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ON THE PROBLEM OF INTELLIGENTSIA IN THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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An analysis of the development tendencies in the Czechoslovak sociological thought¹ makes apparent, among other facts, the effort of Czech sociologists to contribute, in both theory and empiric research, to the knowledge of those social phenomena and processes which are of a decisive importance for the cultural-political events of our national society. In the process of the modern history of our relatively small nation inhabiting in Central Europe a territory at the crossroad of influences due to different social-cultural spheres, the attention of many Czech historiographers, philosophers of history and, since the time when sociology arose as science, also the attention of many sociologists has been focussed on the solution of the problems of existence of our national society and on the possibilities of its independent development.² From among the above problems, the complex of which is generally called "the Czech question" the place and role of the intelligentsia in society has been mainly discussed.

An exceptional concentration on the study of social functions of the intelligentsia in the dynamic structure of society resulted in the past from the knowledge of the unquestionable importance of the activity carried out especially by teachers, writers and patriotic clergymen in the process of the national as well as social emancipation of the Czech global society, mainly in the period between the end of the 18th century and the first decades of the 20th century.

It is no pure chance that one of the most important monographs of the outstanding Czech sociologist Arnošt Bláha was dedicated to the very problems of the intelligentsia.³ Nor are the present Czech sociologists' studies of the intelligentsia as a social phenomenon⁴ undertaken incidentally. This contribution of ours also proposes to deal with these traditional and still topical problems.

¹ Inocenc Arnošt Bláha: "Česká sociologie" (The Czechoslovak Sociology), *Sociologický časopis* (Sociological Journal), 1968, No. 3.

² Jan Macků: "Les tendances principales de la sociologie actuelle en Tchécoslovaquie": *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 1968, vol. XLV.

³ Inocenc Arnošt Bláha: *Sociologie intelligence* (The Sociology of Intelligentsia), Prague 1937, p. 397.

⁴ *The Intelligentsia in the Contemporary Industrial Society*, Collection of papers from the conference on the situation of the intelligentsia, which took place in November 1967 in Brno; edited by Jan Macků, Brno-Prague, 1968.

In regard to the fact that in the Czech as well as in the world contemporary sociological literature the term of the intelligentsia is used in different meanings,⁵ firstly a definition of our own will be proposed. Since our conception is based on Arnošt Bláha's theory, his characteristics of the intelligentsia will be given in the second part of this paper. We shall be further concerned with the manner in which the role of the intelligentsia in the process of social change is analysed in the contemporary studies of some Czech sociologists and, lastly, we shall discuss some questions concerning the function of the intelligentsia in our present society.

I

Shortly after the activity in the field of sociology in Czechoslovakia was renewed in the mid sixties, our sociologists tried to show the place of the intelligentsia in the structure of a socialist society. At this time already, the respective views of our as well as of foreign sociologists differed from one another even in the approach to the fundamental question of defining the contents and extent of the concept of the intelligentsia.

At the beginning of the sixties, the question was discussed in the Marxist literature whether or not the intelligentsia in the modern industrial society should be conceived as a "part" or a "detachment" of the working class. Neither term — the intelligentsia and the working class — appeared to be definable at present in the manner which was current in the middle of the 19th century.⁶

The lack of precision in the concept of the intelligentsia led later to views stating that this concept should not be used in scientific literature at all. In 1964, the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman expressed the above standpoint in a most pregnant way at the conference on the social structure of the socialist society, taking place in Hrazany near Prague.⁷ Although among the Czech sociologists this negative attitude towards the use of the concept of the intelligentsia did not find rigorous adherents, it helped to intensify their efforts to give a new definition to this concept currently employed in Czech political writings.

The writers proclaiming that the concept of the intelligentsia — if newly defined — may, even in the industrial society of this time, have a heuristic and explicative meaning, differ greatly from one another in the way of defining it. In this relation we may distinguish between a number of different conceptions in the Czech literature. Among them two particular types may be mentioned:

1. The "broad" conception of the intelligentsia — traditional in substance — according to which practically all professions of brainworkers are included in the concept of the "intelligentsia". This view, shared in our country parti-

⁵ Cf. e. g. J. Szczepański: *Inteligencja i społeczeństwo*, Warszawa 1957; Mauro Fazio: "Intelletuali e classe politica nello Stato contemporaneo", *Revista di sociologia*, 1964, No 5, etc.

