The Social Structure of Soviet-Type Societies, Its Collapse and Legacy

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Abstract: Soviet-type social systems in East-Central Europe can be characterized by the functional interdependence of totalitarian and anti-meritocratic types of vertical social differentiation. Anti-meritocratic relationships involve strong egalitarian elements operating in favor of less qualified individuals and groups as well as undeserved privileges for the "nomenklatura" and its political supporters. In the history of these countries two important changes occurred that modified their general social characteristics: the defeated attempt at reform that temporarily strengthened the stratification elements which had reached their peak in the 1960s and the emergence of the "second society" in the 1980s. Relevant for a grasp of the substantial aspects of the social structures typical for Soviet-type societies are sociological approaches stressing: a) power differentiation; b) the "second society" as an emerging nucleus of a standard class society; c) neo-Weberian and/or neo-Marxist class categorizations; d) socio-economic status indices revealing social stratification; and e) a multidimensional view of social status accenting status consistency/inconsistency. A brief overview of the reasons for the collapse of communism and of its "legacies" in the case of Czechoslovakia demonstrates the strong influence of this social system on the post-communist transformation.
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By Soviet-type societies we mean European state socialist societies, not the Asiatic, African and Latin-American societies that are ruled by Communists. Non-European communist social systems have substantially different characteristics and functions, due primarily to their pre-industrial versus the European industrial conditions. Among the European state-socialist societies, we will concentrate on the East-Central group, particularly on Czechoslovakia and then the Czech Republic. We will focus on the vertical dimension of social structure, i.e. on problems of social stratification and/or class structure, including their subjective aspects (attitudes, beliefs and value orientations.) We will argue that the specificity of the stratification dimension is the most typical characteristic of state-socialist social structure and that its change is decisive for the present qualitative system change generally called the post-communist transformation. The analysis of our main topic is presented in the parts two through four and introduced by some notes concerning the genesis of the state-socialist system in East-Central Europe in part one. Keeping in mind the significance of this topic for the post-communist transformation, in parts five and six we present a brief overview of the effects of the development of the state socialist structure on the collapse of communism and on the first stages of the post-communist transformation.

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1. Genesis of the Soviet-Type System

One of the assumptions of current social analyses of Soviet-type societies and their present fates is that, at least in East-Central Europe, communism was an enforced regime of oppression. [Dahrendorf 1990] There is no doubt that the influence of the powerful Soviet Union as one of the main victors of World War II, coupled with the presence of the Red Army in nearly all the countries in question, was one of the decisive factors leading to the installation of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in the second half of the 1940s. It is also clear that in these countries undemocratic and violent means were used in the installation of communist regimes and that massive oppression of political opposition was then applied. On the other hand, one must not forget that large parts of the Eastern and Central European societies sincerely welcomed the liberating mission of the Soviet Union in 1944-1945 and that many people saw in it a strong argument in favor of communism. At the same time, there was a general post-war shift in favor of parties of the left in Europe, i.e. towards Socialist, Social Democratic, Labor and Communist parties. Many in Eastern and Central Europe considered communism to be the solution to the problem of social injustice that clearly existed in pre-war social systems and was in certain ways exacerbated by the German occupation. In some cases, a strong pre-war egalitarian tradition existed in the working class, especially in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia.

In 1946, without the presence of the Soviet Army, over 40% of voters in the Czech lands (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) supported the Communists. (This was not the case in Slovakia, where the Democratic Party was victorious.) By 1947, however, undemocratic means were being used in a power struggle, particularly in connection with Prague's centralist intervention that was the main cause of a power shift in favor of the Communists in Slovakia. The use of undemocratic means peaked in February 1948 and in the months following the take over of power. During the following forty years no other free elections enabled the population to express their real attitudes towards the Communist regime. Continuing the practice of intervention begun in 1947 (e.g. in the case of the forced Czechoslovak refusal to join the Marshall plan), the Soviet party leadership and government started immediately after the victory of the Communists to dictate the foreign as well as domestic policy of Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, the Communists received a relatively broad and active level of support for their monopolistic regime from much of society, particularly among the industrial workers and small peasantry.[1]

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[1]) In a public opinion poll from March 1990, after a two month campaign in the mass media depicting the events of February 1948 as a mere putsch by the Communist leadership in Prague and Moscow, 43% respondents agreed with this interpretation. Only a small minority of 5% believed that these events constituted a revolutionary upheaval followed by construction of a socially just society. However, even after four decades of bad experience of communism, 45% of people still agreed that in February 1948 there was a revolutionary upheaval in Czechoslovakia that stemmed from the will of the majority, but was later misused and led to bad ends. (5% did not know, and 2% were of another opinion.) [Archive of the Institute of Public Opinion Research, Prague.]

