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ON THE PROBLEM OF THE LEISURE TIME OF YOUTH IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In all industrial societies, regardless of whether they belong to the socialist or to the capitalist type, leisure time is increasing, and increasing for the absolute majority of the population. It is especially the last mentioned fact that is significant for the problems of leisure time. No doubt it is true that even in ancient Greece, as we learn above all from Aristotle's work "The Nicomachean Ethics", "leisure time", called "Scholé", was regarded as the only time in which the full satisfaction of man, his freedom and happiness could be found.¹ At that time, however, the problem of leisure time referred only to the difference between the position of the slaves and that of the free citizens. For "leisure time" cannot be identified with the time required to regenerate labour power (sleep, food, etc.), which was the necessary accompanying phenomenon of working time in all the stages of the development of mankind. Leisure time, as we know it in contemporary highly industrialized countries, can be, according to the French sociologist *Dumazedier*, defined as "the summary of activities which can be carried on by man under conditions of full choice, either in order to rest, or to amuse himself, or to contribute to his personal development, after having freed himself from his working, family, and social obligations."²

This and similar definitions have been of course the subject of discussions among Czech sociologists, social psychologists, and pedagogues up to the present day. Regardless of some differences in the conception of the range of leisure time it is necessary to acknowledge that the amount of leisure time is one of the basic indices of the wealth of society, as the young Marx already had suggested³

In sociological literature which deals with the questions of leisure time,⁴ spare time is usually divided as follows:

- a) "short leisure", i.e. during the day,

¹ The problem of "leisure time" in antiquity is dealt with by Radislav *Hošek* in his article "Leisure Time — But in Antiquity", Index 1968, No. 3. He quotes here the works of the Czech classical philologists *František Novotný* and *Ferdinand Stiebitz*, who paid uncommon attention to these problems.

² *Joffre Dumazedier: Vers une civilisation du loisir*, Paris 1962, p. 29.

³ *Karl Marx: Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, Berlin 1953, p. 596.

⁴ Besides the work of *Dumazedier* quoted I mention here: *George Friedmann: Zukunft der Arbeit*, Köln 1953, *David Riesman: The Lonely Crowd*, New Haven 1950, and from the Marxist authors especially the Italian philosopher *G. Toti: Il tempo libero*, Roma 1961. Of the Czech authors it is *Blanka Filipcová*, who deals most comprehensively with the problems of leisure time in general in her book *Man, Work, Leisure Time*, Prague 1966.

- b) "medium leisure", i.e. Sundays, holidays, etc.,
- c) "greater leisure", i.e. longer and shorter vacations.

Let us examine in this respect the comparative nature of leisure time in several selected industrial countries:⁵

1. **The average weekly working time of industrial workers**, from which the length of "short leisure" can be inferred:

France, U.S.A., Canada, New Zealand	40 hours a week
U.S.S.R.	41 " "
Federal German Republic, Democratic German Republic, Belgium, Cuba	45 " "
Czechoslovakia, Poland, Sweden, Finland	46 " "
Italy, Switzerland	48 " "

2. **The number of the official (paid) days of rest (except Sundays)**, from which conclusions for the total of "medium leisure" can be drawn:

France	5 days a year
Czechoslovakia, U.S.A.	7 " "
Poland	10 " "
Sweden	11 " "
Italy	16 " "

3. **Basic paid vacations on the average (per annum):**

Belgium, England	6 days a year
U.S.A.	7 " "
Federal German Republic, Sweden, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria	12 " "
France	4 weeks

As the comparison shows, there are no great differences between the industrially well-developed socialist and capitalist countries — with the exception of France, where as early as 1936 the 40-hours working week was enacted and where a 4-weeks' paid leave for all working people is legalized. Of course in France also the struggle for the shortening of working time has its traditions of long standing. It is not without interest that as early as 1883, at the time when the Social Democratic Parties postulated the demand of the "right to work", Marx's son-in-law Paul Lafargue, who was called a "Gascon anarchist" by his father-in-law in jest, issued a publication in France in the form of a manifesto entitled "Le Droit à la parasse" — "The Right to Idleness".

The problem of leisure time does not of course lie only in the relationship of the working and non-working time. We cannot include in leisure time the time spent in travelling to work, the time spent in household work, sleep, etc. At this point the opinions of individual authors differ from each other. The majority of authors in the Soviet Union⁶ and some sociologists of the socialist, but also of capitalist countries, include in leisure time also the time spent in voluntary work in various political, trade-unionist, and youth organizations; others include it in that part of non-working time which is not identifiable with leisure time. Analogous discussions are sometimes carried on in this country, for instance about the fitness of including in leisure time the study devoted for example to the

⁵ The figures are taken from the publication *La Durée du travail*, Geuf 1958, and from the statistics of UTEIN from the year 1963.