⁶ The impact of the mentioned discussions taking place in the years 1959—1961 in the journal: *Otázky míru a socialismu* (Problems of Peace and Socialism) can be found in the Volume *Intelligence za kapitalismu a socialismu* (Intelligentsia in Capitalism and Socialism), Prague 1962; in particular the paper of Miloš Húsek.

⁷ Jan Macků: Zur Diskussion über den Begriff Intelligenz auf der Konferenz über die soziale Struktur unserer Gesellschaft, *Sborník prací FF UJEP* (Volume of Papers of the Philosophical Faculty of J. E. Purkyně University), G 9, Brno 1965.

cularly by Zdeněk Valenta,⁸ proceeds from the criteria of the basic social division of labour.

2. The "narrow" conception of the intelligentsia which understands only a certain relatively small part of brainworkers under the term, especially those of the humanistically oriented fields to which mainly belong artistic professions and sciences of man and society. This conception is accepted nowadays in Czechoslovakia by the majority of sociologists concerned with the problems of the intelligentsia.

The efforts of the Czech sociologists trying to define the concept of the intelligentsia in such a way as to make it correspond to the contemporary state of science, might be further classified in accordance with the sociological theories from whose principles sociologists start to solve the problems of the place of the intelligentsia in society. In this connection, two fundamental approaches to the study of the intelligentsia can be traced in the recent Czech sociological literature:

- 2.1. The first method proceeds from the Marxist interpretation of the theory of the "élite" presented by Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci distinguishes between the "traditional intelligentsia" regarding it as the élite brainworkers, and the "organic intelligentsia", i. e. the politically engaged élite creating and extending the ideologies of various social classes. The above conception of the intelligentsia is referred to by Pavel Machonin⁹ who believes that in the process of the scientific technical development there will be created a new working élite resulting partly from the scientists and technicians, and partly from the highly-qualified workers.
- 2.2. The second approach is based on the structural functional conception of society and of social phenomena. This conception is held by Juliana Obrdlíková and the author of this paper, meeting at present with a constantly broader approval of our cultural public. Therefore, we shall pay attention to it in the further part of our account.

In the Czech literature the structural-functional conception of society was developed for the first time by Arnošt Bláha¹⁰ who applied it also in his previously mentioned monograph about the intelligentsia. We shall concentrate our attention, firstly, on this concept of Bláha and on its criticism, since on it are based the ideas of the contemporary writers starting from the tradition of Bláha's Sociological School.¹¹

⁸ Zdeněk Valenta: *Fyzická a duševní práce za socialismu* (The Physical and Mental Work in Socialism), Prague 1965.

⁹ Pavel Machonin: "Příspěvek ke konferenci o postavení inteligence v socialistické společnosti" (A Contribution for the Conference on the Situation of the Intelligentsia in the Socialist Society), conference taking place in Prague in 1966; in the journal of the High Political School: *Věda — škola — praxe* (Science — School — Practice) 1966, No 4, p. 72 ff.

¹⁰ Jan Macků: "K vývoji strukturalismu v české sociologii" (On the Development of Structuralism in the Czech Sociology), *Filosofický časopis* (Philosophical Journal) 1969, No. 1, p. 80 ff.

¹¹ *Brněnská sociologická škola* (Brno Sociological School), Volume of papers from the conference held in the year 1966 in Brno; editor: Juliana Obrdlíková, Brno 1967.

