

Two Conferences on the Development in East Central Europe

In 1993 the European Union Commission sponsored the project, „East Central Europe 2000“, in four countries of East Central Europe – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic, the aim of which was to assess and compare the potential future development of the economy, society, politics, technology, education and research. The project was completed in early 1994 with a series of studies in each of the four countries as well as with a summary report covering them in a comparative perspective (for more information, also see the *Czech Sociological Review* No. 1/1994). The project has been followed up with four seminars discussing the individual target areas of the project in greater detail and assessing its results at almost a year's distance. A workshop on the technology-research complex took place in Poland in May 1994 (its proceedings already published in: A. Kuklinski (ed.), *Science-Technology-Economy. The Experience and Prospects in Central Europe*. Warsaw: The Council of Scientific Research of the Polish Republic, 1994). A further two follow-up seminars were organised in fall 1994 in Praha and in Smolenice near Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, and which are the subject of the present report. (The fourth seminar on economic development has been planned for Budapest in early 1995).

The second seminar on the turn-of-the century socio-political development in the four countries of East Central Europe was organised in Prague by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic on October 22-23. Scientists from the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic participated. The agenda was structured into four sections. Prospective changes in social structure and stratification were the subject of the first, with *Pavel Machonin*, Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, as the keynote speaker. He considered the contingent and alternative prognostication as the only viable method in futurologist studies of socio-political development in transforming societies. The changes in post-communist countries

have to be analysed as qualitative, structural changes rather than as mere transitions to liberal capitalism. A new social structure, with new social classes and a new stratification is emerging in contemporary Czech society. Wise policies will be necessary to prevent the emergence of disruptive class conflicts. A synoptic overview of the potential future social development in Hungary was given by *Rudolf Andorka*, The Budapest University of Economics. He covered a wide range of problems – from demographic development, social structure and mobility, income, housing, education, health to values and institutions. *Ján Bunčák*, from the Institute of Sociology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, presented findings on research on elites in Slovakia and *Karel Müller*, Charles University, discussed the modernisation aspect of the post-communist transformation. The „Czech wonder“ – the socially viable transformation of Czech economy – was the main subject of discussion.

The second panel dealt with emerging social problems and issues of social policy. In his keynote paper, *István György Tóth* from TÁRKI discussed challenges to social policy in the countries of East Central Europe, posing several bold questions: should there be any reforms of social policy at all in these countries? Can such reforms be successfully accomplished? If so, what directions should the reforms take? He was followed by *Jiří Večerník*, Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, whose presentation focused on social problems, policies and structures in the Czech Republic. Social problems in statistics and people's perceptions were discussed as well as alternative doctrines and models of social policy. The role of corporatism in social policy was frequently mentioned in the discussion.

The population's attitudes and value orientations were the focus of the third panel. *Janusz Hryniwicz*, University of Warsaw, was keynote speaker. Drawing upon national background studies of the East Central Europe 2000 project, he presented a comprehensive comparison of the four countries as far as the population's attitudes toward principal capitalist institutions, income inequalities, privatisation, democratic institutions are concerned,

juxtaposing them to western countries' attitudes toward similar issues. *Milan Tuček* from the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, presented more comparative material along a similar line.

The fourth panel on the political system was opened by *Soňa Szomolányi*, Institute of Sociology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, as the keynote speaker. Her presentation on the tendencies of political development in the Slovak Republic certainly was one of the highlights of the conference. It drew much attention and was extensively discussed, partly because of the recent parliamentary elections in the country. The importance of interpreting recent developments in the East Central European countries within a broader civilisational perspective was mentioned in the discussion. *Lubomír Brokl*, Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, presented the results of an analysis of value profiles of Czech political party functionaries, providing some comparison with similar findings in other post-communist countries. In the last contribution, *Michal Illner* from the same institute summarised some of the main findings of a comparative study of new local democracies in four East Central European countries. The „Local Democracy and Innovation“ project, co-ordinated by Norwegian political scientists, analysed different aspects of the first democratic local governments elected in 1990.