These concrete historical circumstances have not been brought up in order to justify the foreign intervention, which was quite strong in all the countries in question, or the political pressure and violence used by the domestic victors, in many countries against a clear majority of the population. By no means does this discussion aim to justify the egalitarian background of communism, but wishes only to emphasize the historical fact that, parallel to external pressure and domestic oppression, relatively strong internal social forces also more or less participated in the installation of communist systems in Central and Eastern European countries after World War II. This fact is important for understanding the nature of the social system of "real socialism" and of the serious problems of the post-communist social transformation.

The myth about the Soviet Union as the guarantor of national liberation for Eastern and Central European countries gradually vanished from people's minds as a consequence of the bad experience with its "leading role" within the group of the socialist countries. The same holds for the assumption that communist systems can be reformed on a democratic basis. Both these hopes died in the Czech lands after the Soviet occupation of August 1968, but the egalitarian aspirations of people who supported the installation of the Communist regime nevertheless lived on and became a deeply rooted component of the social and cultural tradition in all former state socialist countries. [Mokrzycki 1992]

2. General Social Characteristics of the Soviet-Type System

Many different approaches and theoretical concepts have emerged to explain the nature of "real socialism" and particularly its class differentiation and/or stratification in sociological terms. This study continues previous attempts to classify these concepts and approaches. [see e.g. Szelényi and Treiman 1991, and Andorka 1992] We believe that the ideologically biased "theoretical" concepts of official sociology in the state socialist countries can be left aside here. It is well known that these "theories" depicted the societies in question as consisting of two non-antagonistic classes of workers and cooperative peasants that, with their "service stratum" - the intelligentsia, were rapidly moving toward social homogeneity. [Rutkevič 1982] An explicit critique of these theories was presented in an article published in this journal shortly after the political changes of November 1989. [Alan et al. 1990] In this connection it was also shown that in the official sociology of the state socialist countries, particularly in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, this kind of "theorizing" ruled without opposition until the second half of the 1980s.

Let us begin then with the most common approach stressing the political aspects of the state socialist system. There is a long tradition of criticism of communism as an undemocratic, totalitarian and bureaucratic system,[2] based on strong historical and also partly sociological evidence. [Inkeles, Bauer 1959] This approach became a part of sociological theory after the publication of Milovan

[2]) Bureaucracy in these discussions is conceived primarily in the Marxian, rather than Weberian, sense.

Djilas' *The New Class*[3] [Djilas 1957]. After the open oppression of the reform movements in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, the assumption concerning the totalitarian character of the social system in state socialist countries was confirmed. The principal components of the definition of Soviet-type totalitarianism are well-known: the absolute political monopoly of the highly centralized and hierarchized Communist Party, which can be termed a "partocracy;" the strong influence of a party, state, and economic bureaucracy with their predominantly irrational; and the ruling and redistributive role of a class-like social group usually called the "nomenklatura." All these traits of the social and political system in the state-socialist countries are indisputable. Certainty about the importance of the power dimension in social stratification and very often the assumption that it represents an axis of a class-like social differentiation grew from this.

Despite the nearly universal agreement about the importance of power differentiation, this knowledge was not rich enough from the sociological point of view. Historical, economic and, some years after the origin of the socialist states, also empirical sociological evidence showed clearly that true egalitarianism (not just one ideologically declared and artificially enforced from above) had to be taken into account. This was particularly true in Czechoslovakia, where the full expropriation of both large and small owners, the policy of promoting people with working class origins and Communist party membership as well as the distribution of rewards in favor of manual laborers and less qualified people peaked in the first half of the 1950s. Czechoslovakia became one of the most egalitarian European countries, which led Czechoslovak sociologists to an open denial of the Stalinist "class approach" and to an explicit critique of the egalitarian and bureaucratic system as the main obstacle to positive developments in society. [Machonin et al. 1969]

From this perspective, it became clear that the processes which led to the formation of a Soviet-type society in Czechoslovakia were based on complementary and mutually supporting antidemocratic and egalitarian motivations and tendencies. The true victors in February 1948 were not only the new bureaucratic rulers, but also relatively broad strata of the less qualified population, primarily but not exclusively manual laborers in certain industries. The satisfaction of the interests of the small peasantry and landless persons who obtained land after the revolution of 1945 and once again after the February events of 1948 also played an important role. The Communists had strong support among the new inhabitants of the borderland who acquired fortunes left there by the transferred Sudeten Germans. Since that time, the redistributive, non-market system of the Czechoslovak economy operated in favor of less qualified, less competent and less productive people. These groups provided social and political

3) One of the most sophisticated sociological analyses following this tradition is Shkaratan's concept of "etacratism", which combines the accent on the power dimension of social status with an analysis of privileges distributed along estate-like or caste-like social strata. [Shkaratan 1990]

support for the new rulers, which became the main source both for the functioning of and a certain kind of legitimation of, the communist system.