⁶ G. A. Prudënskij: *Vremja i trud*, Moscow 1960.

raising of qualification, as far as it is not a personal hobby. Thus for instance in the publication "Adolescent Youth: Leisure Time and Cultural Interests", published by the Cultural Institute in Prague in 1967, the time devoted to public activity linking up with profession (for example the activity in Trade Unions), and further the time devoted to the raising of the qualification level necessary for the performance of the profession, etc. are specifically excluded from leisure time. As a rule, the Soviet authors include these activities into the length of spare time, which of course increases its sphere. Similarly too the comparison of the results of the research into the leisure time of University students, which was carried out at the Palacky University in Olomouc in Czechoslovakia, with analogous Bulgarian results,⁷ shows a certain difference (in this country 35.4 a week, in Bulgaria 46.2). This was caused *inter alia* by the fact that the Bulgarian research programme included in leisure time not only the time of the meetings of students' organizations, but also some portions of the time of study (for instance the reading of specialist periodicals which were not set directly as obligatory reading).

In this way we get to the problems of *the leisure time of youth* which has certain specific characteristics in comparison to the leisure time of adult population.

According to our opinion with school children and apprentices the content of working time does not consist only of the time of instruction, or of practical training, but also of the necessary time of home preparation for school, whether elementary, apprentice school, secondary school or University. The boundary between the working and non-working time, as well as the boundary between the various components of non-working time and leisure time, are much more relative and harder to differentiate with young people than with adults. Thus for instance it is difficult to differentiate where the necessary preparation for a certain school subject finishes with the young person, and where further individual study of that subject, which is the personal interest of the boy or girl in question, begins. Thus in the Pioneers' House in Brno dozens of boys and girls aged 12—15 work in chemical, biological, geographical and other groups. They go there because they are interested and the activity of the groups is not directly connected with school instruction. At the same time, of course, in some cases the children who reveal special interest in a certain subject at school are sent to these groups by their teachers, while others find their way to them themselves, without the teachers' knowledge. This activity should be in our opinion included in leisure time. More problematic is the inclusion of this hobby in such cases when parents or teachers recommend talented pupils for regular attendance at the Schools of Amateur Art. In Czechoslovakia there exists a wide network of educational establishments with professional teachers, institutions which provide instruction in singing, playing musical instruments, painting, etc. If the pupil after finishing basic school education and reaching the age of 15 wants to take a secondary-school Art Course, a preliminary preparation in the particular field is necessary for him with regard to entrance examinations, and then this falls, in our opinion, into the category of working time (school education).

With the activity of the above-mentioned groups in the Pioneers' Houses, which is not only of scientific but often also of artistic or physical training character

⁷ Research into the Personality of the University Student, *Sborník autorů* (Collected Studies), Olomouc, 1965, pp. 81 ff.

(for example drawing, singing, gymnastics, etc.), the problem of leaders is of course closely connected. Besides the small number of the employees of the Pioneers' Houses, the majority working there are voluntary workers, as a rule teachers, who perform this activity voluntarily, in addition to their professional school obligations. Here it is sometimes difficult to determine whether this activity of theirs should be included under the proper leisure time or under the other components of non-working time, such, for example, as the parents' care of children in the family which by the majority of sociologists is not included under leisure time.

If we start from the more generally acknowledged narrower conception of leisure time, as is advocated especially by the French sociologists Dumazedier and Friedmann, then leisure time is essentially identical with the time which man has really "for himself" only, whether he spends it in active or passive amusement, which of course can be variously differentiated according to personal likings.

It is of course a real paradox that in industrial societies, which enable the gradual extending of leisure time — for instance by increasing services which replace the formerly necessary work done in non-working time, for example in households — leisure time, especially that of adolescent youth, is at the same time regulated in a uniform manner by means of mass communication media. In this connection I shall quote some figures from Czechoslovak research work of recent time.⁸

All research work realized in this country shows that at the present time the consumption of mass culture through the media of film, radio and television predominates among the forms of spending leisure time most usual with adolescent youth and that traditional forms, such as the reading of literature combined with personal libraries containing the works of popular writers, attendance of theatres, concerts, exhibitions of the fine arts, etc., are becoming less usual. It is interesting that even in sport, which is regarded⁹ as a typical activity of youth carried out in leisure time, as far as spectator sport activity is concerned, listening to and watching radio and television transmissions strongly reduces the attendance at sports stadiums.