Arnošt Bláha wrote his work *Sociology of the Intelligentsia* in the thirties of this century. This was the time when in the European culture symptoms appeared of what we call the "crisis of the intelligentsia", or in a broader sense, the "crisis of culture".¹² Its causes were taken by various authors to be due to a number of different factors. From the viewpoint of our further analysis we are especially interested in the view expressed by Julien Benda in his book *La trahison des clercs*.¹³

According to Benda's opinion, the existence and development of culture is possible only when, besides "secular" people, are also active people who rank spiritual values higher than the secular ones. As Benda believes, the modern intelligentsia has betrayed its role when instead of resisting the cult of power and money, it supports itself utilitarian amorality. In his sociological analysis of the intelligentsia, Bláha also states that a considerable part of the intelligentsia has ceased to fulfil its "spiritualizing function" while becoming a part of the bureaucratic mechanism of the modern state. In contradiction to Benda, however, Bláha is persuaded that the sound core of the intelligentsia will never cease to fulfil its traditional, humanistic functions. With his whole scientific work and with his own life, Bláha made every effort to make just that part of the intelligentsia to which Benda's accusation does not relate, regain its place in, and influence on, the social life, continue to create and diffuse the values of spiritual culture, and help man to be, even in modern society, a true man and not only a fragment of man.

When evaluating Bláha's "Sociology of the Intelligentsia" we cannot omit the above outlined historical and social situation in which his work originated; nevertheless, we must see its fundamental importance in the structural functional analysis of the intelligentsia conceived as a social phenomenon.

Bláha proceeds from the idea that no society can exist without spiritual culture, i. e. without spiritual ties and values. The intelligentsia is the stratum that creates those necessary values of spiritual culture. It forms itself as a social stratum just in consequence of its own complex social function called by Bláha the spiritualizing function. In a more detailed analysis this "global" function can be differentiated into a number of partial social functions. From among them Bláha points out the function of creating spiritual values and the function of spreading (circulating) these values in the respective society. With the spiritual creative function Bláha connects the unifying function, and with the circulating function, the social critical function, for the diffusion of new spiritual values cannot avoid the criticism of old values nor the criticism of those activities in the course of which spiritual values are not respected. The critical function of the intelligentsia should be controlled by global and spiritual concerns. From the point of view of these functions one might also speak of the leading function in so far as we bear in mind the importance of the intelligentsia with respect to the social function of spiritual culture.

From the viewpoint of different variants of the theories of social conflicts,

¹² Karl Mannheim: "The Crisis of Culture", *Sociological Review*, 1934, No. 2.

¹³ Julien Benda: *La trahison des clercs*, Paris 1927.

objections could be raised against some consequences of Bláha's concept of the social functions of the intelligentsia. Bláha's sociological system called by himself *federative functionalism*¹⁴ belongs namely to that trend of sociological theories which — in certain modifications — emphasize Comte's idea of social consensus. In our case this brings us particularly to the fact that Bláha lays emphasis on the "unifying function" of the intelligentsia. We contend that such a function can be accomplished by the intelligentsia in particular historical conditions only, such as the period of the national liberation movement. In other social situations "organic intellectuals" (in the terminology of A. Gramsci) contribute, on the contrary, to the differentiation of society, last not least, by creating antagonistic ideologies of the classes fighting against one another.

Serious objections may also be raised against Bláha's classification of the functional types of the intelligentsia. As to the way in which individual members of the intelligentsia fulfil the above social functions, Bláha draws a distinction between the "parasitic", the "medium-qualified" and the "creative" types of the intelligentsia. In this way, he applies the concept of the intelligentsia practically even to those who do not fulfil, or fulfil badly, the above outlined functions. Bláha means here the so-called "intelligentsia ex situ", i. e. people who occupy posts which should be occupied by creative workers. However, we do not see sufficient reasons for ranking among the intelligentsia people who *ex definitione* do not belong to it, because they are not fulfilling its functions. In the respective chapters of his monograph, Bláha namely ranges implicitly to intelligentsia persons of all professions the performance of which needs higher education or simply "mental work".

It is just on the basis of these objections that the contemporary Czech sociologists attempt to define — in contradiction to Bláha — the concept of the intelligentsia in a less general sense.

III

In our opinion¹⁵ the use of the concept of the intelligentsia might be justified only when it relates to a quite definite stratum of the mentally working persons, which can be distinguished from other strata of brainworkers. If we consider society from a consequent functional point of view, then we are justified to rank among the intelligentsia those brainworkers only who really fulfil the respective functions through their professional activities. There is no blinking the fact that the intelligentsia is an innerly differentiated group, because of — beside other reasons — its specific functions and with respect to those spheres of spiritual culture to which the respective functions are related.

