

emergence and subsequent fates of the new political elites in Polish communities.

G. Batygine from Moscow presented a well-informed, critical, but carefully deliberated picture of developments in Soviet sociology in the period between the 1960s and the 1980s. In the discussion on this issue Machonin suggested some additional criteria enabling the distinction of vital and retardant elements in this process: the knowledge of world sociology, the attitude to empirical research, the ability to dissociate oneself from the Stalinist scheme of the non-antagonist classes and attendant to this the theory of social homogenisation and the participation or not in the ideological critique of the so-called revisionism in the countries belonging at that time to the Soviet block.

The Hungarian sociologist Pál Tamás sees the function of a scientific canon as characterising a classic, in the creation of common language as an instrument of internal communication, in a certain communicativeness with the external environment and in supplying evidence of the solidness of the scientific discipline's professionalism. He believes the stress

on social change rather than social order and the complexity of the system of inequalities to be fundamental characteristics of contemporary sociology.

This fruitful conference was concluded with an intriguing inquiry addressed to the participants. They were asked whom of the personalities of world sociology they consider to be sociological classics. There was a marginal tendency to turn attention to the role of some lesser known and lesser acknowledged sociologists, including the representatives of alternative sociology. However a distinct main tendency appeared: immediately after the almost universally acknowledged contribution of Max Weber the participants clearly singled out Émile Durkheim and, only one vote behind, Karl Marx. It seems that, in spite of all the turbulence in human history as well as in science, and in spite of the presented criticism, the belief in the significance of the 'trinity' of the founding fathers of sociology still survives within the East-European scientific community, including the younger generation.

Pavel Machonin

The Report on the Conference "Parliaments of Central European Countries in the Process of Incorporation into the European Union"

The conference was held on the 12th to 14th September 1997 in Prague and its organisers were: the Committee for Legislative Studies as a part of the International Society for Political Science (IPSA), the Delegation of the European Committee in Prague, the Czech Society for Political Science, the Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, the Centre for European Studies at the College of Economics in Prague, in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

The conference was arranged as a part of long-term programme of the Committee for Legislative Studies IPSA and was preceded by scientific meetings in Bucurest and Ljubljana. The Prague conference was focussed on the role of the parliaments of Central European

countries in the process of integration into Europe.

In the opening speech, Daniel Kroupa, the head of the Permanent Delegation of the Czech Parliament, and Joannes ter Haar, the ambassador of the European Committee in Prague, emphasised that this is the first conference on the given theme to be held in the Czech Republic, one of the leading candidates for EU membership. According to ter Haar, membership in the EU also means a feeling of European identity at the same time, something that cannot be cultivated at a minister's meeting or through the adoption of a new law and the adjustment of legislation and norms, but only by means of comprehensive democratic discussion. This discussion should take place in parliament and must comprise both the gains and losses of integration.

More than fifty participants made up the extensive group of experts from prominent officials of national parliaments, the European Parliament and executive power, and representatives from their respective specialised insti-

tutes, to scientists representing various independent European scientific institutions. This enabled the theme of investigating the role of parliaments of Central European countries in the frames of the European integrative process to be discussed in an extended coherent context as well.

The conference provided an appropriate setting for the comparison of the role of Central European parliaments of associate countries with those of countries with full membership in the European Union as well as the European Parliament in the process of European integration. The participants in the conference reported and discussed both concrete legislative and administrative problems, as well as theoretical consequences of the formation and function of supranational institutions, such as the European Parliament, for political studies and the theory of democracy. The reports of participants, some of them quite critical, were concentrated on the role of parliamentary institutions and the executive, on the co-operation between the executive and parliaments in the process of approximation of legal norms. Even the process of integration in its wider context was a subject for discussion, especially the importance of political parties for the development of a supranational frame of functioning of European structures, the positions and relations

among political parties, the attitude of the public towards membership in the European Union, and the tasks of civil and lobby groups in the process of integration.

The programme of the conference was divided into four parts. The first part was focussed on the role of parliaments in countries with full membership in the EU in process of European integration. The second part was dedicated to the role of Central-European parliaments in their pre-entry strategy. The third part sought to identify the role of the European Union and national institutions in the process of extending the EU to encompass the Central European countries. The reports read in the fourth part diverted attention from the parliaments to the significance of public opinion, political parties and lobby groups in the process of European integration.

The conference, which took place in the historical seat of the Czech assembly in a informal atmosphere of expert discussions among a wide spectrum of specialists, was undoubtedly a valuable professional experience for the participants from countries that aspire to membership in the EU, and for full members of the EU a deeper acquaintance with the problems of associate members which are not always clear in official political communication.

Zdenka Mansfeldová