With the defeat of the democratic and pro-market reform connected with the 1968 Prague Spring and the consequent "normalization" under Soviet occupation, sociologists needed a more general concept of the nature of the Soviet-type social system. Further empirical and theoretical study showed that the original, relatively narrow bureaucratic stratum consisting of party functionaries and former workers developed into a relatively numerous class-like ruling group, usually called the "nomenklatura." Under the totalitarian system, egalitarianism became an instrument of broad social corruption providing social support for the "nomenklatura." In Czechoslovakia, it operated as "compensation" for the foreign occupation of the 1970s and 1980s. However, the ruling group simultaneously rigidified the unjust tendency hidden in egalitarianism and created a stable anti-meritocratic allocation policy and earnings distribution that operated in their favor as well as that of their political and social allies. Therefore we now see "real socialism" as a totalitarian and anti-meritocratic system with an accent on the functional connection between the two aspects of this concept.

This anti-meritocratism does not mean a negation of egalitarianism. On the contrary, egalitarianism -- operating in favor of less well qualified people[4] -- is in principle anti-meritocratic or, in other words, unjust. (Compare this with Mokrzycki's discussion on socialist privileges as a systemic characteristic of "real socialism" in [Mokrzycki 1991].) On the other hand, anti-meritocratism is also not a synonym for egalitarianism. It also encompasses undeserved upwardly mobile careers, high rewards, authoritarian power positions and other undeserved privileges (often illegal and always immoral) for people with a certain class or political background and/or individual political "qualifications." This final phenomenon means not only Communist Party membership but, in most cases, specific political merits proven by experience. In Czechoslovakia, after the massive persecutions of the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s and again after the defeat of the "Prague Spring" in the early 1970s, the politically "reliable" but (as a rule) incompetent "cadres" were rewarded with the posts of the dismissed, high salaries and other privileges.

In this sense, we can partly agree with Szelényi and Manchin's argument that redistribution in state socialism could lead to an increase in inequality. [Szelényi 1978, Szelényi and Manchin 1987] However, in our opinion, the anti-egalitarian tendencies of the redistributive economy under state socialism did not prevail on a

4) By this we mean in favor of unskilled and semi-skilled workmen rather than skilled ones; in favor of skilled workers rather than non-manual working people (i.e., in favor of manual work as a whole when compared to non-manual); in favor of "productive" rather than "non-productive;" in favor of routine non-manual work rather than the professions; in favor of lower professional groups rather than higher professionals; etc.

large scale. Egalitarianism remained the mass basis of anti-meritocratic value structures.[5]

Thus explained, the anti-meritocratic character of social differentiation in real socialism is closely connected to the nature and basic social functions of communist revolutions and of the social order installed by them. Other important characteristics of the communist social system -- such as the restraint of market relationships and the replacement of many of their functions with the operations of a distributive economy -- cannot be grasped without understanding in whose favor the distribution worked. In this connection, the limited market character of the economy, the abolition of private property (almost total in Czechoslovakia under communism), etc. are only the secondary means used to achieve the primary goal, which consisted of an anti-meritocratic way of distributing occupational positions, incomes, fortunes and privileges.

The egalitarian and anti-meritocratic character of the state socialist system became evident to many sociologists in the second half of the 1980s.[6] Ironically, the awareness of the important role played by "socialist" egalitarianism is increasing, particularly after the crucial political changes at the end of the 1980s and the start of economic reform. (See direct and indirect proofs[7] in [Kende 1992, Kolósi and Róna-Tas 1992, Domanski and Heyns 1992, Večerník 1992a, 1992b, 1993a, and Machonin and Tuček 1992b].) The need for solutions to the actual problems of the post-communist transformation (in this case, the problems of de-equalization connected with radical economic reform) is forcing social scientists to examine the past more deeply because of the unexpectedly high degree to which it is influencing the present and menacing future developments.

3. Historical and National Specificities

The communist system prevailed in the state socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe for over forty years. It is not wise to neglect the history of these social systems, including the different waves in which the main tendency connected

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5) All the data concerning Czechoslovakia, with the partial exception of the late 1950s and the 1960s, show the strong prevalence of egalitarian tendencies in the distribution of rewards under state socialism. [Večerník 1991, Krejčí 1972, and Machonin 1992] The same is valid, in the long run, for Poland [Domanski 1992, Adamski 1990] and for the Soviet Union under Brezhnev. [Gordon 1987] The housing policy in the Czech lands, on the basis of which Iván Szelényi argued for de-equalization processes in Hungary, gave an advantage to workers, technicians in industry, and party and state administrators (including the army and security services) for many years, by assigning them inexpensive state flats. Most professionals had no choice but to participate in housing cooperatives or build their own houses, which was much more expensive. The consequences of this typically anti-meritocratic system are still in operation now.

6) This is clear in the work of Petr Matějů who, as a passionate student of social stratification in the American tradition, could come to no other conclusion than that of a strong critique of the "de-stratification" of the Czechoslovak society. [Matějů 1990]

7) By indirect proof we mean empirical analyses showing that, after the crucial political changes in the years 1989-1990, inequality is increasing in comparison with the past.

with the nature of the communist system came into being.[8] At least two such historical changes introduced certain elements into the social life of these countries which pertain to the issues analyzed in this paper.