We regard as the intelligentsia those brainworkers whose activities are directed to the following basic spheres of spiritual culture:

1. to the ideological sphere to which we rank, above all, political ideology, religious systems and philosophy; 2. to the sphere of morality; 3. of art and 4.

¹⁴ Juliana Obrdlíková: "Sociologická teorie I. A. Bláhy" (The Sociological Theory of I. A. Bláha), *Sociologický časopis* (Sociological Journal), 1968, No. 3.

¹⁵ Jan Macků: "K některým kritériím postavení socioprofesionálních skupin duševních pracovníků ve společnosti" (On Some Criteria of the Status of Socio-Professional Groups of Brainworkers in the Society), in the above cited volume *Intelligentsia in the Contemporary Industrial Society*.

of science. In relation to these spheres of spiritual culture, the intelligentsia fulfils the following basic functions:

1. the function of creating ideological, moral, artistic and scientific values;
2. the function of a creative propagation of the above values;
3. the function of a creative realization of these values.

Accordingly, creative activity is taken as a criterion of the distinction between the members of the intelligentsia and the rest of the brainworkers. We regard this creative activity as an opposite to the mere routine work which is typical for a great part of officials and some other categories of employees.

It is naturally possible to delimit the concept of the intelligentsia in a narrower sense by ranking to it those persons only who create artistic and scientific values. This would bring us close to the point of view of Theodor Geiger who defines the intelligentsia as the creator of a representative culture.¹⁶ Personally I lean to the view that it is correct to rank among the intelligentsia even those persons who propagate the values of spiritual culture in a creative manner. It is through the very propagation of the values of spiritual culture, which have been created with regard to the needs of the development of the respective global society, that the intelligentsia participates in the process of social change. Thus, to cite a concrete case, the scientific intelligentsia contributed to the development of society — directly or, as a rule, indirectly — by developing science as one of the basic products of the spiritual culture. The creation of new elements or of whole systems of culture and their spreading, or the spreading of elements and systems of culture from other socio-cultural spheres, i. e. the cultural diffusion is, in our opinion, the principal form of activity through which the intelligentsia participates in the development of a given global society.

Such an activity is, however, possible only in such a type of social dynamics¹⁷ in which social changes are brought about both by the pressure of the socio-active parts of global groups and by the efforts at reforms on the part of the representatives of the power institutions. In case that the propagation of new values of the spiritual culture opposes the existing system of values sanctioned by the power institutions, the intelligentsia starts to fulfil its function of social criticism.¹⁸

The historical analysis shows that the function of social criticism is not fulfilled, as a rule, by all members of those socio-professional groups that constituted themselves on the basis of the social functions of the creation and creative propagation of ideological, ethical, artistic and scientific values. For this reason Juliana Obrdlíková emphasizes¹⁹ the fact that the problem of the

¹⁶ Theodor Geiger: *Aufgaben und Stellung der Intelligenz in der Gesellschaft*, Stuttgart, 1949.

¹⁷ We proceed from the formal classification of the types of social dynamics, used by Zygmunt Bauman in his study "Polish Youth and Politics", in the Czech literature quoted by D. Čahová in her contribution, "K vymezení místa mládeže v sociální struktuře společnosti" (On the Delimitation of the Place of Youth in the Social Structure of Society), *Přehled* (Survey), Prague 1966, No 1.

¹⁸ Jan Macků: "K sociálně kritické funkci inteligence" (On the Socio-Critical Function of the Intelligentsia), in the journal *Universitas*, Brno 1968, No. 1.

Juliana Obrdlíková: "Sociální funkce inteligence" (Social Functions of the Intelligentsia), in the already cited volume *Intelligentsia in the Contemporary Industrial Society*.

intelligentsia demands to distinguish, firstly, the intelligentsia in a broader sense, i. e. a category of brainworkers in professions for which a higher education is required, secondly, of the intelligentsia in a restricted sense, which institutionalizes itself in various specific "white collar" professions according to the respective social functions based on the division of labour and, thirdly, the socially committed intelligentsia which institutionalizes itself in more or less permanent social groups. These groups are bound by identical functions and by a uniform mentality with respect to the social task to be accomplished in a specific social situation. This is the intelligentsia whose coordination has been effectuated by the social need to fight for certain requirements against the pressure of the existing power structures. In such a situation, the intelligentsia becomes the speaker of social movements for the economic, social or political emancipation as well as for other social values.