The third seminar, organised by the Institute of Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, took place on November 12-13, 1994 in Smolenice near Bratislava. There were participants from the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Slovenia and the Slovak Republic. Issues of internal territorial differentiation, inter-regional contacts and territorial administration in the countries of East Central Europe were discussed. Several important problems seem to be outstanding as far as internal territorial differentiation is concerned: territorial differences in all the four countries have been deepening as result of economic transformation and geopolitical change, attaining, in some cases, critical dimensions. Only some regions – typically the national capitals with their hinterlands, other large cities, and regions adjacent to the western

borders, show adaptability to new socio-economic conditions. Others, like the peripheral regions of north-east Hungary, south-east Slovakia and south-east Poland and the predominantly agricultural regions in the Czech Lands have been impaired and suffer many social handicaps. Contributions by *Milan Rajčák* – Centre for Strategic Studies of the Slovak Republic –, *Lubomír Faľčan*, *Peter Gajdoš* and *Ján Pašiak* – all from The Institute of Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences – and *Michal Illner* – The Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic – dealt with regional aspects of the transformation. An efficient policy to stimulate regional development may become establishing innovation centres. The first experience with such centres in the Slovak Republic has been reported by *Štefan Zajac*, Institute of Forecasting, Slovak Academy of Sciences. Old industrial regions – typically those in the Silesian basin, both on its Polish and the Czech side – constitute a special case, facing, as they are, the conversion of their traditional industrial structure based on coal mining and steel production. *Grzegorz Gorzelak* from the Institute for Local and Regional Development, Warsaw University, argued that a slow and socially costly conversion of industrial regions may jeopardise Central European reforms. In this context, developments in the Czech Republic were discussed which were considered by several speakers as inspiring because of their success in controlling the negative social impacts of restructuring. The low unemployment rate in Czech regions was viewed as a puzzle for which there is no satisfactory explanation.

Cross-border interregional contacts, were discussed within the next thematic block. Different modalities need be distinguished: „Euroregions“ established along the western, northern and southern border of Bohemia (in the Czech Republic) are vehicles of co-operation between transforming regions and their neighbours in developed western countries – Germany and Austria (the contribution from *Václav Houžvička*, Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic). They have to cope with the problems stemming from the asymmetry of resources, institutional systems and, perhaps, motivations. However,

they function on a terrain where cross-border links have a tradition and some resources are available. On the other hand, the Carpathian „Euroregion“ formed in the contact area of Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Rumania and Hungary (contribution by *Iván Illés*, Centre for Regional Research, Hungarian Academy of Sciences) represents the joint effort of marginal territories to mobilise their own resources and to attract external support. It faces the problem of the region's considerable political and cultural heterogeneity and its economic weakness. Not all the cross-border contacts discussed have been institutionalised as „Euroregions“. *Zdenek Šťastný*, Institute of Sociology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, reported on relations developing between citizens, social and civic organisations, firms, local governments etc. along the border separating the Bratislava region in Slovakia from Austria and Hungary. An increasingly relevant form of interregional processes in East Central Europe is international migration. *Dušan Drbohlav*, Dept. of Social Geography, Faculty of Sciences of the Charles University, presented generally inaccessible statistical data on the structure of foreign immigration in the Czech Republic. Loosely linked to this the-

matic block was the contribution by *Jan Makarovič*, University of Ljubljana, on regional factors influencing nations' creativity.

The final set of contributions discussed issues of local government and local politics. *Audun Offerdal*, Dept. of Administration and Organisation Theory, University of Bergen, presented an overview of the different problems facing the design of local government in west Europe, in which he professed his faith in politics as a way of reaching decisions within collectivities. The relevance of local and regional culture for shaping the political behaviour of local society was analysed by *Zdena Vajdová*, Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. *Ilona Palné Kovács*, Transdanubian Research Institute, characterised the present state of the local and regional government systems in Hungary and the reform tendencies in regional policy and regional administration since the 1994 elections. It seems that the status of counties and their responsibilities are at stake.

The organisers of both seminars announced their intentions to publish the proceedings.

