federation of Mineworkers called for a boycott of this legislation.

the Polish coal-mining, the so-called Communities of Coal (Wspolnoty Wegla Kamiennego). Within this new structure, the coal-mining industry's management system consisted of four levels: (1) the Ministry; (2) the Community of Coal; (3) the coal company; (4) the coal-mine. This change, then, created two middle structures whose establishment was the last government-lead attempt to maintain centralized control over the industry by the means of creating middle-range organizational structures. .

In December 1989, as a result of Roundtable talks during which miners' representatives demanded the elimination of Coal Communities and coal companies, the Polish government proposed a radical restructuring of the coal-mining industry. Similar to Great Britain, the Polish government decided that Polish coal-mining had to become subject to market mechanisms. This proposal met with unions' resistance and was not implemented in its initial form. In the context of a piecemeal restructuring program, in January, 1990, the first of the middle-structures--coal companies--was dissolved. At the same time, the project of the liquidation of the Coal Communities entered the preparation phase. On the first of January, 1991, the coal-companies were liquidated and replaced by five big multi-enterprises combined according to regional criteria: East, North, South, West and Lower Silesia. Thus, Polish coal-mining industry experienced yet another process of re-organization as a result of which regional industrial structures gained important decision-making powers.

At the same time, employee councils regained their legal rights in 1989, including their ability to appoint the mine director. This accounted for greater workers' participation in decision-making processes at the workplace level--a trend similar to what occurred in some U.S. companies. Given existing legal regulations, as long as the coal mining industry remains

state-run, employees self-management will remain institutionalized. However, if coal mining becomes subject to a privatization program, employees' right to participate in the activities of the supervisory board would be retained only as a result of employee stock holding. Thus, similar to Great Britain, privatization of Polish coal mining would mean a decrease of workers' influence in decision-making processes at the workplace level.

In all, similar to the other two countries, the collective bargaining structure in the Polish industry went through a processes of organizational pluralization. However, the outcomes of this process were similar in some aspects and different in others. First, similar to the NUM, the OPZZ had to give up its monopoly with regard to organizing production workers in the industry. Second, at the end of the decade, Polish miners' had greater decision-making powers at the workplace level than their British or U.S. counterparts. Third, in all three countries the changes in industrial relations, such as the creation of the IBCBA in the United States, the institutionalization of union dualism and simultaneous centralization of industrial management and shift of some decision-making from the industry to the workplace level in Great Britain, and the relegalization of Solidarity and more powerful workers' councils were at least in part result of the new power relations between labor and management.

#### **D. Summary**

In sum, the processes of industrial relations centralization/decentralization which took place in the aftermath of the 1980-81, 1984-85 and 1989-90 strikes appear to acquire different dynamics depending on the relative strength of labor and management in each country. In

Poland, the revitalization of employees' self-government bodies, which enabled the delegalized "Solidarity" to challenge managerial prerogatives regarding vital production- and investment-related decisions, was stopped in 1984, one year after they had begun. Yet, at the end of the decade, similar to the United States, the re-institutionalization of employees' self-government bodies in the context of the presence of strong unions took place in Polish coal mining. At the same time, while the right to decide about long-term strategic industrial policies were preserved by the state in Poland, and by the coal company or corporation in the United States, regional enterprises were granted large degree of autonomy and some U.S. companies allowed for some worker participation concerning other dimensions of industrial management. In contrast, in Great Britain the locus of strategic decision-making shifted from the industry to the state level and workplace level as the British state gained control over long term decisions which historically had been made by management and union in consultation.

Further, as I suggested in the first part of this chapter, focusing on union politics and the relations between rank-and-file workers and their unions reveals that change to organizational pluralization of collective bargaining occurred across all three countries. At the same time, however, my analysis revealed a complex pattern of similarities and differences in the meaning and outcomes of this similar process. For example, despite growing structural similarities between the United States and Great Britain (see Chapter Five), the collective bargaining outcomes in these two countries diverge, and despite existing structural differences between Poland and the United States, similar processes of the enhancement of worker participation occurred in the context of union presence. By contrast, in Great Britain worker participation schemes were used to by-pass and undermine the NUM.



The structuralist perspective, which focuses only on general patterns of social organization across different systems, does not seem to be very helpful in adequately explaining these patterns of convergence and divergence in collective bargaining, including the introduction of organizational pluralism.

### **III. Summary and Discussion**

This chapter starts with a comparison of the processes which occurred within three miners' unions during the 1980s, especially in the aftermath of the Miners For Democracy movement against the centralized UMWA in the U.S. coal mining in the 1970s, the strikes of 1980-81 in Poland and 1984-85 in Great Britain. The comparison of internal union processes, an aspect of industrial relations neglected by some abstract structuralist analyses such as Burawoy's, shows the existence of some important cross-national similarities and differences. First, despite the fact that the UMWA and the NUM functioned in increasingly similar political-economic environments at the societal level, the rank-and-file challenge to the centralization of decision-making processes in these unions in the 1970s and the 1980s, respectively, resulted in two divergent outcomes: the transformation of the UMWA structure towards decentralization, on the one hand, and the further centralization of the NUM and the emergence of a breakaway movement, on the other.

In this context, the Polish situation presents a combination of these two outcomes wherein the rank-and-file movement eventually resulted in the formation of an alternative, independent union in the industry, on the one hand, and the creation of more decentralized

union structures, on the other. In turn, these events shaped collective bargaining during the rest of the decade and into the 1990s. Thus, the relational perspective, which begins with activity of actors rather than the structures surrounding them provides a more subtle understanding of the changes of such institutions as collective bargaining than the structuralist perspective.

The second important point that this chapter's analysis reveals is the existence of a similar process of changing industrial relations as a result of changing balance of power between labor and management. For example, it appears that in the United States some coal companies have been changing their managerial strategies through involving labor in decision-making processes, while other companies used the tactic of double-breasting or the formation of subsidiaries to avoid the union. Importantly, during the 1980s the UMWA documented its continued ability to maintain miners' solidarity and disrupt the operation of selected companies. In this context, to avoid conflict with the UMWA some the U.S. coal-mining companies established the IBCBA. As a result, the industry went through a process of organizational pluralization with the formation of several bargaining arrangements.

In Polish coal mining, official trade-unions were created to bolster managerial control in the workplace. However, due to the existence of workers' councils, which served as an institution where Solidarity could survive, at the end of the decade Polish miners' challenged the regime again. As a result of this challenge, Polish industrial relations were decentralized and union pluralism was created. The presence of this similarity challenges one of the most important propositions coming from the structuralist argument saying that we should observe differences in industrial relations and behavior across the Polish and U.S. political-economies.

While an alternative union was created in Great Britain and resulted in the organizational pluralism regarding industrial relations in British coal-mining, this did not mean that decentralization occurred. That is, whereas similar to the United States and Poland, some aspects of industrial management, including the strategic policies, remained centralized, contrary to these two other cases, in Great Britain the shift of some aspects of industrial management from industry to the workplace level was used as a union busting strategy as far as the NUM was concerned and did not mean greater workers' involvement in decision-making processes. Importantly, then, at the outset of the 1990s, with regard to worker involvement Poland had the most meaningful program, Great Britain the least meaningful program, and the United States had a growing program.

The third important point that stands out in this chapter concerns the similarities and differences in the centralization/decentralization of industrial relations in the context of the relative strength of labor solidarity and/or workers' organizations. Namely, it appears that faced with relatively strong labor organizations, Polish and U.S. moved in the direction of creating cooperative labor-management relations by decentralizing the decision-making powers at the workplace level by revitalizing employees' self-government bodies or creating labor-management committees, respectively.