On the basis of a historical analysis of the activities of the intelligentsia in the Czarist Russia, in France (Dreyfus' affair), in Germany (K. Marx) and of the Czech intelligentsia in Austria-Hungary, J. Obrdlíková arrives at the conclusion that the concept of the intelligentsia as a social group is to relate to that stratum of brainworkers who are socially committed in the sense of a certain social ideal: justice, the liberation of nations or of big social groups, or in the sense of a new organization of the society.

From the point of view of this conception, the intelligentsia fulfils in the global society the ethicizing function, i. e. it pursues certain ethic aims. The accomplishment of this function presupposes the cognizing, critical and ideological functions. Under certain conditions, this intelligentsia expresses — either in scientific concepts or in artistic abbreviations — a particular social reality, faces it critically and tries to understand the tendencies of the development and to formulate its aims, i. e. it creates an ideology. In such historical cases, the intelligentsia fulfils the integrating function, i. e. it contributes to the ideological integration of a certain social totality, for instance of a class, a nation, etc.

It is typical that in a certain way this conception brings closely together the structural functional viewpoint and the concept of the "organic intellectuals" of the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci mentioned above.

IV

When the development of specific professions of brainworkers is followed up in our century, considerable changes can be observed in both the quantitative and the qualitative sense, i. e. from the point of view of the essential differences in social functions which they fulfil in a specific social structure. When expressed in a concrete way this means, firstly, an intensive increase of the number of members in those professions that had been ranked with the intelligentsia as early as the middle of 19th century, especially the number of scientists, editors, of some artistic professions, etc.²⁰ Secondly — and this is more important from

²⁰ Very thorough statistical surveys in this sense are presented by Jaroslav Klofáč in his contribution published in the previously stated journal *Science — School — Practice*, vol. 1966, No 4.

the viewpoint of the functional conception — new professions of brainworkers have arisen which had not existed a hundred years ago or had been so-to-say “in an embryonic state”. This applies explicitly to managers and to various technical professions.

Thus we are led to the question whether or not the “classical” concept of the intelligentsia may also be applied to “technicians”, or whether quite another functional group of brainworkers has been constituted here. The efforts at a serious solution of these problems fail, as a rule, very soon in consequence of “social regards”: for many sociologists it is hard to say openly to e. g. engineers that they do not regard them as belonging to the intelligentsia.

If, however, J. Obrdlíková proceeds from the idea that a humanistic education or the performance of a profession which requires humanistic education, providing information about relationships between men is the necessary prerequisite for the fulfilment of the intelligentsia’s social functions quoted by her, then the majority of engineers, — though not each of them — may be said not to be qualified to fulfil the functions of a socially committed intelligentsia.

When tackling these problems the author of this paper starts from the conception of the technique as it is conceived by Georges Gurvitch.²¹ In conformity with this author the *technique* is defined as *an effective manipulation oriented to the control of the world of nature, man and society in order to produce, cure, organize and plan, to defend or attack, to inform and communicate.*

By manipulation are meant such proceedings, requiring special schooling or training, which enable their users to obtain the expected results of their activities in an easier way. Thus, the manipulation in the social sphere means processes enabling any persons to reach a specific goal by means of influencing effectively the activity of men and hence of dominating them.

From this very conception follows the difference between the social functions of the technicians, on the one hand, and that of the scientists and artists, on the other hand. The principal aim of science is namely not to dominate, but to search for knowledge. The difference need not be presented as a formal logical deduction from respective definitions of science, art and technics. Historical experiences of the 19th and 20th centuries show quite clearly that there has always existed a considerable difference in both the social opinions and the activities of most technicians, on the one hand, and of the humanistic intelligentsia, on the other hand. It was by no chance that in our country the writers, philosophers and representatives of the humanistic branches of science were first to criticize the Stalinist deformations in the theory and practice of socialism. The manipulators, i. e. the engineers and managers, cannot be taken to be bearers of the function of social criticism.