The first of the changes came in the late 1950s and lasted until the late 1960s (in Hungary and Poland perhaps until the first half of the 1970s) and was a time marked by reform attempts in the Soviet-type societies. In this period moderate democratization tendencies, with their culmination in the Prague Spring of 1968, were closely connected to some elements of economic and cultural modernization and meritocratization.[9] [Strmiska 1989] These new phenomena brought a limited rise in the stratification elements which were reflected in the Czechoslovak stratification and mobility survey of 1967 [Machonin et al. 1969, Machonin 1992] and later in the Hungarian sociological literature as well. [Konrad and Szelényi 1981] The frustration of the hopes raised by the Prague Spring was reflected in sociological works which presented a sober, critical evaluation of post-war social developments in Czechoslovakia and in other East-Central and East European countries. [Krejčí 1972, Kende, Strmiska 1984]

The second important wave of changes came in the 1980's, and was qualitatively new. From its beginning in Poland, it was clear that the reform attempts of the 1980's were merely an overture to the introduction of more fundamental changes. The struggle for democracy in Poland, the new wave of economic reforms in Hungary, and "perestroika" with its unintentional consequences in the Soviet Union all paved the way for new social arrangements in the state socialist societies. Even in "normalized" Czechoslovakia some important new economic, social, cultural and ultimately political phenomena in unofficial life merged in the 1980s, clearly overstepping the barriers of the Soviet-type system.[10]

The most courageous and theoretically inspirational sociological ideas concerning this period of crucial changes came from the Polish literature, which concentrated on social and political processes [Adamski 1993],[11] and the Hungarian literature dealing with the "second society." [Hankiss 1988, Szelényi 1986, Kolosi 1988] The idea of a meritocratic and more democratic social arrangement discussed in the 1960s was, under the particular conditions of the

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8) In our opinion, the core of the "misunderstanding" inherent in the discussion concerning the results of the Czechoslovak stratification survey of 1969 lies in the critics' attempt to falsify the empirical findings from the 1960s using evidence from the 1980s. This evidence is very important for the recognition of the long-term trajectory of development of the state-socialist societies, but is not fully valid for the specific historical situation of the 1960s. [Boguszak et al. 1990 and Machonin and Petrusek 1991]

9) These new traits were connected with the vision of the "convergence" of capitalism and socialism.

10) The first sociologist who noticed these in Czechoslovakia was R. Roško in his analysis of the domestic work segment. [Roško 1986] An analysis of the new situation, focusing on changes coming from family life, can be found in Ivo Možný's "Why So Easy?" [Možný 1991]

11) The empirically based theoretical contribution of systematic research work of the team of outstanding Polish sociologists from the 1980s has been presented in a synthetic publication edited by W. Adamski. [Adamski et al. 1993]

time, a call for reform, i.e. for a more human form of state socialism, while the idea of the second society clearly aimed at an alternative society based on market principles. The Polish contribution was the model of a democracy without the "leading role" of the Communist party. In accordance with the specific nature of Kádár's economic reforms, the Hungarian approach aimed at connecting the second society with the emerging private economic sector and with the expansion of market relations. In both cases the emerging second society, whether in the economic or political spheres, was gradually at least partly acknowledged or tolerated by official authorities, and sufficiently institutionalized.

Nothing like this happened in Czechoslovakia, as only in the second half of the 1980s some very faint nuclei of officially tolerated individual or family private economic activities appeared. In politics, the small number of dissidents was persecuted, and diffident attempts to renew reform on the basis of the "perestroika" ideology were resolutely refused. In culture, no liberal tendencies were admitted. There were no officially tolerated economic, political or cultural institutions developing activities opposed to the totalitarian and anti-meritocratic system. Nevertheless, in our opinion, the theory of a "second society" can also be applied to the Czechoslovak case. Relatively extensive private economic activities on an unofficial, individual and mainly family basis developed partly with official toleration, and partly in the sphere of the "gray economy." [Roško 1986] Many cooperative managers and some state or communal enterprise managers tried to do business that benefited them personally and often also their subordinates and their "micro-institutions." Most families, having lost hope in the possibility of improving their material and cultural levels on an official basis, shut themselves off from official life and concentrated on creating better conditions and a more attractive life-style for themselves using their own forces. Work at home became one substantial means of achieving a better standard of living. Social conciousness at the unofficial level dissociated itself totally from official ideology, especially after the frustration of hopes connected with the beginning of "perestroika" in the Soviet Union. In general all these phenomena, as described by Ivo Možný [1991], can be viewed as an unofficial, i.e. not macro-institutionalized, second society. The lack of macro-institutionalization was at the microstructural level, where the second society functioned, and was replaced by the development of interpersonal contacts that led to the creation of an extensive social network.

