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SOCIAL-PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF MODERNIZING SOCIETY

SUMMARY: (*Social-philosophical aspects of modernizing society*) The contemporary trend in developing a society can be characterized as a modernizing process. Explicit contemplation of this question becomes the foundation for dichotomical solving of traditional and modern society. Totalitarian society differs from modern society in systematic characteristics. The actual state of our society can be defined as modern or post-modern but definitely post-totalitarian, transformative, gradually achieving the profile of a modern society.

The understanding of functional mechanisms and the character of social changes is based on the idea of civil, open society. Principles and practical sense appear in a question of dialectics of national and civil principle and cultural-historical specifics. The solving of ethnic problems takes the dominant position in creating a modern, civil society.

Socio-philosophical views are the necessary starting point in searching for convenient methodological orientation, the need for a state society, identity and the definition of specifics and alternatives during its development.

The last two years in the development of our society have brought about not only changes in its structure, but also new efforts to express these changes in a socio-philosophical way.

Theoretical scientific discussions in the C.S.F.R., as well as consultations with foreign theoreticians have helped to bring about an understanding of the mechanisms behind this transformation into a new, modern society.

From a theoretical point of view, there are now two main problems to be solved: finding potential models for the transformation of our society and the methodological problem of establishing a convenient identity for the new state.

The totalitarian regimes' demise in Eastern Europe and their transformation into new, more or less democratic social societies, based on market economies led, in theory, to fundamental new social and philosophical analyses, devoid of any unilateral methodological processes.

On the other hand, we now notice many different interpretations of the social processes, by our own scientists as well as by scientists from the authoritative western scene.

Consultations between philosophers, sociologists, politologists and others from post-totalitarian countries may become the principal starting point for a better understanding of these social changes and also for new directions in research, leading to a much deeper self-knowledge.

One of the main spheres of social and philosophical analyses in connection with these changes, is the relevant question of social changes, social dynamism and, as a result, social progress.

In the beginning, the modernization was connected with the evolving "progress" category mainly by philosophers of a socialistic standpoint and those who understood the principles behind "the evolution of a society".

Modernization leads to the establishment of new institutions, new social relations and new ways of life.¹ The term "modernization" is now understood in a much broader sense than it has been since the 1950s, and it is being used more often as societies found their own theories about modernization.

The concept of the theory of a modernization which is described as "the process of transition from a traditional society into an ever-changing, contemporary industrial society" has no definite logical structure. It is quite unclear and is used to describe various systems, political, economic or technical and technological processes.

It is also accepted in the spiritual sphere of culture, philosophy and art. In order to distinguish between all these processes, the term "post-modernism" has begun to be used.

The process of modernization is mostly understood at two levels. The first being the epoch of the first industrial revolution, the interruption of traditional hereditary privileges, the proclamation of equal civil rights, democratization.

The second is marked by gathering of mature social, economic and cultural contacts with existing market and industrial centers. In principle, it is a question of a society that is acquiring self-organization.

The dichotomy of the traditional and modern industrial societies represented in socio-philosophical essays by Kant, Spencer, Tonnies, Weber, Rostow, Eisenstadt, Durkheim and many others can be overcome, according to the new methodological procedures, by using a systematic approach. In certain senses, the term modernization is in accordance with the evolution of society.

Modernization appears like a term of a social system's self-development, increasing complications in social interrelations and structures, differentiations in dealing with systems and complexity in its reduction.²

The principle aim is the establishment of a functionally differentiated society with mutual systems of politics, law, science and so on.

Naturally, from this point of view questions about the character of our society arise. In principle, the totalitarian society differs from a contemporary society in that it has different aims, different goals.

Through the hierarchical order of its subsystems political power remains strong. Its position is monopolized here, government power is authoritative, directive ways of life are encouraged and political influence on all aspects of society is apparent.