Michal Illner

A Successful International Conference on Relation between Ecology and Democracy

„The Conference Ecology and Democracy. The Challenge of the 21st Century“ took place in České Budějovice on September 6-9. It was organised by the local biology and ecology institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. The conference took place in the pleasant environment of the new Biological Centre lecture-rooms and buildings. Due to the care of the international preparatory and organisational committee of the Institute of Landscape Ecology, headed by Dr. Irena Hanousková, the event was well-organised.

Even before the conference opening a comprehensive file of abstracts in English (the official language of the conference) was published I. Hanousková, M. Lapka and E. Cudlínová, eds., *Proceedings of the First International Conference. Ecology and Democ-*

racy. The Challenge of the 21st Century, Full Abstracts. September 6-9, 1994, České Budějovice. The availability of the abstracts and the directory of conference participants facilitated all communications given the considerable attendance by foreign participants. The only drawback of the conference was the relatively small presence of people from the Czech specialist institutes, as well as the absence of several well-known ecologists who merely forwarded their abstracts (H. Skolimowski, H. Henderson).

Presentations were thoughtfully divided into several larger units, and were mostly presented at plenary sessions and followed by discussion. Only on the third day were the proceedings divided into three sections: 1) The influence of international institutions on environmental protection, 2) The ecological and economic issues and education in ecology, 3) Ecology and culture, ecology and agricul-

ture. Some of these pressing topics, especially the relation between ecology and economy, had already arisen earlier in presentations and discussions on the first day of the conference.

The first day of the conference was dedicated to pluralistic views on the relations between ecology and democracy, ecology and politics and ecology and democracy. K. Bayer (USA, of Czech origin) emphasised the need for the integration of ecology and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, and rejected the reverence for material values which have survived in this region. A. J. Dahl, an American working with the United Nations Environmental Program in Geneva, compared the specifics and analogies between ecosystems and social systems. The presentation of a leading Japanese economist Kaoru Yamaguchi, a UNESCO adviser and professor at the Faculty of International Economy Nagoya University of Economies, focused upon the antinomy between the industrial and information eras in the development of local Japanese communities. His presentation, in addition to a deep analysis of the relation between the market economy and economy of sustainable growth, summarises new views on regional sociology and ecology in Japan (given the novelty and high quality of the analysis, translated, it would be definitely recommendable as a contribution to the *Sociologický časopis*). Yamaguchi's presentation stimulated a broad discussion in which a number of Czech (V. Stoklasa, V. Zátko, etc.) as well as foreign experts (T. N. Jenkins, S. Miller, G. Borrelli, etc.) participated.

This was followed by two presentations from Czech authors: – P. Gandalovič from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and S. Mlčoch, a lawyer – the former pointed out the discrepancies between the short-term planning of politics in electoral cycles, and the long-term character of ecological cycles and changes, while the latter emphasised the need for institutional co-operation in securing ecological optimisation. He included not only the establishment of ecological legislature, but also its control over institutions and participative democracy.

The morning of the second day was also mostly dedicated to theoretical topics such as analyses of ecological and democratic prin-

ples, the development of various kinds and types of ecology, and the problematic relation between democracy and risks, and of ecology and economy – the most frequently discussed topic of the conference. The afternoon sessions dealt mostly with topics such as practical achievements in the application of environmental protection measures in industry and agriculture, the analysis of some particular areas of heavy pollution, occasionally also case studies of specific industrial factories and mining areas.

Two Czech presentations contributed to the comparative analysis of ecological and social systems (P. Kovář and J. Květ). According to A. Maurinsh from Lithuania, the most important role in humanist ecology is played by the domestication of space and time, and by the harmonisation of temporal rhythms – thus forming the premise of the peaceful coexistence among human as well as between human race and nature. The Greek philosopher R. Witt, questioned whether the democracy is worth preserving even at the very brink of ecological collapse. He answers in the negative, therefore concluding that we should use the great adaptability of democracy, of which we have been aware ever since the development of democratic systems, to prevent this collapse while there is still time. The Roman professor G. Borrelli presented an original analysis of the relation of risk and democracy from the viewpoint of the history of human knowledge, the perception and acceptance of the risk. Risks are accepted more readily if they are freely and consciously chosen, and, further, when their acceptance guarantees an attractive profit or their advantages are shared with others. J. Stoklasa, a Czech economist and ecologist, delivered a well-grounded presentation on the role of an economist among ecologists. It was mostly based on results from the work of an interdisciplinary committee founded in the 70s by the Institute of Landscape Ecology of the former Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