The existence of a "second society," even in the extreme case of Czechoslovakia where it was not officially acknowledged, is very important for the solution to the question concerning the actors in the democratic revolution and in the post-comunist transformation as a whole. Some authors stress the assumed absence of social groups prepared for this role within the communist system [Touraine 1991, Mink and Szurek 1992] and argue that the future of the transfomation processes is uncertain. However, as our analysis shows, even in Czechoslovakia there were social groups who were prepared to actively participate in the restructuring of the society, as well as numerous other groups prepared to accept the coming changes. However, these empirically existing groups are difficult to define using traditional class or stratification categories.

In addition to temporal variations, apparent variations caused by country specificity must also be mentioned. They arise from the different paths taken by individual countries in the time prior to state socialism including, among others, differing levels of industrial maturity, cultural and educational levels, experiences with democracy and different positions and forms of participation in World War II. Varying trajectories during the establishment of communist power and in the period of communist rule (including the timing and forms of resistance) also play an important role. The specific nature of the individual Soviet-type societies in question affected the decline of Communist rule in varying ways that should not be overlooked as important determinants of the ongoing social transformation.

Awareness of historical and country specific variety developed gradually and found expression in the sociological literature. Different "ideal types" historically present in the social structure of Czechoslovak society in the late 1960s were described by the author. Elmer Hankiss presented a highly developed conception of the different organization principles, paradigms and goals operating within the hybrid society of Kádár's Hungary.[12] These and many other similar considerations are examples of the common progress of knowledge: in spite of the intentional character of the genesis and development of the Soviet-type societies, their actual social structure cannot be reduced to one general type of social relationships. Different types of relationships intertwined and operated throughout their historical existence in the state socialist social systems, and all should be seen as influential determinants of the post-communist transformation processes.

4. Primary Principles of Vertical Social Differentiation

The complexity of principles shaping the actual social structure of state-socialist societies became the main reason why vertical social differentiation and

12) See Machonin et al. 1969: 39-45 and Hankiss 1990. It is interesting to compare these two approaches from the late 1960s and from the late 1980s. Machonin's "types of vertical social differentiation relevant for investigating contemporary Czechoslovak society" were: the capitalist type, the dictatorship of proletariat, the bureaucratic type, the egalitarian type and the socialist type (the last being conceived as an ideal democratic society of achievement based on prevailing collective ownership of the means of production.) Hankiss shows how in Kádár's Hungary the conflicting organization principles, paradigms and goals of the "first" and "second" society ("To safeguard and conserve the statist, centrist, one-party monopolistic paradigm and related objectives" vs. "To cautiously advance in the direction of the pluralistic, democratic paradigm and related objectives") led to the emergence of curious economic, social and political hybrids. These include, e.g., quasi-pluralism, the administrative market, the second economy, paternalism, covert participation, etc. The historically later approach is clearly far more sophisticated. However, the main difference lies in the influence of two historically very different situations. In the first case the main conflict was between bureaucratic and egalitarian principles (supported by the residues of the "worker's dictatorship") and the reformist principles of democracy and meritocracy (with the possibility for the restoration of capitalism in the more distand future.) In the second case, the main problem was how to move from collapsing state socialism to a modern society, pluralist democracy, and market economy. Nevertheless, the new historical situation is even more complicated, and the "hybrids" may certainly bring surprises in the subsequent social transformation.

integration cannot be reduced to only one type for explaining the social history of the countries in question. There are at least five "candidates" for the role of the guiding principle of vertical social differentiation in Soviet-type societies.[13] Two are clearly connected with the class approach: for at least certain stages of development, the theory of a politically formed "new class" with a strong position in the distributive mechanism can explain much in this respect, while the theory of the "second society" stresses the emergence (in some countries the persistence and revival) of a classical class structure in Marx's sense, based on ownership of the means of production and wealth. The stratification approach, the third explanatory model, shows that in some periods of development in state socialism the emergence or renewal of meritocratic principles played a limited role.

Apart from these attempts to explain some periods or aspects by purely abstract principles, two other approaches were developed in order to grasp the complexity of vertical social differentiation. The first is represented by a broad spectrum of attempts to use "neo-Marxist" or "neo-Weberian" class schemata in the empirical analyses of "real socialism." They are often used in Western sociology and connected first and foremost with the names of E. O. Wright, R. Erikson and J. H. Goldthorpe. [Wright 1985, Goldthorpe 1987, and Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992] In East-European sociology many sociologists used these commonly understandable schemata in their sophisticated multidimensional statistical analyses of social reality. Better educated official Marxist sociologists tried to develop the prescribed but senseless Stalinistic "class schema" by refining it to suit this model. Typically, these attempts create an *a priori*, theoretically constructed, multidimensional "class" schema, encompassing many criteria that differentiate vertically the occupations. These include types of ownership, wealth, position in management, assumed education and qualifications, income, the non-manual vs. manual work distinction, non-agricultural vs. agricultural work, etc. As was already shown in the 1960s [Rollová 1969], similar schemata explain many aspects of real social life far better than the Stalinist ones, or than oversimplified unidimensional approaches. On the other hand, there are also inherent disadvantages in multidimensional class schemata: a) the reduction of vertical social differentiation to occupation; b) the overestimation of ownership relationships and mainly of the distinction between non-manual and manual labor; c) the *a priori*, non-empirical character of the interrelations among the individual dimensions of vertical social differentiation; and d) the discontinuous character and rather arbitrary determination of class divisions. These characteristics are responsible for the fact that neither neo-Marxist nor neo-Weberian class schemata, which were developed primarily for the conditions existing in advanced capitalist countries, operate equally well as instruments for analysis of state-socialist societies.[14]