The social subsystems maintain much more independence and autonomous activity. Economic, political, and juristical sub-systems keep a much more independent dimension through their functions and general legality. By virtue of this autonomy the sub-systems are increased on the base of their own functions and they create a reciprocal influence simultaneously.

Weber pointed out different functional necessities that are a premise of a system which will overcome communism when he said that "Either economics, politics or culture will work according to their own norms. Economic rationality, the autonomy of a political system, l'art pour l'art, or, on the contrary, the process of leaving the unified system will lead to a mixture of economic, political and cultural actions."

It is very difficult to predict which of these will be effective, especially in societies which consist of a number of state formations and a complexity of national structures. This also depends on political factors such as the Czech liberalism and the Slovak anti-liberalism. Modern democratic systems must work on the functional differentiation principle. Autonomy exists according to advanced communication connections.

Therefore the conditions for responsibility, self-control and self-organization abilities are formed.

Modernization is not understood to be a purposeful, regulated system, but the ability to establish a social system with inter-effective sub-systems and the adaptation of the society to a new way of life, a new way of behavior.

In theory, there is a natural base for prosperity and self-improvement. In this way, political, economic, spiritual and other sub-systems would not need to dominate or apply repressive tactics.

The system would be communicatively dynamic, relatively homogenous and balanced to respect the interests of the citizens. From this point of view, it must bear towards the people representatively and legitimately.

In today's way of thinking, modern society is characterized by its ability to be flexible in terms of keeping the democratic mechanism alive, and in ensuring the vital co-existence of the sub-systems. Such societies must be able to learn from the experiences of developed countries.

Economic, political, ecological and cultural interactions are as important to our new society as they are to the modern societies in any other country in the world.

With the aim of considering this system in mind, I mention "Entrance to Europe". This means that these principles are working very well in developed Western European countries. For that reason and because of the risk of striking the roots of social standards in our society, we cannot talk about the flexibility and differential autonomy in sub-systems in western Europe.

It is possible, however, to rank this stage in the social category of transition towards modern society.

Insufficient, and very often antagonistic information about the real state of our society undermines civil and political activities. Committed economic reform mobilizes social development and influences the social structures in need.

As for autonomy, we are unable to wait for the political interference needed to put the principle change of the totalitarian society in motion.

Every social system, with its own subsystems, their elements and functions, keeps some of its traditional, genetically inherited culture, its geopolitical theories, the character of its social structures, the national determination of its state and the relationship between the center of society and its environment, etc.

As to the views of the people behind the systems, each system and consequently the social societies, keep their own integrative qualities. The interweaving of structural levels and their elements is necessary for its function. We see integrity as a tendency to be whole and in most cases this is preferential.

Contrary to the totalitarian concept of a system as a whole, dealing with the interests within the whole society and also the interests of the individual, the new, modern society thinking stresses the concept of systems as a "continuation of events".

The system is not something extraneous but, in the process of developing self-consciousness it behaves as self-referring.

The repressive side to societies occurs when the system stagnates, when the social projects and aims are made through power, and the real and revolutionary movements are depreciated.

It is positive that just now, in the transformative phase of our society, there is an open discussion about the task of developing politics, morality, economics and law, on a philosophical level.

In the epicenter of philosophical, and also theoretical interests lie some questions connected with the dilemma of national and civil principles, content and substance of civil society, the modern order of state, democracy, pluralism, asserting humanity, social priorities and national specificities.

These questions must be answered in terms of humanistic potential, historical and traditional continuation and integration into Europe. New schools of thinking face the unavoidable confrontation with the developed concept of the western world, searching for new approaches to fellow men and the world as a whole. The questions being asked of Christian-humanitarian traditions, accepting liberalism and understanding its philosophical substance, the character of moral, valuable dynamics of economic reform and its influence on modern, social life are more frequent.

At present, the dominant problem surrounds national order, according to the sovereignty which exists and interrogation techniques of the federal unit.