In Czechoslovakia the radio still retains an important position among the means of mass communication. On the one hand this is because there is a wireless set almost in every household, including those in the country, then in all schools, workplaces etc.; on the other hand a certain listening tradition has been created. At the same time, of course, according to the results of an extensive orientation state research programme into the cultural interests of youth, the majority of young people, i.e. 71.9 %, listen in only from time to time. 22.4 % of the young listen in to the radio or to some of its programmes regularly and with great interest; only 1.2 % state that they never listen in and 3.9 % exceptionally (the remaining 0.6 % did not reply). The analysis of the contents shows at the same

⁸ I start from the research results published by Miroslav Dismán: *Leisure Time and Cultural Development of the Working People*, Bratislava 1964, Anton Jurovský: *Cultural Development of Youth*, Bratislava 1965, Eva Turčínová-Davidová: *Adolescent Youth, Leisure Time and Cultural Interests*, Prague 1963, from the contributions in the *Collected Studies Research into the Personality of the University Student I*, 1965, II, 1966, and from the research work at the University in Brno, in which I took part.

⁹ See e.g. Georges Magnagne: *Sociologie du Sport*, Paris 1964.

time that young people are most interested in dance music and other light programmes. Over 50 % of boys and girls from all social strata mention listening to radio and transistor transmission of dance music. At the same time of course the partial research which I undertook among the students of the University of Brno, like some results of M. Diesman, shows that this type of listening sometimes only forms "musical background" for other youth activities. At the same time also in Czechoslovakia young people from the large towns show greater interest in light music than those from the villages.

As far as television is concerned, the situation is somewhat different. Not only in the fact that the possibilities of watching television programmes are somewhat smaller than those of the radio, but also as far as concerns the relationship of the young to the programmes. The quoted orientation research work has shown that 58.6 % of the questioned from the representative sample of 4376 persons of the age from 14–24 years have the possibility of watching television at their parents' homes (in Bohemian regions about 65 %, in Slovakia 44 %), 28.8 % at their neighbours' or acquaintances', only 4.9 % state that they have no possibility of watching television. The rest can watch TV in Youth Clubs and at schools. If young people listen in often quite accidentally, for example as a musical accompaniment to other activities (dancing, amusement, but also studying!) — then with television programmes they obviously choose according to their special interests. This is testified by the fact that almost 35 % of the young state that they watch television only when an interesting programme is on, 27 % say that they watch several times a week and only 11 % daily.

As far as the choice of programme is concerned, over 30 % of young people mention television films and shows, about 25 % sports transmissions and light programmes, in the third place are television inscenations of dramatic works, followed by various documentary programmes (sports, programmes from foreign countries, etc.). It is significant that both with television and radio there is very small interest in the programmes for children and young people. The exception was formed by several regular radio programmes in which experts, psychologists, sociologists, doctors, etc., answered young people's questions. Recently, especially in 1968, the interest of the young in political programmes has markedly increased, which is connected with the whole process of democratization in Czechoslovakia.¹⁰

Czechoslovak research results agree with world statistics too, in that the young form the greatest number (over one half) of *cinema-goers*. The *film* undoubtedly holds the supreme position among all the spheres of the cultural interests of youth in Czechoslovakia.

From the group examined in the state research programme 21.4 % of all the questioned go to the cinema regularly and with great interest, 71.4 % go from time to time and with interest to see selected films, which is 93 % altogether! This is in agreement with other research results quoted here, according to which 42 % to young people have an entirely spontaneous relationship to the film, and 51,6 % an averagely good relationship, while an indifferent relationship was revealed only by 6.4 % of the questioned. If we take into account that in the

¹⁰ It is of course necessary to take into account that generally the post-war generations of youth in Czechoslovakia revealed higher political activity than those in Western European countries. See D. Cahová: The Development of Post-War Generations of Youth in Czechoslovakia, *Mladá fronta*, Prague, 1967.

order of popularity of television programmes, television films assume the first place, the supreme position of the film is obvious. A certain drop in the number of cinema-goers, the blame for which is laid on television and radio in this country, too, obviously refers more to the adult population than to the young. The development of television affected the attendance at theatres and concerts much more than at cinemas. It is significant that even with University students, who before the Second World War still formed a great part of theatre- and concert-goers in this country, attendance at theatres and concerts is far behind not only that at the cinema, but also behind radio listening and TV viewing, including of course audience participation in radio and television interpretations of dramatic works.