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[13]) The discredited Stalinistic "non-antagonistic class" schema, which has never been a serious explanation of the social reality in state socialist countries, is not mentioned here.

[14]) E.g. the Czech participation in some comparative projects using the EGP class scheme led to some barely explainable results hiding obvious differences between our country and some advanced western societies such as Sweden and the Netherlands. [Boguszak 1991 and Matějů 1991]

The second approach, aimed at better reflecting the complex character of vertical social differentiation in the state socialist countries, is based on a multidimensional concept of social status and the consistency/inconsistency of its dimensions. This approach has a long tradition [Lenski 1954, 1966, Wesolowski 1968, Machonin et al. 1969, Kolósi 1984, Róbert 1990, Tuček 1991, Machonin 1991, and Machonin and Tuček 1992a, b and c]. The incorporation of P. Bourdieu's concept of economic, political, cultural and social capitals [Bourdieu 1986] into status attainment research also stresses the importance of the multidimensional approach to social stratification. This improves the analysis of multidimensional vertical social differentiation and mobility in the former state socialist countries at the beginning of their social transformation. [Szelényi and Treiman 1991, and Matějů and Řeháková 1993]

Although the typological approach to multidimensional social status has met with serious methodological difficulties, compared with unidimensional approaches its advantages seem indisputable.[15] Compared with the neo-Marxist or neo-Weberian class approaches, it enables a more flexible coordination of partial status scales and the search for actual, not only assumed strata and classes. Its main advantage is its ability to reveal status inconsistencies along such status dimensions as occupation, ownership, power, income, wealth, material standard of living, cultural participation, etc. Empirical analysis on this topic clearly shows that recognizing the existence of important social groups characterized by status inconsistency is crucial to understanding state-socialist societies, their internal conflicts and cooperation between social groups, social forces interested in the conservation or change of the social system, tendencies important for the future and the potential social actors in the post-communist transformation.

In spite of this critical evaluation of different approaches for the definition of the leading principle of vertical social differentiation in state-socialist countries, we can not reject any of them as totally unjustified. Although it seems likely that the multidimensional status concept (and/or the kindred concept of various capitals) will reveal its advantages after improving its methodology, it is also fully justifiable to apply models analyzing status attainment and mobility in separate status dimensions. Improved quasi-class models, "meritocratic" socioeconomic status indices, and analyses showing the actual role of both the "new class" concept and the classical Marxian class model will also have some explanatory power. The complexity of theoretical concepts and methodological instruments must correspond to the complexity of the subject of study. This will contribute to a better knowledge of the as yet somewhat uncertain future of the countries in question. Some of these models (quasi-class models, socioeconomic status index and Marxian class model) will probably be more productive for explaining further

15) Empirical analysis of the data collected in 1991 showed that the multidimensional status typology has a substantially better possibility of explaining the complex social reality of the beginning of the post-communist social transformation in Czechoslovakia than either the neo-Weberian class schema or socio-economic status indices. [Machonin and Tuček 1992]

phases of the post-communist transformation than they have been in explaining the past.

5. Reasons for the Collapse

Deeper insight into the nature, dynamics and country specifics of the social structures of the state-socialist countries in East Central and Eastern Europe leads to a better general understanding of the causes of the collapse of the communist system in this part of the world in this given historical period. It also makes for a better understanding of the developments in Czechoslovakia in particular. Here we will mainly analyze the case of this country in order to show by historical example the fateful consequences of the long-lasting totalitarian and anti-meritocratic social system.

The defeat of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries in the Cold War and the consequent changes in international power relations certainly played a significant role in this respect. The examples of successful revolts or reform movements in Poland, Hungary and the former East Germany also helped Czechoslovakia considerably, as did the apparent unwillingness of the Soviet leadership to aid the ruling group. However, none of these external circumstances can fully explain the historical process in question. In the end the loss of support from abroad simply revealed the communist system's crucial lack of domestic social and political stability with great clarity.