In contrast, in Great Britain, a weak union context resulted in workers' participation in decision-making processes imposed from above without union consultation as a means of institutionalizing managerial prerogative. Namely, in British coal mining the "labor problem" was resolved and management's right to manage was re-asserted in the context of the defeat of 1984-85 strike, the NCB and later the BC could actually focus on institutionalizing the gains in

managerial control over production processes and employment relations. Industrial managers not only enthusiastically welcomed but also supported the formation of the UDM, whose existence contributed to institutionalizing the shift in the locus of power away from the NUM and management consultation process towards management alone. Compared to the U.S. or Polish coal industry, managerial practices in British coal-mining in the second half of the 1980s were characterized by a different struggle--a struggle to institutionalize managerial gains rather than greater workers' participation.

If we look at strategic industrial policies, it appears that decision-making moved toward centralization in Great Britain, remained the same in the United States, and decentralized to some extent in Poland with the introduction of regional enterprises. Again, finding critical differences across two capitalistic countries challenges the structuralist contention concerning capitalist hegemony across national-boundaries, while the existence of similarities across capitalistic and socialistic industrial relations challenges some aspects of the dichotomous conceptualization of these two political-economies.

One of the linchpins of the structuralist argument is that two different modes of industrial relations and behavior will characterize two divergent political-economic systems. From this position, then, we should find more similarities in the processes of industrial re-organization between the United States and Great Britain than between either of these countries and Poland. However, my analysis of changes in union structures and other aspects of industrial relations suggests a more complex pattern of similarities and differences than the structuralist perspective allows. The relational perspective with its focus on labor activism, unions, and processes of organizational change, proves helpful in this regard as it allows us to

see similarities and differences which are not as obvious when seen from a more abstract structuralist perspective.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION

This research addressed an enduring theoretical debate between system- and action-oriented approaches to social change by exploring the meaningfulness of two theoretical frameworks. The first, the structuralist perspective, represents a system-oriented approach to social change which assumes that structural conditions have ontological primacy in relation to human agency. The second, the relational approach, takes a processual view of social reality and posits the ontological primacy of the interactions of agency and structure. Thus, to understand social change and social order the structuralist position presumes that we need to explore the nature of structural configurations, while the relational perspective focuses on the interactions between people's actions and surrounding social structures.

In the field of industrial sociology, this debate translates into a polemic between the top-down, market control-oriented industrial sociologists, such as Richard Edwards (1979), Littler (1982), Burawoy (1979, 1985) and the proponents of a more interactive, labor-activism oriented position, including Herding (1972), Hyman (1975, 1989), and P.K. Edwards (1986). Since Burawoy's work provides the most sophisticated development of a structuralist position in industrial sociology, I focused on his theorizing, on the one hand, and developed a relational approach as representing an alternative position, on the other hand.

To address this debate empirically, I looked at the organizational changes in the coal-mining industry of three different countries--the United States, Great Britain, and Poland. My choice of an historical-comparative method was dictated by two things. First, to establish

whether social structures, especially energy markets, are sufficient to understand labor activism and organizational change, I needed analyze the historical patterns of the industry's market situation, labor activism and changes in industrial relations in different political-economic contexts. Second, I selected the underground coal mining industries located in two capitalist countries--the United States and Great Britain--and in a socialist country--Poland. The choice of coal industry allowed me to control for the labor process, labor market and product. The choice of capitalist and socialist countries as providing the broader, structural contexts is crucial for establishing the existence of similarities and differences regarding changes in industrial organization across different political-economies.

In this last chapter I first outline the major findings of this research. Then, I discuss some of the limitations of the structuralist approach in relation to labor activism and understanding similarities and differences in organizational change across different political-economies. Specifically, I address four structuralist hypotheses in the context of my research: (1) the structuralist market-control hypothesis, which posits that the industry's economic situation is the most important variable determining changes in industrial relations; (2) the structuralist hegemony hypothesis, which posits the convergence in arenas of struggle within capitalism and their stability across historical boundaries; (3) the labor consent hypothesis, which states that labor militancy significantly decreased during the 1980s and that workers in socialist countries tend to be more militant than their capitalist counterparts; and (4) the gender hypothesis saying that gender is irrelevant for understanding changes in industrial relations. Third, I suggest that my findings present evidence for an alternative, relational approach and examine the ways in which this alternative perspective contributes to a more adequate

understanding of the nature of industrial relations change. Next, I discuss the limitations of my study, including measurement, data and generalization problems. I conclude with an outline of directions for further research.

### **I. Results of This Study**

Five major findings stand out from this study. First, with regard to the market situation of coal, I found that the most dramatic changes occurred in both countries prior to 1980, except Great Britain when in the aftermath of the 1984-85 strike further changes were brought about by interactions of state, NCB' and NUM politics. In Poland, market situation of coal showed the least amount of change both prior to and during 1980s. Yet, I also found that industrial relations in all three countries were characterized by more instability in the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s than during the preceding years when the market situation worsened considerably. Further, I found that, until the late 1970s, Great Britain represented a mixed case in terms of the economic situation of the industry which shared some similarities with both Poland and the United States, but after the late 1970s, the British industry started to face competitive pressures similar to the United States. Also, the market situation of coal in the United States and Great Britain, as measured by coal supply and demand, and energy consumption, became more similar over time while increasingly diverging from Poland.

Second, at the state level, I found that, although important differences in degree exist, in all three countries the state has been involved in industrial relations. By comparison, the United States government has been largely absent in industrial relations until a threat occurred,



while in Poland the state has always been present with regard to both industrial management and union internal matters. In Great Britain, the state was not involved in union internal matters and largely abstained from intervening in the industry's operation until the late 1970s. These findings suggest that, prior to 1980, at the state level, the coal-mining industrial management was the least centralized in the United States, the most in Poland, and Great Britain was in-between. As far as unions functioning is concerned, the state was the least involved in Great Britain, the most in Poland, and the United States was in-between. For the late 1980s, I have found that the degree of state involvement in industrial relations changed: the British government increased its involvement, the Polish government decreased it, and the U.S. government did not change its policy radically in this regard. Thus, at the end of the decade, the pattern of centralization at the state level was as follows: the U.S. was the least centralized, Great Britain the most, and Poland was in between.

At the industry level, I found that during the 1970s and 1980s the U. S. and British energy markets became more similar. Yet, industrial relations in the coal-mining industry of these two countries appeared to be less similar at the end of the 1980s than in the late 1960s. This divergent industrial relations trend was evidenced by the emergence of union pluralism in Great Britain and bargaining pluralism in the United States. While the market situation of the British and Polish industries became less similar in the 1980s as compared to the 1960s or the early 1970s when both governments controlled coal prices and sheltered the industry from markets, in both countries industrial relations changed in the direction of union pluralism. This latter development suggests convergence between Poland and Great Britain at the industry level.

Further, in all three countries I found some form of worker participation. The growing trend toward joint labor-management participation in the United States, the imposition of worker participation by management in the British context, and the re-emergence of workers' councils in Poland suggest some convergence of all three countries at the workplace level. Yet, the extent of worker participation in decision-making regarding different contested arenas varied across national and historical boundaries. For example, until participatory schemes were established in the U.S. in the late 1980s, collective bargaining at the industry level was the only avenue of U.S. miners' influence on industrial management; consultation and bargaining taking place at different levels of industrial organization were the avenues of British miners' influence on industrial matters; and workers' councils were the only avenue of Polish miners' influence on industrial management at the workplace level. However, while in the U.S. and, to some extent in Poland, these developments meant a movement toward more worker participation, as compared to the 1970s, in Great Britain worker participation schemes were imposed by management to undermine union and signified a trend toward less worker participation. As a result, at the end of the 1980s, depending on the level of industrial relations, all three cases are similar or very different, or represent even more complex patterns of similarities and differences.