As far as film genres are concerned, the research results show that young people in this country favour most highly film comedies and cartoons (over 30 %), in the second place films of adventure and detection (almost 20 %). In this connection I must mention that last year in this country and in Poland it was the films of adventure, Red Indian films, especially the serial *Vinnetou* — the Red Gentleman, that had absolutely the greatest number of visitors. It is significant that — as far as Czech films are concerned — the films about young people are among the most popular (17 %). This is probably connected with what is known as the “new wave in Czechoslovak films”, with the production of several films from the life of contemporary youth which gained outstanding successes at World festivals. They are for example the films “Loves of a Blonde”, “Romance for the Bugle”, etc.

In distinction to this consumption of mass culture the active participation of the contemporary generation of the Czech and Slovak youth in various cultural groups is rather in the background. From the examined sample of 4376 young boys and girls only 2.3 % are members of theatrical ensembles or groups, 5.3 % of singing or musical ensembles, 2.6 % are members of folk-dancers', modern dancers' or ballet groups, 3.9 % of recitation groups etc.

In this respect a certain decline in amateur creative activity among young people took place in recent years. In the post-war period, owing to the then historical situation created in the course of national liberation and the revolutionary changes in society, which provided young people with a romantically conceived ideal of socialism, and owing to the systematic propagation of popular creative activity by the national Youth Federations, the situation was exceptionally favourable to these trends in the activity of youth. In the years 1945—1948, for instance, about 60 % of the members of the Czech Youth Federation and Slovak Youth Federation took part in the activity of some of the cultural groups of these organizations.

The contemporary generation of youth, which is growing up in considerably different conditions, is much more concrete in interests and likings.¹¹ This is reflected not only in the decline of the number of members of the Czechoslovak Youth Federation and Pioneers' Organization, in the development of hiking and of unorganized camping of small groups of young people in the open air, but also in the changes of all the forms of spending leisure time, in which the consumption of mass culture — together with open-air life and tourism — assumes the main

¹¹ See D. Cahová: *The Development of Post-War Generations of Youth in Czechoslovakia*. Mladá fronta, Prague, 1967.

to the accompaniment of guitars to such an extent as post-war generations did, but often only listen to the music from a transistor set. Of course, I do not intend importance. The groups of present-day Czech youth do not sing round camp-fires to suggest by this that these forms of spending spare time should be rejected. They correspond to the spirit of modern society and the mentality of youth. It is the concern of pedagogues, psychologists, sociologists, etc. that they — together with the personnel of mass communication media — might succeed in creating suitable conditions for the young to be able to spend their leisure time in the most useful manner for their own sake and for the development of society.

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K OTÁZCE VOLNÉHO ČASU MLÁDEŽE V ČSSR

Množství volného času je jedním ze základních ukazatelů bohatství společnosti, jak vyzdvihoval již Karel Marx. Není proto divu, že se dnes věnuje studiu problematiky spjaté s otázkami volného času zvýšená pozornost ve všech průmyslově vyspělých zemích. Autorka tohoto příspěvku si všímá některých otázek trávení volného času z hlediska své specializace, tj. sociologie mládeže.

Úvodem stručně shrnuje názory předních sociologů na otázku vymezení a funkce volného času, který bývá dělen na: 1. „malé volno“, tj. během dne, 2. „střední volno“, to je neděle (případně soboty) a svátky, a 3. „velké volno“, to jsou prázdniny a dovolené. Srovnává poté, jak se jeví v těchto rovinách volný čas ve vybraných zemích, především evropských. Ukazuje se, že z hlediska institucionálně vymezeného volna je „nejbohatší“ Francie, kde ovšem existuje dlouholetá tradice boje dělnictva za zkracování pracovní doby.

V další části si autorka všímá — na základě několika u nás uskutečněných sociologických výzkumů — způsobů využívání volného času mládeže. Hlavní pozornost věnuje přitom otázkám konzumace masové kultury, jak ji zprostředkují masová media, zvláště rozhlas, televize a film. Výzkumy ukazují, že v Československu zaujímá stále rozhodující místo v tomto směru rozhlas (tranzistorové přijímače). Poněkud jiná je situace, pokud jde o televizi, kde stále mají mladí méně příležitostí ji sledovat. Přitom se jeví značné rozdíly mezi českými zeměmi a Slovenskem, v němž televideofikace nedosáhla dosud té úrovně jako v Čechách. Pokud jde o film, ukazují některé výzkumy, že roste záliba mladých v českých a slovenských filmech, které jsou označovány za nejoblíbenější. Souvisí to zřejmě s novou vlnou našeho filmu.

V závěru autorka ukazuje, že došlo k poklesu vlastní kulturní tvořivosti mládeže, jež se tak výrazně uplatňovala zejména u první poválečné generace naší mládeže, v letech národní a demokratické revoluce.

