

The current trend is for Central Europe to find itself outside of the main area of focus. This also applies to a certain extent to Germany, whose aspirations are now directed towards a confirmation of its new role in a dimension wider than the Central European one. It remains, though, the motive force of European integration, for which it is prepared to sacrifice even the symbol of its post-War

boom, the *Deutschmark*. As T. G. Ash remarks, however, the contradiction between the architecture of Berlin as a symbol of the renewal of the national state and the pro-European rhetoric of Bonn remains. The situation of Central Europe in the third millennium will undoubtedly also emerge from the answer to that question.

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**J. Krejčí, assisted by A. Krejčová: Great Revolutions Compared. The Outline of a Theory**

New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-Tokyo-Singapore, Harvester Wheatsheaf 1994, 302 p.

It was not by chance that the first of the author's studies on theory of revolutions appeared in the year 1968, in the time of political loosening and, at the same time, of the renaissance of Czech sociology on the back of the Prague Spring events. ("Sociologický model revolučního procesu" [A Sociological Model of the Process of Revolution]. *Sociologický časopis* 4: 159-173 and 635-649.) The first version of the English-language and more extensive work, which the author finished with the assistance of his wife during their engagement at Lancaster University, was published in 1983 and in the paperback issue again in 1987. The reviewed title represents so far the most recent topical and voluminous modification of his considerations concerning theory of revolutions. If we accept the classification of the study as sociological, it is one of the largest and theoretically most important works of a Czech sociologist published in English since the Second World War.

The conditional used in the previous sentence has some serious grounds. The eventful scientific career of Professor Krejčí has been influenced on the one hand by the tragic turns of Czech history in the 20th century and, on the other, by his extraordinary diligence and invention. During his life, he has been an economic statistician, economist, demographer, historian, ethnologist, cultural anthropologist and sociologist. The erudition acquired in this way certainly entitles him to formulate his

methodological creed in the introduction to his book in the following words:

*"However interesting individual sociological, socio-psychological, economic or political theories may be (...) a good understanding of the phenomenon of revolution requires a comprehensive approach."* (p. 4)

Following this idea, Krejčí dissociates himself from the Arendt's one-sided philosophical (value-oriented) concept of revolution as well as Skocpol's deterministic sociological and political concept. In addition, he even more relativises the disciplinary approach of his study by doubting the viability of exclusively either idiographic or nomothetic methods and accepts the risk of a middle path. This enables him neither an extensive use of historical sources, nor a strong emphasis on subtle and well-elaborated abstract considerations. In his recently published methodological study ("The Comparative Historical Approach as a Unifying Principle in the Humanities and Social Sciences." *Czech Sociological Review* 4: 135-147.) the author lays stress on the joining of historiography and the complexity of social sciences. At the same time he adds that he has in mind *"an integrated social science, in which cultural, political, economic and demographic aspects enter into an appropriately modified framework of sociology, in which the idiographic account is analysed in comparative, nomothetic terms"* (p. 135).

This book is probably the best demonstration of the author's comparative historical approach aiming at theoretical generalisations. The main stream of the study is a treatise of historically significant 'great' world revolutions from the end of the Middle Ages until the present times, from the point of view of an *a priori* constructed and seriously argued system

of theoretical categories and abstract classifications. In the conclusions, the analysed cases of revolutionary processes are interpreted in the given theoretical framework in the form of a concrete typology. Only after reaching this point of investigation is the generalising knowledge enriching theory derived.

Thus, it concerns a non-traditional conception of historical sociology synthesising the knowledge summoned by the specialised social sciences. The main argument for this interdisciplinary methodological choice is clearly the complexity of Krejčí's subject. It is one more proof that his clear priority is always the adequate cognition of the subject of research, to which the disciplinary, theoretical and methodological instruments are subordinated. Nowhere in his book can there be found spectacular demonstrations of a 'science for science' approach.

It goes without saying that throughout the book the author proves his erudition in the mentioned disciplines, particularly in knowledge of history, and economics. At the same time, he presents an enviable overview of sociological theory and its application as the conceptual framework of reference for the analysis of various types of revolutions, as well as the background for theoretical generalisations. Despite the difficulty in unambiguously classifying Krejčí's work as belonging to conventional sociology, there is no doubt that it is relevant, contributive and inspiring for sociological thought in the broad sense. The 'methodological eclecticism' (or, in other words, the complex approach) provides the author with the opportunity to formulate many ideas highlighting the individual cases and groups of cases and, on this base, original contributions to both sociological medium-range theory and general theory of societal change. On the concluding pages (pp. 266-270) he opens several as yet unresolved questions of the theory of societal change, for example, of the dependence of the revolutionary or non-revolutionary solutions on geographical and historical conditions, on the 'spirit of the time' and '*genius loci*'. Another problem offered for further consideration is how to distinguish unique, repetitive and cyclical phenomena. In the reviewer's opinion, the evaluation of the book as a signifi-

cant work in the field of sociological theory is fully justified by the mentioned contributions.