Third, my comparative analysis of arenas of struggle in the coal-mining industries across countries suggests that in all three cases productivity, wages, employment security, flexible work schedules, work rules, pit closures, state involvement, and health and safety have emerged at different points in time as important domains of labor-management conflict. In the United States, health care and pension benefits became important arenas of struggle in the

1980s; during the same time, in Poland, health care was not an issue and in Great Britain neither of these issues constituted an important contested arena. Instead, the main issues in the British industry were pit closures and work discipline. In contrast, in Poland the main concern was the question of overtime, especially having to work on weekends. Moreover, in no country did the issue of technological change become a direct arena of struggle. While some of the cross-national differences in the arenas of struggle can be attributed to the differences in macro socio-economic organization, i.e., lack of universal health care in the United States and its availability in Great Britain and Poland, other differences between the United States and Great Britain, such as issues of job security and pit closures, respectively, as well as similarities between Poland and both capitalist countries, such as issue of labor productivity or lack of industry-level resistance to technological change, cannot be adequately explained by focusing on macro-structural similarities or differences only.

Fourth, with regard to the changes in the level and locus of control over different aspects of industrial relations, I found that all three countries represent different patterns of change. Great Britain went through the most radical changes regarding both the level and locus of the decision-making process with regard to strategic planning. Prior to the 1984-85 strike, strategic decisions were made in part at the industry level and in part at the local level in consultation with the NUM. After the 1984-85 strike, the state, which was not involved in running of the industry until the Thatcher government, became the most important locus of strategic decision-making in British coal mining. In the United States, the level and locus of strategic decision-making have been stable, with decision-making power being located at the company/corporation. In Poland, regional multi-enterprises emerged as an important locus of

strategic decision-making alongside the state and worker's councils. As a result, strategic decision-making was the least centralized in Poland as it became distributed along different levels of industrial organization and the most centralized in Great Britain, with the United States somewhere in between.

With regard to the wage system, which at different times emerged as an important arena of struggle in each industry, I found that, in the United States, in the late 1980s, the level and locus of decision-making regarding wages was at the national level, based on master agreement between the BCOA and UMWA. The centralization of decision-making regarding wages increased after the elimination of the bargaining council by UMWA president Trumka took the locus of control over wage negotiations away from miners. The establishment of the IBCBA undermined the BCOA's control over negotiating the master agreement for the industry. In Poland, wage bargaining became more decentralized over time as both unions began participating in wage bargaining at the industry and local levels. In Great Britain, while the introduction of the NPLA moved the locus of control to national-level bargaining between the NCB and the NUM, some wage bargaining still occurred at the mine level. While the re-introduction of incentive system could return the wage control to the local level, in reality the Coal Board and later British Coal took control over this wage system away from the coal mine. Thus, while prior to 1980, decision-making regarding wage system was the least decentralized in Great Britain and the most centralized in Poland and the United States, at the beginning of the 1990s, this decision-making was the least centralized in Poland and the United States and the most in Great Britain.

Thus, with regard to miners' involvement in decision-making, it appears that, although

worker involvement was not the same across different arenas, in general Polish miners appear to be more involved and until the end of the 1980s the U.S. miners the least involved. Importantly, with the dissolution of consultative machinery in British coal mining in 1987 and the emergence of the UDM, British coal mining lost its middle position and replaced the U.S. at the end of the spectrum. Based on these findings, I conclude that, if we look from workers' standpoint, changes from centralization to decentralization occurred in Poland and to some extent in the United States. By contrast, in Great Britain the movement was from a relatively decentralized to the most centralized industrial relations.

Five, in terms of general patterns of labor activism, I found that prior to 1980 indicators of labor activism in the United States and Great Britain show a divergent pattern. In examining the 1980s, I could not conclude that important similarities in labor activism existed between the United States and Great Britain, although in both countries the number of strikes decreased while they became longer in duration. With regard to Polish miner's militancy I found that they were the least militant when compared to U.S. or British miners.

In terms of workers' consciousness and the politicization of labor conflicts, my analysis of strikes in Poland suggests that similar to the Gdansk Agreement, the Jastrzebie Agreement did not mention the need for workers' self-management. This distinguished the strikes of the 1980s from the 1956 strikes whose major goal was the creation of workers' councils. In terms of cross-national comparison of the 1980-81, 1984-85 and 1989-90 strikes, although main contested arenas varied across cases, with overtime being the issue in Poland, pit closures in Great Britain, and health care and pension benefits in the U.S., these arenas became contested for a similar reason: in its drive to lower costs of coal production, management disrupted the

existing patterns of work-household nexus. Also, in each country the workers' demands had characteristics of what can be called socially responsible unionism--that is, unionism concerned with improving or preserving the living standards of both union members and of the working class households in a more general sense. In all three cases, miners expressed concern with the departure from the principles of social justice. They challenged the right of a capitalist company or a socialist government to evade their social responsibilities regarding the workforce as well their right to unilaterally determine the fate of their employees. The fact that all the strikes were related to a concern with social justice points to an overarching similarity in workers' consciousness across all three cases.

Further, I found connections between labor activism and centralization/decentralization of industrial relations. For example, the creation of the Bituminous Coal Operators Association in the 1950s and subsequent centralization of collective bargaining in the U.S. coal-mining industry was managerial response to growing power of the UMWA. The creation of the Independent Bituminous Coal Bargaining Alliance was a response to the UMWA's ability to disrupt the operation of the selected coal companies and an attempt to decentralize collective bargaining which was biased toward the interests of the largest coal companies. In Great Britain, the National Coal Board politics in the 1970s, especially the re-introduction of the decentralized wage system, and then in the second half of the 1980s, especially the decentralization of decision-making processes to the workplace level, were managerial responses to miners' militancy as well as attempts at gaining more control over employment relations and production processes. In Poland, centralization and decentralization of industrial relations was also managerial response to labor activism and the changing power balance

between labor and management. For example, establishment of Gwarectwa shifted some of the most important decision-making powers from the enterprises, where workers' representative bodies existed. As a result, workers' councils lost some of their influence on strategic decision-making at the workplace level.

Further, all three countries experienced labor activism aimed against centralized unions. Since in all three cases it emerged in the context of stable energy markets, it would be difficult to connect such labor activism to the market changes. Rather, my study supports the view that industrial conflict can result from rank-and-file disillusionment with union politics, which in turn may lead to union structure decentralization and changes in industrial relations. For example, workers' unrest in the United States at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s resulted in the democratization of the UMWA, on the one hand, and changes in industrial relations, including the creation of the mine committees to handle grievances at the local level, new arbitration procedures, and new disciplinary codes. In Poland, miners' activism against centralized unions in 1980 resulted in the signing of the Jastrzebie Agreement and the creation of Dabrowa Basin Solidarity--events that subsequently affected the decentralization of industrial relations in the industry. In Great Britain, miners' dissent and the creation of the UDM also had far-reaching, although different when compared with the other countries, consequences for the shape of industrial relations as it resulted in their centralization in the aftermath of the 1984/85 strikes.

Moreover, although the outcomes of labor activism for industrial relations and unions were somewhat different across countries, it appears that, in all three countries, worker solidarity was an important factor shaping post-strike industrial relations outcomes. For

instance, both the Polish and the U.S. labor unions were able to generate worker solidarity, while the British union was not able to overcome the divisions among British miners. As a result, both Solidarity and the UMWA continued to influence industrial relations in the coal mining industry, whereas the NUM lost its ability to shape the future of coal mining in Great Britain.

To locate these findings in the context of the two contending theories let me recall my general premise: if the structuralist perspective is more adequate, patterns of labor activism, organizational change, and contested arenas in all three countries should reflect their macro-structural social organization. Alternatively, I assumed that if and when the structuralist perspective does not work, the relational perspective could provide an alternative interpretation. In fact, as my research suggests, the patterns of labor activism, changes in the level and locus of control, and arenas of struggle showed historical and cross-national similarities and differences which were not accounted for by looking at structural variables. In this context, if the relational perspective provides a possible alternative then the politics and actions of industrial relations actors, such as labor unions, workers' councils and rank-and-file workers, are important interpretive variables for understanding the presence or absence of cross-national similarities and differences.