However, we ought to be aware also of the differences in the social commitment of the representatives of various specific technical professions. In the technics Gurvitch also includes manipulations concerning information. In industrial societies such technics are realized by means of mass media. The social group allied to this form of manipulation is represented — in terms of the Polish sociologist Jan Szczepański — by the “engineers of the word”, which means

²¹ Georges Gurvitch: “Société, technique et civilisation”, *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, 1968, vol. XLV.

press-, radio-, and television-editors and commentators.²² And under certain social conditions the representatives of this very profession manifest a high degree of social commitment so that they can be considered to belong to the intelligentsia even in the above stated conception of J. Obrdlíková. It is typical that Seymour M. Lipset also regards²³ "the majority of editors-in-chief" and "a part of editors" as the "proper essence" of the intelligentsia. It is evident, that among physicians and surgeons — who in Gurvitch's conception represent a group of technicians performing more or less effective manipulations in order to secure or reconstitute the health of men — there also exist many humanistically oriented, and in this sense socially committed, individuals who may be ranked to the intelligentsia.

From what was said above it follows that the frontiers between the intelligentsia and the other groups of brainworkers lead within each specific profession. This is equally true when we use the criterion of social commitment in the sense as it is used by J. Obrdlíková, or when we proceed from a creative fulfilment of the previously cited functions referring to the values of the above mentioned spheres of spiritual culture. Comparative analyses, show, however, that the members of certain professions of brainworkers are, as a rule, more socially committed than the members of other professions ranked to the intelligentsia in the broad sense of former times. With respect to the actual degree of social commitment of various professions we propose to establish approximately the following hierarchy: writers, especially such as publish in journals and newspapers; at present also a part of press-, radio- and television-editors and commentators; further, philosophers and scientists, above all in the fields of history, economy and sociology. It is obvious, of course, that under different social conditions this hierarchy will change accordingly.

In conclusion we should like to emphasize that we regard both the mentioned restricted conceptions of the intelligentsia as conceptions which could have also an explicative meaning when the structural functional analysis of society is applied. When studies of sociographic character are undertaken, those professions of brainworkers should be studied which — from the viewpoint of their respective working functions — are typical as a whole. Thus e. g. it would be necessary to cover all scientists, artists etc., in the investigations although not all of them are equally socially committed.

K ÚLOZE INTELIGENCE V PROCESU SOCIÁLNÍCH ZMĚN

V úvodu poukazuje autor stručně na faktory, které podněcují ke studiu funkcí inteligence v soudobé společnosti. Poté nastiňuje klasifikaci jednotlivých typů definic inteligence, jak se vyskytují v české literatuře. Klomí se k onomu typu, v němž je inteligence vymezována pomocí sociálních funkcí. V další části hodnotí pojetí inteligence v monografii Arnošta Bláhy "Sociologie inteligence". Vyslovuje námitky proti jeho chápání "řádové scelující funkce" a poukazuje i na to, že Bláha v závěrečných kapitolách své knihy nedůsledně rozšiřuje pojem inteligence na všechny duševně pracující. Ve třetí části příspěvku vysvětluje autor své pojetí

²² Jan Macků: "Technici slova v soudobých společnostech" (The Technicians of the Word in the Contemporary Societies), in the journal: *Index*, Brno 1968, No 10.

²³ Seymour M. Lipset: *Political Man*, New York 1960.

inteligence jako té části profesionálně duševně pracujících, kteří plní funkce tvorby, tvořivého šíření a tvořivé realizace výtvorů světonázorových, uměleckých a vědeckých. Souhlasí s názorem Jana Szczepeańskiego o sociálně kritické funkci inteligence, s pomocí níž se inteligence podílí na přípravě a realizaci sociálních změn. V závěrečné části se soustřeďuje na problematiku úlohy inteligence v tomto procesu. Připomíná v této souvislosti pojetí Juliány Obrdlíkové uveřejněné ve studii "Sociální funkce inteligence" ve sborníku *Inteligence v soudobé industriální společnosti*. Inteligence plní v procesu sociálních změn funkci poznávací, kritickou a ideologickou, jak ukazuje i životní dílo Karla Marxe.