The way in which the author handles sociological theories is also unconventional. He does not declare himself to be an adherent of any of the acknowledged sociological schools, does not confront the advantages of it in clashes with other orientations and does not label any of the theoretical approaches with a priori ideological evaluations. Instead of this, he dives into the treasury of world sociological theory in those points where it is functionally grounded, that is, where it is necessary for the analysis of various aspects of the complex phenomenon called revolution in its proper historical and geographical contexts.

He devotes most attention to the possible theoretical approaches in the subchapter dealing with the aetiology (causes) of revolutions. He does not conceal the variety and even controversial character of some aspects of theories in which he seeks incentives. He does not hide his personal critical distance to excessive generalisations which were formulated on their base. However, he intentionally selects from theories mentioned in his book such elements which he (emanating from the preliminary study of historical processes) considers to be relevant for the clarification of the essence of the revolutions in general, as well as of the analysed cases in particular. Following this path, he is able to present an interesting overview of relevant theories of revolution and, later, of their useful elements. He begins, of course, with the comparison of Weber's and Marx's concepts. He finds the roots of the theory concerning the significance of the feeling of social injustice in the works of Aristotle and de Tocqueville. For highlighting the role of elites and various other problems he refers to some considerations of Pareto. In order to clarify the issue of the 'militant spirit' of the revolutionaries as well as of their adversaries he seeks inspiration in the writings of the Islamic medieval scholar Ibn Khaldun.

In one of the concluding passages, dealing with the structure of causal nexuses (pp. 248-251), Krejčí gives characteristics of the individual cases of revolutions using the categorical apparatuses of the authors in question, using them for the explanation of both specific

and common causes and motivations of various types of revolutions. From the same framework, he derives one of his main theoretical ideas, namely the thesis on the plurality of the causes of revolutions: both cultural-civilisational and social, objective and subjective, a rising from 'basis' and 'superstructure', etc. He rejects the pretension of individual theorists to the universal validity of their partial contributions to theoretical knowledge. Is this theoretical eclecticism? In a sense certainly yes. It is, however, critical and functionally argued eclecticism, oriented to a more profound and differentiated knowledge of the complex processes in societal reality.

The structure of the reviewed book is given by the method just depicted. In the first part (pp. 1-45), Krejčí explains the concept of revolution and presents the introductory abstract classification of revolutions (revolution 'from above', 'from below' and 'from the side' i.e. from abroad; 'vertical' and horizontal, 'endogenous' and 'exogenous'). Further on, he deals with their topography, grounding the selection of the cases which become subject of proper analysis. After the chapter devoted to the previously mentioned etiological issues, a detailed morphology of revolutions follows, describing – with a claim to general validity – the historical course of the revolutionary processes from the initial formation and institutionalisation of the reform, revolution and counter-revolution forces until the restoration and final consolidation of society with saving certain results of the revolutionary endeavour. Under this conception, revolutions show up rather as complex historical processes lasting for decades, or, in some cases, even for centuries.

The second and third parts of the book (pp. 47-244) encompass detailed 'case studies' of six original and two subsequently included – for the second edition – 'great' 'vertical' revolutions. Three of them are already historically finished (the Czech Hussite, English Puritan, French bourgeois). Five others are still unfinished (the Russian, Turkish, Chinese, Iranian and Mexican). In the chapters analysing individual revolutions the explication is arranged according to the phases of the revolutionary process as explained in the chapter on morphology. As a rule, the individual cases are described

and analysed objectively, perhaps with the exception of a somewhat less historically anchored and slightly biased text about the Russian revolution – for example, the Chinese revolution is described with some understanding devoted to the historical circumstances that caused its birth and historical fates, while the role of Russia and the Soviet Union in the First and Second World Wars and the difficulties these enormous conflicts inflicted on the country are evaluated very briefly and somewhat coldly. I find a better method of summarising of the analyses in the verbal characteristics at the end of the book than the attempt to illustrate the individual cases by the model diagrams (pp. 190-209) presenting the subjective qualitative evaluations of the phases of the revolutionary processes by means of quasi-quantitative classifications using criteria that vary from case to case.

The fourth part presents the already mentioned theoretical conclusions. In such an extensive and demanding text as *Great Revolutions...*, it is inevitable that anyone acquainted with the subject matter will find some passages and ideas with which it is difficult to agree entirely.

Thus this reviewer would welcome a less sharp distinction between vertical and horizontal revolutions (the latter being conceived as oriented against a sovereign power coming from another country). The horizontal revolutions are not analysed in this book as a specific type. The author's fidelity to historical reality compelled him not to omit the horizontal aspects of the Chinese and Mexican revolutions. On the other hand, such significant and really great revolutions as the American in the 18th and 19th centuries or the revolutions of the Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European nations, which began in the course of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian, Turkish, German and Soviet Empires, were entirely left aside, although all of them had historical continuations with clear-cut vertical aspects.

My second comment concerns the initial definition of revolution as a certain type of societal change. From the broadest characteristics of revolution as a 'sweeping dramatic change' the author arrives to a more exact concept of revolution as an accelerated, in