In general, my research findings suggests that industrial relations are far more complex to be simply governed by the larger political economies, as the structuralist theory implies. In fact, it appears that while the structuralist theory may provide a useful heuristic tool for organizing the general principles governing capitalist or socialist political economies, including their macro-level decentralization or centralization, its abstract and static character impedes a



more adequate and nuanced understanding of industrial relations changes occurring within different political-economic systems. Specifically, my findings suggest that, at least in the case of the coal-mining industry, changes in industrial relations do not reflect the structural differences in the larger political economy; they are governed by more complex interaction of factors than managerial responses to markets or to uncertainties of central planning.

Knowledge of macro-structural organization is not sufficient to understand similarities and differences in industrial behavior across the three political-economies. Instead, it appears that industrial relations in coal mining are partially autonomous from, while embedded in, larger political-economies. This does not mean that the structuralist perspective completely fails to explain reasons for change across the different socio-economic systems. Rather, this means that the historical and more complex approach to people's actions and industrial relations, has revealed some critical similarities and differences in organizational change across different socio-economic systems. While I have not directly assessed the relational approach, this last conclusion is consistent with this perspective.

Below, I engage in a more detailed discussion of the limitations of the structuralist approach by examining the four major hypotheses yielded by this perspective.

## **II. Limitations of the Structuralist Approach**

### **1. Market-Control Hypothesis**

Similar to other structuralists, Burawoy has argued that the main force behind

organizational change under capitalism is market competition, while the main determinant of industrial transformation under socialism are the uncertainties related to central-planning. Further, based on the assumption that social structures have explanatory efficacy in relation to human agency, the major proponents of the structuralist tradition assume that by exploring the interconnections among social structures they can explain people's behavior across different political-economies.

In this regard, my study has indicated three things in terms of structural patterns of similarities and differences in the coal-mining industry's economic situation. First, the most radical changes in coal's energy market position in the United States and Great Britain occurred prior to the 1980s. While toward the end of the 1980s, British electric utilities were privatized and started converting to natural gas, this change in the market situation of coal occurred after the major changes in the industrial relations had already been underway. Thus, while market situation of the underground bituminous coal mining in the United States and Great Britain could have shaped management and labor strategies in the 1980s, in the context of the relative stability of energy markets it becomes difficult to attribute the radical transformations of industrial relations which occurred during the decade to market pressures.

Second, since the mid-1970s, the British industry has been facing competitive pressures similar to the United States. In this context, the British government started imposing financial constraints and cutting subsidies to foster the industry's economic self-sufficiency. During the same period, the Polish government was trying to increase production and continued to subsidize the industry. Thus, the situation of British coal mining was actually closer to that of its U.S. and not its Polish counterpart. Third, with regard to other market variables, such as

energy consumption and coal supply and demand, the United States and Great Britain showed increasing convergence in the 1970s and 1980s, exhibiting more similarities than between either of these countries and Poland.

In this context, then, the most important question became: after twenty years of convergence in structural variables, did industrial politics and patterns of class struggle also converge in these two countries? A related question was whether, in the context of continued divergence between Poland and its capitalist counterparts, the social processes that occurred in Poland during the 1980s also showed divergent trends?

Although the cursory character of some data and gaps in others on collective labor activism call for a very limited interpretation of my study's findings, still they suggest the existence of certain patterns. First, prior to 1980, although labor activism in the United States and Great Britain shows similarities in terms of arenas of struggle, such as wages, indicators of labor activism show a divergent trend, especially towards the end of the 1970s. In examining the 1980s, I could not conclude that important similarities in labor activism existed between the United States and Great Britain, although in both countries the number of strikes decreased while they became of longer duration; I also could not conclude that significant similarities or differences existed between either of these two countries and Poland.

## **2. The Hegemony Hypothesis**

Besides the emphasis on the explanatory efficacy of structural variables, one of the most important limitations of the structuralist perspective is its assertion that behavior is

determined by the macro-structures in which it occurs. Therefore, labor activism patterns in the countries with similar political economies should present more similarities than in the countries with different political-economies. Since, as my study documented, the political economies in the United States and Great Britain have been more similar than either of them and Poland, industrial behavior in the two former countries should also present more similarities than industrial behavior in either of these countries and Poland.

To assess this, I examined the structuralist hegemony hypothesis which suggests that if capitalist hegemony exists, working class struggles and arenas of struggle in the United States and Great Britain should display important similarities. My findings suggest that, while during the 1980s the political economies in which the coal mining industry functioned in the United States and Great Britain started converging in some important ways at the structural level, especially in terms of market pressures, both the processes and the outcomes of class struggle in the industry differed in critical ways. I also found that cross-national and historical similarities and differences in arenas of struggle present a more complex pattern than the structuralists had anticipated. Finally, arenas of struggle and the extent of control wielded by workers and managers over industrial management varied over time or cross-nationally within the boundaries of the same socio-economic system. Thus, my findings challenge Burawoy's claims about the existence of top-down convergence within a given political-economy.

Furthermore, I found that arenas of struggle, such as productivity, health and safety, and wages, converged in important ways across two different socio-economic systems. With regard to technological change, it appears that in all three countries unions did not resist it in any major way. Thus, despite macro-structural differences, trade unions acted in a similar

manner across national boundaries. My research also indicates that despite structural differences neither U.S. nor Polish workers had an influence on decision-making processes regarding long-term industrial policies. In contrast, British miners influenced strategic policies at least to some extent through the institution of consultative machinery until the mid-1980s. After the defeat of the miners' strike in 1985, Great Britain converged with its U.S. and Polish counterparts. Thus, my research suggests the existence of similarities in the extent of control exercised by labor and managers over industrial management across different political-economies. This finding challenges Burawoy's contention concerning the radical dualism between the capitalist and socialist forms of industrial organization. Importantly, and in line with the relational approach, I found significant variations in arenas of struggle within capitalism and important similarities across capitalism and socialism.

### **3. Labor Consent Hypothesis**

While the structuralist perspective posits a linear, declining trend in industrial conflict as measured by strike activity, the relational perspective suggests the existence of changing patterns of conflict and accommodation, which would be expressed in increasing and decreasing strike frequencies or other measures of industrial conflict. Specifically, according to Burawoy, the steady decline in strike activity is attributable to industrial relations transformation prompted by the emergence of capitalist hegemony under which managers are able to manufacture workers consent. From this position, declining strike trends reflect a shift from conflictual to consensual industrial relations. Hence, the structuralist perspective both

asserts linear historical processes and questions the existence of class consciousness among workers under hegemonic capitalism. By contrast, it suggests that because of the manner of surplus value appropriation, class divisions within socialism are more visible than under capitalism. Further, the high degree of centralization in socialist economies, including Poland, establishes the conditions for the emergence of cohesive opposition to the regime. As a result, socialist workers should be more class conscious and more militant than their capitalist counterparts.

My findings indicate that even though basic strike indices for coal-mining industry suggest a declining trend, a pattern supportive of the consent hypothesis; on the other side, they also suggest that changing patterns of conflict and accommodation characterized industrial relations both prior to and after 1980. For example, in the United States, I observed a labor-management accord lasting from 1943-1969. This peace was broken by workers' militancy against their union and coal companies which lasted from 1969 to 1979. Beginning in 1983, industrial relations in U.S. coal mining were characterized by what could be called "strategic conflict," that is, a situation wherein the UMWA began organizing selective strikes against companies which did not follow bargaining agreements, including the Massey and Pittston strikes. Since 1990, the UMWA has presented itself as willing to enter into the era of what can be termed "strategic cooperation," that is, strategic partnerships with some coal companies committed to acting in a cooperative spirit.

The labor activism of British and Polish miners suggests a similar to the U.S. pattern of conflict and accommodation, although the timing varied. In Great Britain, industrial conflict did not decrease until the mid-1960s, resurfaced at the beginning of the 1970s, and declined

again until the 1984-85 strike. The Polish coal-mining industry experienced industrial unrest in the 1950s and then again in 1980-81 and 1988-1989.