Dahrendorf, the German socio-philosopher had his own opinions about it. To him, the existence of freedom and democracy is just a dream if the territorial unit and its methods are not sorted out into a complex, ethnically-minded system before too long.³

He shows that the shift towards prosperity of our society is only possible if civil and national principles are adhered to. Disunity of opinions and, mainly, politics jeopardizes the change of real democracy.

The other questions related to the changes of the subsystems are all about the consequences of the new situation. The most important questions concern the political problems we face, intellectual maturity and the formation, position and culture of an "intellectual peak" in political life, and also penetration through the other spheres of social structure. Unfortunately popularity is wrongly interpreted as plurality by many politicians. Solving the task to secure a contemporary functioning of society is often difficult and alien to their way of life. To create a modern society without adopting the modern way of behavior and a modern way of thinking would be absurd.

The key question behind such transformation concerns social factors. By this we mean socially powerful people who are averse to protecting or helping those who take an active part in integrating the logic of the system into society.⁴

These antagonists seem to be activists of antisocial behavior who are driven by an interest in power and not an interest in a better society for everyone.

It is important in contemporary societies to identify and obtain early information about the behavior and conditions of the people. There are also the valuable merital co-efficients-standard signs` which enable us to determine conditions and estimate expected changes. Naturally, such philosophical, sociological and economic theories are taken seriously as they define the mechanism of a transitive society most effectively.

Modernist and postmodernist theories are aimed at finding more effective mechanisms of modern society, based on the principles of alternation, the autonomy of subsystems and their functional maturity.

Previously, such theories searched for new values, new senses of worth in lives.

The theories are connected with another level of socio-philosophical thinking, deeper reflexivity, which is characteristic of democratically stabilized societies.

In principle it is impossible to find a simple model of the transformation of a system and so it is very difficult to find uniformity in theoretical expression "working" in concrete social systems.

But these are some attempts at the theoretical analyses which, in general, express the specific stages of transformation.

Most contemporary socio-philosophical conceptions catch these regularities of a society's transition according to their principle mechanisms and aims. Early social, economic and politically orientated analyses make presumptions leading to corrective theories. Previously it was the matter of practical politics and ideological organization of political subjects. Modern pluralism is the dominant principle behind an effective transformation.

R. Dahrendorf may sound controversial when he voices his opinions and offers a valuable interpretation of a society's transformation.

He considers that ethnic, religious and regional friction causes a weakness in the political center. Various interpretations of the use of the word weakness have been decribed as under-estimated autocracy, legitimacy, maturity, and so on. Everyone's personal interpretation is different.

This expert in European conditions echoes Popper's thesis on open societies when he says: "The transition does not mean, and should not have to mean the substitution of one system for another. Transition from socialism to capitalism makes no sense. The way forward, towards freedom, is to transform from a closed to an open society. The open society is not a system but the mechanism with which we can search for alternatives."⁵

In this way Dahrendorf shifts the problem into a new position. He points to the mechanism of function, a constitutional reconstruction of the social system. Accordingly with other system theoreticians, he states that economic structures and

politics are not determined beforehand. Therefore they cannot be the aim, but the means for correction.

This German socio-philosopher warns us of radical system changes, but simultaneously recommends that we apply system structural changes which lead to the civic society and elimination of central control, which is desirable.

Democracy is not simply a matter of pluralism. Neither is it a transferral of power. He defines democracy as a principle change of operation recognizing the authority of the citizen in relation to the state power.

Comprehension of a modern society as an open civil society leads to the logical conclusions that a substantial understanding of its mechanisms and functions is necessary, especially in a modern, industrial, civil society. So we must respect that our society's transformation is from the totalitarian society to one of modern civic society. The theoretical question has a principle sense.

The mechanism behind the modern social system is not about simple conceptual differentiation, but more about various approaches in which to express the system.

They complement each other in an understanding of the substance, signs and context of creating a new social system. But at the same time, it is necessary to emphasize that an open society is a pre-condition for a modern, civil society.