As to the case studies, detailed analyses of the development of extensive ecological measures have been carried out in the nickel mines on Ontario, Canada, by an international trust INCO Ltd. (V. J. Zátko). In Athabasca, north

Alberta, the public participation which lead to the effective protection of the environment around a paper-producing factory was the main interest of a group of Canadian experts who produced a comprehensive case study. Of this only the section dealing with the effectiveness and success of participation of public in the spirit of the sustainable growth (M. Richardson, M. Gismondi, J. Sherman) was presented. A document about the development and contemporary state of the controversy surrounding Libkovice was presented by an independent environmentalist working with Zelený kruh (Green Circle) H. Reeve. A. Alexandrova from the Federal Ministry of Economy in Moscow gave a thorough presentation of the problems of ecological security and ecological catastrophes in the former Soviet Union (Aral Lake, Chernobyl). The contributions from Bielorussian, Ukrainian and Russian conference participants were of a similar nature. A detailed presentation on the devastation of the natural environment in the former Soviet Union was given by D. A. Krivolutski from the Institute of Evolution Morphology and Ecology in Moscow. He emphasised that information about ecological catastrophes were kept secret for many years, such that this ecocide was only documented and made public after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

On the third day, the proceedings continued in the three already mentioned sections. In the first, F. von Ketelhodt of the European Parliament, pointed out that the influence of the Rio conference (1994) had lead to a change in the ecological climate of the EC states. D. A. Paine dealt with the history of democratic thinking and, within it, the place of ecology. The ecological crisis, science and the public sphere was the theme of a speech delivered by a Dutch philosopher, M. Korthals. He thoroughly analysed the European discussion on the philosophy of ecological crisis. The question whether democracy can survive the ecological crisis is wrongly presented. The opposite is true: only if a substantial part of modern democracy – the weak politics – will indeed function, can we survive an ecological crisis. Another Dutchman, R. van Schomberg, spoke about ethics, the public sphere and political decision-making mechanisms. J. Laessoe from

Denmark summarised the results of his three-year research project: Ecological crisis, subjectivity, and civil participation. He gave a detailed analysis of both the socio-psychological and the sociological conditions of successful civil participation in permanently sustainable growth.

In the second section, there was a well documented introductory presentation by T. M. Jenkins, from Great Britain, on the ecologisation of economics and the democratisation of the global economy. It was followed by critical remarks from the well-known South Bohemian ecologist, N. Johanisová. She rejected the one-sidedness of certain economic theories which conceal economic premises: Economy-enhanced consumerism is one cause of the world ecological crisis. In his brief commentary on theses dealing with the risk-bearing society and ecological modernisation J. Kamarýt emphasised certain absurd consequences of the uneven development of various phases of ecological modernisation in the contemporary world. E. Cudlínová, from the Institute of Landscape Ecology, gave a philosophically interesting presentation of an alternative-suggestive name: Democracy or the Green society. She criticised some flaws in the contemporary model of parliamentary democracy and values of the post-industrial society, which has shown itself incapable of solving a number of ecological problems. V. Mejstřík of the same institute called the anthropocentric principles of our educational systems fossil's: they should be changed to the advantage of biocentrism and humanistic values.

In the third section, two basic theoretical presentations were given by S. Miller, from Great Britain, and S. Rikoon, from the USA. The former dealt with the sociological and ecological discrepancy in the developing relations and conflicts between British agricultural and industrial regions. The latter was rooted in the phenomenological description of the cultural constructions of landscape and nature, and their influence on the mediation of the relation between ecology and democracy. (This philosophically stimulating presentation would provide an excellent contribution to our *Journal of Philosophy*.) P. J. Howard, from Great Britain, analysed some controversial notions