In terms of relative labor militancy, as measured by strike frequencies, miners' involvement in strikes, and workdays loss ratio, my study suggests that, in contrast to the structuralist thesis, U.S. miners were at least as militant as their British counterparts. Specifically, U.S. figures presented higher degrees of both miners' involvement in strikes and workdays loss ratio. The situation was more complex with regard to strike frequencies: until 1970, British strike frequency appears higher than the U.S. figures, but during the decade of the 1970s these figures reversed. In a large part, this reversal was due to the increase in wildcat strikes in the U.S. coal mining, a sign of miners' disenchantment with the politics of union leadership. Finally, while the Polish strike data both prior to and after 1980 is very cursory, Polish miners appear to be the least militant workers of the three countries--a finding that contrasts with the structuralist assertion that the more centralized the social organization, the more militant the labor force.

In terms of workers' consciousness and the politicization of labor conflicts, my analysis of three major strikes suggests that the course and direction of labor consciousness and politicization of these strikes were not structurally predetermined. Rather, they were shaped by encounters among different actors, especially rank-and-file workers, management, the union, and the government. Moreover, the fact that, contrary to 1956 strikes, the Jastrzebie Agreement did not mention the need for workers' self-management points to the changing nature of workers' consciousness under socialism. Further, the fact that all the strikes were related to a concern with social justice points to an overarching similarity in workers'

consciousness across all three cases. These two findings run counter Burawoy's static view of class consciousness in socialist economies and of a dualism in class consciousness across different political-economies.

#### **4. The Gender Hypothesis**

According to the structuralist position, as represented by Burawoy, gender is irrelevant interpretive variable. In this context, an important critique of the structuralist approach that I raised at the outset of this study was its neglect of gender as a central organizing principle of social relations. However, because of the lack of data I could not examine this issue thoroughly. My study, then, neither supported nor denied the structuralist contention that gender is not an important interpretive variables in relation to labor activism and class politics. At the same time, however, I was able to discern some instances of labor activism when the concept of gender, including notions of masculinity and the paid employment-household nexus, appeared to be important for understanding miners' behavior. First, my analysis of the introduction of the four-shift system in Poland suggested that the functioning of the family-employment nexus was an important element of miners' dissatisfaction with this work organization as it affected time spent with their family. This intersection of work and family life, together with the challenges to miners' masculinity, contributed to their unusual militancy in 1980. Second, my discussion of miners' wages in all three countries suggested that their wages were probably sufficient to support their families. In all likelihood, these miners remained the main economic providers for their families. Recognition of this fact, as called for



by the relational model, could enhance future analyses of miners' activism. For example, it is possible that interactions of gender and class produce specific patterns of worker mobilization; patterns that cannot be understood by looking at class relations alone. Finally, while gender did not come out systematically as an important interpretive variable for miners' activism, it appears that gender plays an important "hidden" role in structuring workers activism. One way in which one can discern the "hidden" gender dimension of labor activism is by attending not only to actual worker demands, but also to the absence of certain demands or issues from workers' agenda. In all, the role of gender in labor activism and industrial change remains an important empirical question.

### **III. The Importance of Labor Activism and Participatory Institutions**

The relational model suggests that workers, through their collective activism, influence organizational changes, including processes of centralization and decentralization of industrial relations, including unions structures. From this position, attending to both the historically- and contextually-specific interactions between labor activism and existing industrial structures and institutions, including unions, should reveal both similarities and differences in the processes of change and the real operation of otherwise distinctive capitalist and socialist political economies. While I was unable to directly observe all interactions, my data drew from both the structural and agency levels and they are suggestive of the relevance of the relational approach.

Several important theoretical conclusions emerged from my application of the relational

perspective to a cross-national study. First, the relations between union and rank-and file workers as well as the character of participatory institutions appear to be very important factors for explaining patterns of labor militancy, especially given that, contrary to the structuralist prediction, Polish miners appear to be the least militant and that the outcomes of Polish miners' politics were more similar to those of U.S. miners than to their British counterparts.

Of course, the relative lack of militancy of Polish workers could be explained by looking at the labor laws and the fact that strikes were illegal. However, it is possible that workers' militancy is also related to the extent of their influence on decision-making regarding issues having direct influence on their working and family lives. In this context, Polish workers' lack of militancy and the unexpectedly high level of militancy of the U.S. miners could have been related to the existence of workers' councils which provided an alternative platform for workers' participation in industrial management, an option lacking in the U.S. where union was granted the exclusive right to represent workers. In this context, the fact that British miners' militancy appears to fall in-between could be attributed to the fact that they could influence decision-making through consultative machinery when it existed. It could be, then, that as long as workers' councils in Poland and consultative machinery in Great Britain provided institutional avenues to influence decision-making, Polish and British miners remained cooperative. This suggestion is rendered more plausible in light of the fact that, as my research suggests, when unions are the only avenue of workers influence, but become detached from rank-and-file workers, miners' militancy tends to increase as exemplified by the U.S. miners in the 1970s. This does not mean, however, that the existence of workers' councils assures industrial peace. It is also possible that institutions such as workers' councils can serve as an

institutional realm wherein workers' solidarity and militancy could be cultivated even under adverse circumstances, as it was the case in Poland in the 1980s.

Second, workers' collective activism and the threat that workers or their representative organizations can expand the arenas of their collective control over different aspects of industrial management tends to create a managerial response to maintain or expand managerial prerogative by undermining the power of organized labor or shifting arenas of struggle to those where they have more control. As my research suggests, if the locus of labor influence is located across different levels of industrial organization, but limits managerial prerogative regarding strategic issues at the industry level, we can expect that managerial strategy will be to shift locus of decision-making to a higher and/or lower level of decision-making, as occurred in Great Britain in the late 1980s and in Poland in 1990. If the locus of workers' influence on decision-making is located at the workplace level, we can expect that managerial response will be to shift the locus of control to a higher level of industrial organization, as was the case in Poland when Gwarectwa were established in the late 1980s. Of course, it is also possible that facing a strong labor organization and militant labor force, and fearing that continued conflict will not resolve the struggle over control, management may try to foster cooperative relations with labor, as was the case in some U.S. coal mining companies. Thus, depending on where the locus of workers' influence is located and how strong workers' organizations are and how militant rank-and-file workers are, management responds by centralizing or decentralizing industrial relations, as I observed across different political economies.

Finally, by comparing the internal union processes, an aspect of industrial relations neglected by abstract structuralist analyses, I found the existence of some important cross-

national patterns of similarities and differences regarding the interactions between union structures and labor activism. First, despite the fact that both the NUM and UMWA functioned in similar political-economic environments, the rank-and-file challenge to the centralization of decision-making processes in these unions resulted in two divergent outcomes: the transformation of the UMWA structure towards decentralization, and the further centralization of the NUM and the emergence of a breakaway movement. In this context, the Polish situation presented a combination of these two outcomes wherein the rank-and-file movement in the coal-mining industry eventually resulted in the formation of an alternative, independent union and the creation of more decentralized union structures. In turn, these events reshaped collective bargaining relations in all three countries.

Second, the relational perspective also directed my attention to the possible interactions between the unions and rank-and-file workers. In this regard, I found that the industrial relations outcomes of Polish and U.S. strikes contained more similarities than the outcomes of either and their British counterparts. This finding runs counter to the structuralist prediction saying that we should observe more similarities between U.S. and Great Britain than between either of them and Poland. From the relational perspective, the existence of similarities between Polish and U.S. cases was related to actors' politics that can be understood by looking at the history of industrial relations and more localized activities. That is, rank-and-file solidarity, the relations between rank-and-file workers and their respective unions, support of the community and other groups, and cooperation among different unions are the keys to the strikes outcomes. Essentially, community-based organizing and labor solidarity play a major role in shaping strike outcomes because they provide an institutional support which union

leadership could use to pursue their strategies. In contrast, if union leadership does not have unanimous rank-and-file support for a strike or does not make a conscious attempt at grass-roots organizing prior to a strike, the strike is very likely to fall short of achieving its goals. In fact, if union leaders are not able to bridge the historical divisions among miners from different mining regions, these divisions are likely to be exacerbated by subsequent developments as occurred during the 1984-85 strike in Great Britain.

