

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Since 1958 when Czechoslovak sociology had resumed its place in the system of social sciences its development has been a tempestuous one from the first attempts at reestablishing the violently interrupted continuity with the preceding (particularly pre-war) period of its evolution, and at seeking contacts with world sociological thought, from attempts at returning to the „authentic Marx“ through the stage of a hypertrophy of haphazard and not always sufficiently methodologically informed empirical researches and quasiresearches up to the present state when one can speak of a well constituted, consolidated and institutionalized discipline of science which has essentially overcome its „infantile disorders“, and has begun to fulfil its basic social functions. The authors of the present volume which we recommend to the reader's kind attention have not aimed at presenting a historical reconstruction of the development of Czechoslovak sociology in the years 1958—1968 (this might not even be too interesting for the foreign reader), nor a complete description of its contemporary state (this, in view of the limited capacity of the group of authors, would not in any case be easily possible). The aim pursued by their efforts is a more modest one - what they wish to give is an account of the development and present state of those disciplines in which they themselves have been active for some years, i. e. of some problems of general sociological theory, of the development of empirical sociology in Czechoslovakia, of the sociology of industry, of youth, of intelligentsia, and of small groups. Admittedly the subjects chosen do not cover the internal differentiation of *interests* of Czechoslovak sociology as a whole, the authors, however, do try to indicate the ways in which the internal differentiation of *views* is projected into the individual sociological disciplines, and thus to bring to the reader's attention the principal problems, both theoretic and methodological, under discussion, and to acquaint him - as far as this is possible within the given scope - with the basic relevant findings of empirical researches. However, the authors have intentionally not subordinated their papers to any formally uniform approach, some emphasizing problems of categories and of conceptual analysis and questions of general theory, while others reproduce, and comment upon, the results of empirical investigations undertaken in a way which corresponds to their interest as researchers and to their basic orientation.

As a supplement to the papers the volume brings a bibliographical survey,

including both books and periodicals, of sociological literature published in Czechoslovakia in the years 1957—1967. This is intended to help the reader in completing his picture of the development of sociological research as well as of its present state in Czechoslovakia. It includes, however, not only texts that are „specifically sociological“ but also studies and papers from disciplines closely related to sociology — demography, social psychology, pedagogics, etc. The reason for their inclusion being not only the fact that it may often be disputable to define precise border lines between these disciplines and sociology (particularly in the field of empirical research which often employs the same methodological tools). Another reason is that in the period when sociology was not „officially recognized“ it was these disciplines which filled the place of its cognitive and, to a certain degree, practical functions as well. As a matter of fact, a similar position was held by the discipline called „scientific communism“ which was fulfilling not only strictly ideological functions but in many cases even those of empirical research. Moreover, at a certain period some problems of general sociological theory were being developed not only on the theoretical basis of the materialistic conception of history, i. e. of a certain philosophical approach, but direct in the formal and „institutional“ context of historical materialism. Thus the aims of the volume are modest: if it succeeds in acquainting the reader with the way a number of Czechoslovak sociologists approach certain aspects of social reality and with the present state of some sociological disciplines, and possibly in stimulating his interest in contact and discussion with Czechoslovak sociologists its objectives will have been amply accomplished.

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