Keeping in mind the given social and political characteristics of state-socialist Czechoslovakia, it is not difficult to specify those traits in the communist system that provoked the dissatisfaction and even resistance of different social groups and, in some cases, of an overwhelming majority of the population. By the end of the 1980s nearly everyone was disturbed by the long-term loss of national sovereignty. A life with very limited political liberty and few opportunities for economic initiative could not satisfy the majority. The authoritarian handling of the citizenry by a largely incompetent bureacracy was another source of dissatisfaction. It is equally obvious that qualified people could not accept the egalitarian and anti-meritocratic system. Yet other reasons led to dissatisfaction with the centralist practices of the federal administration, both on the part of Czechs and Slovaks. However, national and democratic resistance and democratic or liberal reform attempts had already been successfully "managed" by the communist regime several times in the past, so we must ask (following the Czech sociologist Ivo Možný) the question: "Why so easy?" [Možný 1991] Why so easy in Czechoslovakia (as compared with the difficult political struggle in Poland or the long-term Hungarian endeavor to reform the economy), and why so easy just at the end of the 1980s?

To answer this question we must temporarily abandon the strictly limited field of social relationships. By this, we assume that the most profound internal reasons for the collapse of communism in Czechoslovakia lie in the country's economic, technological and cultural developments. Many groups in the Czech population knew from their own experience that the competition with the advanced capitalist countries had not only been lost in the arms race and in the

field of political liberties, but also in the fields of technology, production, services, standard of living, as well as in the civilization and cultural level as a whole, including life-style. The communist social and political system had been able to stimulate extensive industrialization (with an accent on arms production); it had not, however, been able to modernize an industrial society. Consequently, it was not able to take effective steps towards post-industrialism in the later decades. In other words, the state-socialist social and political structure in Czechoslovakia clearly lagged behind the possibilities that the modern age had opened for the development of civilization and culture. The lack of democratic liberties and particularly the lack of motivation for qualified and competent work (as a consequence of the anti-meritocratic societal arrangement) hindered talented Czechs from taking part in the progress of world civilization and culture typical of the last few decades. People rightly felt a relative deprivation in comparison with their international surroundings. At the same time, they already felt absolutely deprived in comparison with the country's past, even in comparison with some other periods in the state socialist era. In the second half of the 1980s, the general standard of living started to decline even in relatively advanced Czechoslovakia, ecological conditions deteriorated rapidly and life expectancy declined. Most importantly, all these changes for the worse could no longer be counterbalanced by the relative advantages enjoyed by the social strata or classes given preferential treatment in comparison with competent and qualified people. Subsequently, public support for the regime on the part of this group declined substantially.

At the crucial moment in November 1989, politically active groups -- dissidents, people persecuted by the communist regime either in the 1950s or the 1970s, democratic intellectuals and students -- received support from relatively broad social strata prepared for this role by their experience with life in the second society. At this moment, these people (mostly with inconsistent status-patterns) were ready to transfer their attitudes and activities from the microsocial and unofficial level to the macrostructural and give support to the formation of new democratic political institutions. Support came from relatively broad groups of people who felt limited by the totalitarian and anti-meritocratic system in their possible future careers, in further raising their standard of living and in modernizing their life-styles. Even a number of qualified workers joined this movement. However, the decisive factor for the final success was that not only the Soviets, but also the internal social forces that had for decades been socially corrupted by the communist system (including many members of the Communist Party and even the Workers Militia), failed to support the old regime this time. This circumstance seems to be the main reason why the leadership of the Communist Party gave up and handed over power at just that time.

6. Legacy of Communism

Since the communist system operated in the country for more than forty years, consistently had -- even after the Warsaw Pact occupation -- some social support, and did bring certain undeserved advantages to relatively broad social groups, then surely its influence on social psychology and the real behavior of both people and

institutions cannot vanish overnight. Here we are facing a phenomenon that is undoubtedly influencing the course of the post-communist transformation. This is generally referred to as the "legacy of communism." [Mokrzycki 1992, and Rychard 1992] A brief enumeration of the factors subsumed under this notion in the Czech lands shows that the social characteristics of the Soviet-type system, as they were discussed in sections two through four, are surviving the historical existence of the structures that brought them into being and continue to affect the present and future of the countries in question.

The first factor resulting from long-term communist rule and now hampering the course of the transformation has already been analyzed above: the civilization and cultural lag of the Czech lands in comparison with advanced countries. This is not as large as the lag in some other post-communist countries, but it still exists. We can count on many years of substantial and complex modernization of the economy, culture and way of life, all of which will be both difficult and expensive. This civilization and cultural lag has direct social consequences. Czech society, like the others in East-Central Europe, differs from the societies of advanced countries mainly in the branch and sector structures of the working population and also in the major and specialization structures of education. [Tuček 1993a] A higher percentage of people are employed in industry, a somewhat higher percentage in the primary sector, a lower percentage in the tertiary sector, and a substantially lower percentage of people are active in the quaternary sector than in advanced Western countries. As a consequence, we have an extremely high percentage of students majoring in agriculture, mining, occupations in industry and building and in the economic professions (except in education preparing for practical business activities) and a lack of people educated for services in the broad sense of word, particularly in the information technology sector.