Thus, the findings of this study suggest that the omission of labor activism and workers' participatory institutions hinders our understanding of the processes of transformation that occurred in socialist and capitalist countries. Also, the structuralist position assumes homogeneity of workers and their interests across space and structural locations, including gender. This results in an oversimplified understanding. In contrast, the relational perspective with its focus on unions, labor activism, division among workers, gender, and processes of organizational change proves helpful in this regard as it allows us to see similarities and differences which are overlooked by more abstract structuralist analyses and provide a more nuanced approach to change across socio-economic systems.

#### **IV. Limitations of this Study**

My research goal was to assess the structuralist argument by examining the similarities and differences in labor activism and processes of organizational change across two-different socio-economic systems. Towards this end I conceptualized centralization and decentralization of industrial management and industrial relations in terms of social processes. I also introduced

rank-and-file and unions' activities as important explanatory variables. As a result, my research shows that the relational approach is a viable alternative to the structuralist perspective. However, my study is beset with its own problems which I discuss below.

### **1. Alternative explanations**

Another apparent limitation of this study is the exclusion or insufficient treatment of other factors that could possibly contribute to explaining similarities and differences in labor activism and processes of organizational change across different political economies. First, the main social actors I focused on in this study--labor, unions and management--are not homogenous and have different goals and interests. While I recognized the division among workers as an important explanatory factor, I omitted divisions within management. These conflicts may be important factors influencing direction, timing and outcomes of labor activism and organizational change.

Second, in contrast to structuralists who tend to view the state as an undifferentiated entity which enforces the interests of dominant class, I recognized the state as composed of different organizations and institutions which pursue varying and often contradictory goals and whose strategies, while autonomous, are not unrestricted (Zeitlin, 1985). Besides being constrained by historical legacies, state agencies' activities are influenced by diverse and unequally powerful social groups, dominant ideological discourses, and economic conditions (P.K. Edwards, 1986: 90-93). In this context, the second major limitation of this study is the fact that I was not able to gather documentation and provide a systematic account of processes

and struggles which took place at the state level and which might have been important for shaping the relations between the state and the workplace and among the main actors involved. As a result, instead of exploring social process, the findings of this research deal with changes only. This fact takes on special significance in light of the fact that in my analysis I was unable to move beyond Burawoy's view of the socialist state in terms of a unified, centralized bureaucracy.

The third major limitation of this study relates to my focus on market dynamics within each country and relative neglect of the global context of energy markets and coal production. For example, the fact that Poland's foreign debt grew rapidly in the 1980s shaped the government policies regarding coal mining which was the most important source of foreign currency. These global trends and international relations have had important effects on British and the U.S. Pittston strikes, as well as on the functioning of Polish coal mining.

## **2. Measurement problems**

The first measurement problem concerns the formal nature of conceptualization of centralization/decentralization of decision-making. That is, I did not trace the real participation or influence of diverse social actors in decision-making processes. The restriction of my analysis to legal provisions regarding the role of participatory and representative institutions resulted in my inability to determine whether such participatory bodies as workers councils provided an actual arena for workers' influence on decision-making concerning strategic policies, production process and employment.

The second measurement problem is related to the fact that while the concept of centralization is relatively easy to define and measure, decentralization cannot be easily defined. In a sense we can assume that when a given decision-making process is occurring at the top of hierarchy then we are dealing with centralization. But, what if a decision-making process occurs at the top of two hierarchies, such as two different collective bargaining structures? Can we define this phenomenon as an instance of decentralization, or is it an example of a more complex centralization? Or perhaps we should define such a situation as something entirely different, such as organizational pluralism. To address these concerns, it would be vital to conduct an analysis of organizational change from the viewpoint of different actors involved and use these insights to define concepts such as decentralization more adequately.

Third, while initially I conceptualized my research question in terms of processes of change, ultimately I was not able to follow such processes in detail. As a result, it would be more appropriate to say that my research suggested the existence of possible connections between labor activism and organizational change, but failed to analyze the processes of change. Also, although I used a relational perspective as an alternative to the structuralist approach, I was not able to systematically look at organizational change from both labor and management perspectives. Rather, I adopted the perspective of rank-and-file workers to determine whether centralization or decentralization occurred.

Fourth, I used class consciousness as a proxy for worker mobilization. In this context, I encountered two related problems. First, class consciousness is hard to measure, especially if the focus is on the structural variables or if the structural level data are the only data available.



To measure class consciousness better, I should have conducted an historical-comparative analysis of miners consciousness, as I did with regard to the economic situation of the industry. Second, measuring class consciousness requires content analysis of ordinary data such as diaries. Unfortunately, because of time constraints, I was not able to conduct a more detailed analysis of miners' class consciousness.

Finally, while relational theory calls for a dialectical approach to social reality, that is, for the analysis of actors' agency within social structures which both constrain and enable actors' activities, at certain points my focus on labor activism went too far to the detriment of the more balanced analyses of the reciprocal flow of agency and structure. In fact, it is often the case that in trying to provide a dialectical analysis of interactions between agency and structure we end up focusing on the one side of the dialectical relationship and marginalizing the other.

### **3. Data Problems**

The biggest data problem that I encountered conducting this research was the fact that some desired data or data sources were difficult or impossible to obtain. For example, data on labor activism in the United States are cursory or aggregate in character; for Poland such data do not exist. Data on labor activism for Great Britain are the best but in the context of the data problems for other two countries the usefulness of British statistics becomes limited. I also was not able to gather data on such indicators of individual resistance as turnover and absenteeism. In the same vein, I could not obtain detailed data regarding industrial management, especially

the decision-making topics and agents of decision-making. Also, I was not able to gather data on household-work intersection, especially on family wage. This in turn impeded my analysis of the gender-class interactions. The data on coal's share of energy market in Poland or the supply-demand patterns prior to 1980 were not available to me either. As a result, I was not able to conduct a more detailed comparative analysis of capitalist versus socialist coal markets.

Similarly, some of the data were not complementary across all three cases; thus I could not systematically compare and contrast all the possible decision-making topics and determine the level and the locus of decision-making across all three countries. An ideal situation in this regard would be to have the data for all the variables outlined in Tables 1.1 and 1.2. across historical and national boundaries.

A final issue that I was not able to address fully was the the importance of a given decision-making topic or industrial relations issues for workers. This was due to the lack of data on workers' grievances and other written expressions of actors' interests or demands.

#### **4. Generalization Problems**

As this study deals with only one industry, it is difficult to generalize on the existence of similarities and differences across socio-economic systems. Rather, a more appropriate conclusion would be to say that there are similarities and differences in organizational change and industrial behavior in the coal-mining industry located in two different socio-economic contexts. Future analyses could focus on other industries to better explore the similarities and differences. Also, based on this study it is difficult to talk about particular workplaces,

companies, regions or industrial areas. The coal-mining industry is very diverse and thus what might be true for the industry as a whole is not necessarily true for mining regions or particular mines.

A related criticism of this research could be that Burawoy's arguments are made at the societal level which means that some industries, including coal mining, can deviate from the broader pattern. In this context, let me recall Burawoy's (1985: 18) claim saying that "each particular factory regime is the product of general forces operating at a societal or global level." My research suggests that neither miners' activism nor the organizational history of the three coal-mining industries confirm Burawoy's claim. Instead, my findings suggest that coal-mining's industrial relations and labor activism have been partially autonomous from, while embedded within, the broader political-economies. Of course, it is possible to argue that because of its specificity the coal-mining industry and miners' activism will most likely deviate from the general pattern. At the same time, however, it is possible to argue that my choice of the coal mining industry as the unit of analysis controls for such external influences as heterogenous labor markets and residential communities. Hence, while not typical of other industries and workforces, if the dynamics of the coal-mining industry and miners' activism failed to confirm the correspondence between the political-economic system, on the one hand, and industrial relations and labor activism, on the other hand, it is quite likely that the more complex cases could create even more challenges for the structuralist theory. Importantly, I would like to emphasize again that my research findings do not conclusively disprove the validity of structuralist theory, but rather they suggest that the industrial relations reality in the coal-mining industry, and possibly in other industries, is more complex than the structuralist

perspective allows.