The term "open society", introduced by Popper, is used to describe the cultural, historical and political systems characterized by various societies.

Terms such as democratization, change and simplicity of change and their adoption by outer-world societies are placed opposite "dogmatic", "authoritative", "totalitarian" and "static society".⁶

The problems of civic society are discussed relatively widely. They are discussed in philosophical works of Ferguson, Smith, J. J. Rousseau and more often G. W. F. Hegel. Later A. Gramsci, R. Dahrendorf, K. Popper, and the others.

The term "civic society" denotes a simplicity of characteristics -- a real democracy based on increasing subjectivity and effective market economics. Dahrendorf expresses the opinion that the civic society is not built but it is independently developed and its actual existence shows confidence in political and economic reform. The principle signs of this confidence are the existence of independent organizations and institutions which are the link between the individual and the government, the existence of retail trade projects, their economic and legal support, the function of a mass information system, the existence of an intellectual peak, independent of the critical bearing and power of the government, civic legality, not only in the legal sense but also from the view that economic equality is most important.

The civic society is not perfect, nor is it immune from conflicts. As the Slovak sociologist J. Stena⁷ states, without these signs, the civic society would have to control the social technology for solving conflicts and antistatements, in its own way and by developing civic culture. The basic symptom, according to R. Dahrendorf is "creative chaos" and this provokes powerful structures and modifies its own relationship with the citizen.

The way that countries of former socialist and communist orientation have been setting out on their own way is by a transformation to a reformed and civic society. Receiving the Document of civic rights and freedom forms the base for harmony in national and civic societies through definite national differentiation and crystalization of interests.

In Western European countries "the citizens' revival" has been in existence since the earliest times of enlightenment, when this society was formed as a national formation because of federal frustration.

In Bohemia and Slovakia the national aspect was accented more to the detriment of the civic one and so the revival was cut out of the European context. After the renovation of the Hungarian statesmanship in the second half of the nineteenth century the formation of civic society was laid down in a more Slovakian medium, that is Hungarian politicians did not make the effort to build an educational system or any sort of cultural institutions for the use of Slovak civilians.

These problems concern the return to the subjectivity facilitating the reconstruction of democracy and establishing a base for it.

By the turn of the century the Slovak ethnic community was fighting for its revival. The revitalization of civic society represents many problems during the development of a separate Slovak society. The modernization of cultural and social spheres is not enough to solve economic and political problems. Though the question of the revitalization of civic society is discussed in our country, the accompanying problems remain unsolved.

Subjectivity does not exist in opposition to economics or equality. At the time of natural law this system was based very much on religion, at present it is more an ethical principle.

Naturally, the Slovak nation had to leave sovereign law in its own complicated history, although in this way, its own national identity has been darkened in modern Europe in the eyes of other civilized societies.

Transformative changes in our society will sound expressive if we take them in the context of post-communist Europe. A. Touraine⁸ involves Hungary and

Czechoslovakia in his analysis and model of reconstruction expressing the ways of the countries leaving communism for autonomous civic societies.

In his model, the weak economic depression and the weak opposition of society against the state are combined. In this characterization their ability to manage subjects, to regulate the changes, the prevailing processes of controlled political transformation and the weak advance towards political adversity, are emphasized.

Perestroika in the former U.S.S.R. and the Roumanian way are combinations of deep economic depression with weak social opposition towards the state.

Certainly, it is possible to argue with opinions of a similar type: from the view of those with a deeper appreciation of particular social specifics, intensity of economic changes, national activities of political activists, their position in the state, the content of their politics and their international position.

It is necessary to gain a wider historical and cultural view to articulate this problem into another position. The wide field of problems concerning the analysis of the formation of a modern civic society needs to be discussed, as well as confronted with opinions of progressive western philosophers, politologists and sociologists, who point out their needs and their philosophical intention.

Searching the contour of creating a new society will not be by-passed by socio-philosophical reflection.

References:

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