This horizontal occupational differentiation has led to the extreme prevalence of manual over non-manual workers (and particularly professionals.) At the same time, it means a small share of people with higher work complexity and a large share of those with lower work complexity. Such vertical differentiation is connected with the corresponding shape of the educational hierarchy. We do not have enough people with tertiary education in appropriate majors and of sufficient quality to meet the needs of further modernization. There is also a lack of people with secondary education in some necessary specializations. On the other hand, the advantage of having a large number of qualified lower-level specialists and of skilled and experienced semi-skilled workers on the labor market should not be overlooked. One must add that the branch and specialization structure of the education of the Czech population is somewhat rigid. This is a consequence of the low level of flexibility in an educational system that for many years was not obliged to adjust its curricula to the changing needs. [Matějů and Řeháková 1993] All of these lags in the occupational and educational structures are a consequence of the conservative economic and cultural policy typical for the communist regime.

The most apparent trait of the social structure of "real socialism" in the Czech lands was the absence of differentiation in the ownership of economic sources. Perhaps the highest degree of nationalization and collectivization of the

means of production and other fortunes was visible in this country. This means that due to the state monopoly in the economy, planning and the redistributive system, for forty years Czechs had nearly no official opportunity to take part in enterprise, to compete, to try to best satisfy the needs of the consumer, etc. Empirical evidence concerning some changes in this field after November of 1989 does exist. [Tuček 1993b and Hampl 1993] However, the modest amount of real change achieved by the privatization process [Tuček 1993a] shows how difficult it is for any of the proposed economic policies to create a new, private system of real decision-making concerning economic capital. This is important evidence of how deeply the etatist approach to management is rooted in the economic system inherited from communism. Contrarily, the attitudes of the population toward private enterprise and competition have changed quite rapidly. This is likely a consequence of the phenomenon we have called the "second society," and of the well known high level of adaptability of the Czech population to new conditions. Unfortunately, a lack of skill in satisfying consumer's needs seems to be one of the harshest legacies of the old system, with its preferences for the "working people," i.e. tradesmen, producers and subsuppliers with monopolistic positions.

Due to the attention we have already devoted to the problems of egalitarianism, it is enough to state here that both egalitarian redistributive practices [Večerník 1993a, b] and egalitarian attitudes [Tuček 1993b] continue to persist. Although things are changing, particularly in the sphere of attitudes, the "legacy of communism" in these fields will certainly be one of the most difficult obstacles to the post-communist social transformation. It should also be noted that the tendency toward striving to gain unjust privileges for people in power and managerial positions did not die with the communist rule; it is continuing to operate under the changed social conditions.

At first glance, the pro-democratic changes in political institutions, behavior, and attitudes have been the most successful. [Hampl 1993 and Tuček 1993b] The totalitarian aspect of the "legacy of communism" is very unpopular and only a very small group of people openly identify themselves with anti-democratic tendencies. Nobody protests against free elections or against a pluralist parliamentary system. On the other hand, however, the not inconsiderable existence of radical political currents on both the left and right [Hartl 1993] and, simultaneously, the existence of some intolerance toward political, ethnic, racial and other minorities [Hampl 1993] show that the "legacy of communism" is still operating in the political culture, although in some cases this intolerance comes this time from the right instead of the left of the political spectrum. Strong elements of bureaucracy (in the Marxian, not the Weberian sense) also continue to operate within the newly created political institutions, in the state administration and in the economic management of state-owned or only formally privatized enterprises. Even some elements of "partocracy" seem to have survived their original communist patterns.

Thus we see that the "legacy of communism" is relatively alive and significant in all important spheres of societal life: in the level of technology and culture, in economics and politics, in the social structure, and in the attitudes and value orientations of the Czech population. On the other hand, traditions, habits and

value orientations typical for the "second society" are also continuing their existence and are rapidly developing in the new conditions. In any case, the legacies of both communism and the potential or actual opposition to it are undoubtedly influencing the present social and political situation in the Czech Republic. These legacies are competing with other foreign and domestic influences and will continue to play an important role in the post-communist transformation, and this not only in the Czech Republic.

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SUCH A CLEVER POPULATION! THEY HAVEN'T EVEN ANSWERED ONE OF OUR QUESTIONS!..

JAROSLAV KREJČÍ

SOCIETY IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

This text is a brief introduction to what may be described as integrated social science. It studies the structure and development of individual societies with respect to the close interconnection of the cultural, political and economic aspects of social life. Particular attention is paid to the changing relevance of these aspects in historical time and geographical space. In the United States a substantial part of this subject has been introduced into university curricula as a comparative study of civilizations. After increasing specialisation has made of the humanities a fragmented field in which the basic features and trends tend to escape due attention, some acquaintance with the global approach to social science may be particularly useful.

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