## V. Directions For Future Research

This study was an attempt to determine which theoretical perspective--structuralist or relational--provides a more adequate understanding of organizational change across different political economies. My findings suggest that labor activism is an important explanatory variable which adds significantly to our understanding of cross-national similarities and differences in the nature of organizational change. This does not mean that market pressures and the nature of the relations between the state and the workplace, or production regime in Burawoy's sense, are not important. Quite the contrary. But, workers' collective acts and unions strategies had some relatively independent impact on organizational change and their outcomes, even though these outcomes might have been unintended.

Importantly, given that coal-mining industry and miners' behavior are not the only exceptions from the general pattern suggested by Burawoy, by focusing on workers' and unions' behavior and centralization/decentralization of industrial relations my study challenges the commonly held dualistic view of socialism and capitalism. Instead, it appears that organizational centralization/decentralization, among other things, result from managerial responses to labor activism occur in both political-economies. However, as I was not been able to sufficiently examine all important aspects of organizational change, labor activism, energy markets, and state politics several possible directions for future comparative research in industrial relations remain .

In general, the limitations of this study point to important directions for future research, including the unsolved issue of the significance of gender for explaining change in industrial management and industrial relations. In this regard, I envision future studies as going in two possible directions. First, future research might more fully explore the importance of gender for miners' labor activism, including the effects of the interactions between family and paid employment, especially of the presence and amount of a second source of income on miners' militancy. In this regard, family wage can be possibly used as a proxy for miners' masculinity. Also, it would be important to explore the presence or absence of family obligations on workers' ability to engage in collective actions, such as strikes. Second, it would be interesting to explore the effects of gender ideology on miners's activism, especially the impact of cross-cultural and historical variations in the notion of masculinity. In this regard, it would be interesting to see if there is a connection between the definition of masculinity in terms of rebellion and militancy, or, alternatively, work ethic and commitment, and miners' activism (Yarrow, 1988). The third interesting question to explore would be the issue of gender and processes of centralization/decentralization of industrial management. With this regard, a comparative study of centralization/decentralization processes in a woman-dominated industry could yield insights in the gendered character of industrial management and industrial relations across national and historical boundaries.

The second general direction for future research would be to explore in more detail the actual processes of organizational change while more closely attending to the labor-management relationship. Also, it would be important to more closely examine the role of state politics in changes in industrial relations, especially privatization processes, and the relations

between rank-and-file workers, unions and working-class communities for the character of industrial relations. Likewise, future analyses could focus on the impact of the globalization of coal production and exchange, and the international debt structure on the functioning of the coal industry, especially on managerial and unions' strategies. Also, subsequent research might more systematically explore the historical and cross-national similarities and differences in level and locus of decision-making process with regard to specific decision-making topics. It would be important to explore the actual participation and influence exercised by different agents on particular decision-making dimensions and arenas in relation to processes of centralization/decentralization.

In conclusion, while many questions remain to be addressed by future research, to provide a more adequate understanding of industrial change and patterns of labor activism future research must attend to the interactions of agency and structure, especially to the interactions between labor activism and union organization, and between labor activism and centralization/decentralization of industrial relations.

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B.S. and M.S., Sociology, 1986.  
University of Silesia, Katowice, Poland.  
Thesis: "Changes in the Social Position of Film Directors in Poland: 1907-1982."

### AREAS OF RESEARCH

Comparative Industrial Relations  
Gender and Work  
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### AREAS OF TEACHING

Gender and Society  
Introduction to Women's Studies  
Introduction to Sociology  
Marriage and the Family  
Comparative Work Relations  
Social Theory

## **CURRENT POSITION**

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## **AWARDS AND HONORS**

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1992 Instructional Scholarship, Department of Sociology, VPI & SU, Fall.

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## **GRANTS**

Graduate Student Travel Stipend from the Labor Studies Division of the Society for Studying Social Problems for paper presentation at the annual meetings of the Society for Studying Social Problems, 1993.

Grant from the Graduate Research Development Project for dissertation research titled "Labor Activism and Job Control in the Coal Mining Industries of the United States, Great Britain and Poland," 1992.

Travel Grant from the Graduate Student Assembly for paper presentations at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, 1990.

## **GRANT PROPOSALS**

Anna M. Zajicek. "Employment Regulations, Work Relations, and Women Workers in Poland and the United States," submitted to Women's Research Institute, 1991. Unfunded.

Anna M. Zajicek and Vasso Petoussi. "Social Science as a Tool for Social Change," submitted to Women's Research Institute, 1989. Unfunded.

## PUBLICATIONS

### Articles

Mark Wardell and Anna M. Zajicek. "Pathways for Transcending Exclusive Sociology" Social Problems (forthcoming).

Toni M. Calasanti and Anna M. Zajicek. "A Socialist-Feminist Approach to Aging: Embracing Diversity," Journal of Aging Studies, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1993): 117-131

Toni M. Calasanti and Anna M. Zajicek. "Reweaving a Critical Theory: The Socialist-Feminist Contributions," Rethinking Marxism, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1993): 87-103

Anna M. Zajicek, Jenniffer Sult, Tim Wolfe, and T. R. Young. "The Great Flying Chaos Learning Circus: A Strangely Attractive Way to Teach Large Sociology Classes," The Wisconsin Sociologist Vol 29, No. 4 (1992): 139-150

### Book Chapters

Anna M. Zajicek and Toni M. Calasanti. "The Impact of Socio-Economic Restructuring on Polish Women." Forthcoming in Family, Women and Employment in Central-Eastern Europe, edited by Barbara Lobodzinska-Lien. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.

### Review Essays

Anna M. Zajicek. Review essay "Na Rozdrożu: Modernizm czy Postmodernizm?" (At the Crossroads: Modernism or Postmodernism?), Roczniki Socjologii Wsi, (Annals of Rural Sociology), Vol. 24, No. 5 (1992): 45-50, (in Polish).

### Book Reviews

Anna M. Zajicek. Book review of "Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research," edited by Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith A. Cook. Gender & Society, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1992): 316-319.

Anna M. Zajicek. Book review of "The Critique of Economic Reason," by Andre Gorz. New Political Science, No. 21-22 (1992): 247-249.

Anna M. Zajicek. Book review of "Postmodernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads and Intrusions," by Pauline Rosenau. New Political Science, No. 23 (1992): 121-123.



Anna M. Zajicek. Book review of "Situation and Human Existence: Freedom, Subjectivity and Society," by Sonia Kruks. Forthcoming in New Political Science, (1993).

### Other Publications

Anna M. Zajicek. "Contradictions in Polish Labor Politics." Labor Studies Newsletter, February 1994: 2-3.

Anna M. Zajicek. "Feminist Methodology/Pedagogy: Selected Bibliography," prepared for Locating Multiple Voices: A Conference About Feminist Perspectives in Writing, Research, and Pedagogy, October 1993.

Anna M. Zajicek. "Frog Leg Buffet: Karen Lehrman Hits Women's Studies" Women's Research Institute Newsletter Vol. 5, No. 2 (1993): 6

### WORK IN PROGRESS

Anna M. Zajicek and Toni M. Calasanti. "Eastern European Women's Experiences: A Socialist-Feminist Approach," to be submitted to Gender & Society.

Toni M. Calasanti and Anna M. Zajicek. "Economic Restructuring in Poland and Women's Retirement Experiences." For journal submission.

Mark Wardell and Anna M. Zajicek. "Efficiency Efforts and Industrial Relations in State-Owned Enterprises: A Two-Country Comparison. For journal submission.

Anna M. Zajicek. "In A `Different' World: The Potential of Radical Postmodern Feminism." For journal submission.

Anna M. Zajicek and Toni M. Calasanti. "Radical Theorizing and the Promise of the Socialist-Feminist Dialectic: Toward an Inter-Theoretical Dialogue," under revision to be re-submitted to Sociological Theory.

### PAPERS PRESENTED

Anna M. Zajicek. "Revisiting Convergence Thesis: A Comparative Analysis of Industrial Relations in Coal-Mining Industry." To be presented at the annual meetings of the Society for Studying Social Problems, Washington, D.C., August 18-20, 1995.

Anna M. Zajicek and Toni M. Calasanti. "Body Politics, Gender, and Economies in Transition: A Look on Eastern Europe." To be presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, Washington, D.C., August 19-23, 1995.

Toni M. Calasanti and Anna M. Zajicek. "Economic Restructuring in Poland and Women's Retirement Experiences," presented at the XIII World Congress of Sociology, Bielefeld, Germany, July, 1994.

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Anna M. Zajicek. "Coal Miners' Activism in Great Britain and Poland," presented at the annual meetings of the Society for Study of Social Problems, Miami, August, 1993.

Mark Wardell and Anna M. Zajicek. "Transcending Exclusive Sociology?" presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, Miami, August, 1993.

Toni M. Calasanti and Anna M. Zajicek. "A Socialist-Feminist Approach to Social Change and Women's Experiences of Retirement," presented at the XVth International Congress of Gerontology, Budapest, Hungary, July, 1993.

Anna M. Zajicek. "Reinventing Feminist Sociology," presented at the annual meetings of the Midwest Sociological Society, Chicago, April, 1993.

Anna M. Zajicek and Toni M. Calasanti. "A Women-Centered, Interpretive Framework," presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, Pittsburgh, August, 1992.

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Anna M. Zajicek and Toni M. Calasanti. "Feminist Theorizing and Dialectical Methodology," presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, Washington D.C., August, 1990.

Toni M. Calasanti and Anna M. Zajicek. "Feminist Theories of Labor," presented at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, Washington D.C., August, 1990.

Anna M. Zajicek. "Theory and Practice Reconsidered," presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Humanist Sociology, Washington D.C., November, 1989.

## **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

Preliminary research on gender dynamics of industrial restructuring in Poland, including informal interviews with union officials, workers, managers, and state officials, Summer, 1992.

Research Assistant, "Agricultural Service Needs Analysis," North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center. Principal investigators, Cornelia B. Flora and Jan L. Flora, May-July 1990.

## **TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Arkansas, 1995 (Gender and Society, The Family, General Sociology).

Instructor, Department of Sociology, University of Arkansas, Fall 1994 (General Sociology, Marriage and the Family).

Instructor, Women's Studies Program, VPI&SU, 1993-1994 (Introduction to Women's Studies)

Instructor, Department of Sociology, VPI&SU, 1993 (Gender Relations).

Teaching Associate for Introductory Sociology (500 students), VPI&SU, Fall, 1992.

Teaching Assistant for Women and Work class. VPI&SU, Fall, 1991.

Teaching Assistant for Women and Work, Social Problems, Introductory Sociology, Individual and Society, Sociology of Aging, Social Organization, and Work and Occupations classes, VPI&SU, 1988-1992.

## **TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

Invited Speaker, Colloquium: New Central Europe, EUST, 4003, Spring 1995.

Invited Speaker, "Comparative Sociology," Advanced General Sociology class, SOCI 5053, University of Arkansas, Fall 1994.

Invited Speaker, "What is Women's Studies?" Cultural Diversity class, SCWK, 3193, University of Arkansas, Fall 1994.

Invited Speaker, Introduction to Sociology class, "Multiculturalism," VPI&SU, Fall, 1993.

Invited Speaker, Introduction to Women's Studies class, "Why Women's Studies?" VPI&SU, Fall, 1993.

Invited Speaker, Introduction to Women's Studies class, "Exclusion; Science and Ideology," VPI&SU, Fall, 1993.

Invited Speaker, Introduction to Women's Studies Class, "Rethinking Rape: Cross-Cultural Myths," VPI&SU, Fall, 1993.

Invited Speaker, Introduction to Women's Studies Class, "Rethinking Rape: Cross-Cultural Similarities and Differences," VPI&SU, Fall, 1992.

Invited Speaker, Feminist Theory class, "Feminist Theory and the Experiences of Women in Eastern Europe," VPI&SU, Spring, 1992.

Invited Speaker, Women in Development class, "How Housewifization Occurs in Poland," VPI&SU, Spring, 1992.

Invited Speaker, Women and Work class, "Women and Economic Restructuring in Eastern European Countries," VPI&SU, Fall, 1991.

Invited Speaker, Social Movements class, "The Solidarity Movement: Self-Limiting Revolution," VPI&SU, Spring, 1990.

## **EDITORIAL ACTIVITIES**

Reviewer, Gender & Society, since 1993.

Reviewer, American Sociological Review, since 1993.

## **OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Discussant, regular session "Diversity and Aging," annual meetings of the Midwest Sociological Society, Chicago, April 1995.

Discussant, regular session "Sociology and Disabilities," annual meetings of the Midwest Sociological Society, Chicago, April 1995.

Thesis Committee, member, since Fall 1994.

Student Advisor, 8 students, Fall 1994.

Facilitator, group discussion "Classroom Dynamics," Locating Multiple Voices: A Conference About Feminist Perspectives in Writing, Research, and Pedagogy, sponsored by the Women's Studies Program and the Women's Research Institute, Virginia Tech, October, 1993.

Presider/Discussant, roundtable session on "Gendered and Cultural Attitudes about Work and Professions," annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, Miami, August, 1993.

Member, Social Issues Committee, Sociologists for Women in Society, 1992.

Discussant, regular session on "Women's Economic and Political Empowerment in Comparative Perspectives," annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, Pittsburgh, August, 1992.]

## **OTHER EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Faculty Development Program sponsored by Teaching and Faculty Support Center, University of Arkansas, 1994-1995.

Women's Studies Professional Advance Program sponsored by Women's Studies Program at VPI&SU, May, 1994.

Faculty Development Workshops, sponsored by Women's Studies Program, VPI&SU, 1993-1994.

Women's Studies Advance Program sponsored by Women's Studies Program at VPI&SU, May 10-11, 1992.

Field Trip with Women in Appalachia class, VPI&SU, 1992.

Workshop on Feminist Pedagogy, sponsored by Women's Studies Program, VPI&SU, May 14-17, 1991.

Teaching Workshop for Graduate Teaching Assistants, VPI&SU, 1991.

The Fourth Conference of the Association for Women in Development, 1990.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Undergraduate Committee, Member, 1994-1995.

Criminal Justice Search Committee, Member, 1994-1995.

Coordinating Council for Women's Concerns, Member, VPI&SU, 1993-1994.

Women's History Month Committee, Member, VPI&SU, 1993-1994.

Coordinator, revision of the Women at Virginia Tech brochure, VPI&SU, 1993-1994.

Public Relations Representative, Women's Studies Program, VPI & SU, 1993-1994.

Representative of the Polish Democratic Union of Women, since 1991.

Vice-President of the Sociology Graduate Student Association, VPI & SU, 1990-1991.

**ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

1989-present Association for Humanist Sociology

1990-present American Sociological Association

1991-present Sociologists for Women in Society

1992-present International Sociological Association

1993-present Society for Studying Social Problems

1992-present Midwest Sociological Society

1994-present Research Committee on the History of Sociology (ISA)

1994-present Research Committee 32 Women and Society (ISA)

*Anna M. Zarek*