

scientific contact with the Western colleagues through short visits, attending conferences and research seminars and, last but not least, profiting from the visits of Western scientists in Hungary.

The three strategies might obviously be combined. My advice for young social scientists is to spend one or two semesters as Ph.D. students in some Western universities, which are, indeed, not at all schools of "janissaries", then return to a scientific job in Hungary and combine the maintenance of foreign contacts through short visits with teaching and research in Hungary. I do not see any inherent conservatism and provincialism of Hungarian universities and research institutes, mentioned by Csepeli-Örkény-Scheppele, which prevents these young scientists from getting a job.

I would like to emphasize simply that all the three strategies are completely legitimate and none of them ought to be judged in depreciative terms. The only bad strategy, in my opinion, is the withdrawal from cooperation with foreign social scientists.

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The Immune Deficiency – Acquired or Inherited?

Comments on Csepeli-Örkény-Scheppele: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in Social Science in Eastern Europe

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not simply the presence of a body (which may be, as the authors write, only an "empty shell"), but rather the presence of mutual communication and reflexivity, then the Slovak sociological community appears to be near its death agony.

I was astonished by the accuracy of the authors' analysis in regard to the state of the social sciences (certainly of sociology) in Slovakia, as if their analysis had been elaborated with the case of Slovak sociology directly in mind. I could stop here and limit myself to complimenting the authors' sociological imagination: the study is a remarkable and familiar analysis of the complex conditions of social sciences in Eastern Europe; it enables us to observe the individual professional troubles of doing sociology within wider institutional frameworks; it discloses several coincidentally operating factors of our situation, and illuminates their mutual amplification, and so on. It would be, indeed, more convenient and safe (though certainly unfair) to avoid elaborating on my conviction that the present state of Slovak sociology supports the plausibility of the conclusions Csepeli et al. I am not sure if I can manage to do what the authors have done admirably; to rise above solidarity commitments, and to break a tacit game of our successful incorporation into the world's social science. A low ability to whip myself out of the group whose state

My impression of the paper by Csepeli et al. was mixed. Although a response to a similarly accomplished paper usually starts with the sentence "I have read the paper with great pleasure," it seems to me impossible to repeat the standard pattern in the present context; it would sound almost morbid, as if I were admitting to having read a coroner's report with pleasure.

If the concern at hand is the social sciences in all the Eastern European countries, it could be an exaggeration to compare the authors' diagnosis with a coroner's account. However, regarding the situation in Slovakia, such a comparison does not sound so inappropriate. I am not thinking of the "institutional body" of Slovak sociology in using this metaphor; research and educational institutions, a professional journal, and even the professional association, have survived, and the majority of researchers are busy with data collecting and processing. But if I take as an indicator of sociological life

and sanity is being discussed, creates a shortsighted perspective which makes me embarrassed to look into in the offered "mirror" and to consider the analysis to be unfair and indecent. I find inappropriate not only the public (international) avowal of poverty (we have traditionally kept this to ourselves) and rigidity, but feel justifiably anxious that the merciless disclosure of our subordinate and inferior position in the projects usually called "international cooperation" might not have beneficial effects, but rather destructive ones – not only concerning our self-esteem and dignity, but more importantly, our prospects in being judged by domestic institutions (grant agencies, committees that give scholarly degrees, and ministries).

This gloomy view on the possible consequences of the essay by Csepeli et al. seems to be considerably loaded by my domestic experience. It might, perhaps, be interesting to try to explain why I surmise that such a thorough and consequential analysis could not appear in Slovakia.

All the factors they describe as contributing to the "acquired immune deficiency" in the social sciences in Eastern Europe seem to be "effective" also in Slovakia; however, Slovak sociology has other specificities. The authors observe that the Eastern European scholarly community is in a disintegrated state ("due to historical legacy of suspicion and distrust" as well as a "doomed state of their mutual competition for rewards"). Slovak sociology is, in addition, faced with a chronic ignorance among native scholars of each other's work and a lack of critical feedback. As I have suggested, the prevailing view among Slovak sociologists is that we have ceased to exist as an intellectual community. Attempts to revitalize, or more precisely, to start a discussion about the changes and the present state of our discipline, have failed¹. Although none of those who addressed the problem of our sociology aspired to provide a complex account, it seems useful to compare their points to those stressed by Csepeli et al. First, the critique was not aimed at the worsening material conditions of scientific work (the self-evident poverty is both an uninteresting and an awkward topic for public discussion). A more vivid problem appears to be "how our sociologists have mastered the new situation of free choice of theoretical perspectives, which, given the still fallow field of Slovak sociology, they need for their work (Sopóci Ján, 1993)." Sopóci, classifying Slovak sociologists according to the "respected theoretical perspectives they could now apply in their research," finds that the most numerous are those "who are distinguished mainly by the absence of any conscious theoretical perspective as well as by their apparent feeling that they can do

¹ The first paper on the given topic was written by Ján Sopóci in the beginning of 1993. Sopóci considered his paper to be an introduction, and it contained several points challenging the state of sociological research. The main critique was aimed at the empty place that still remained after the loss of the Marxist-Leninist ideological or theoretical framework and the lack of communication. The editor of Sociological Diary (the bulletin of the Institute for Sociology and of the Slovak Sociological Association) sent the paper to ten prominent Slovak sociologists with a request to write comments on it. Only one of them (Roško Robert, 1993) replied. Even though both papers were published in the bulletin and sent to all members of the Slovak Sociological Association, as well as to all the research and education institutions, nobody was provoked to reply to calls for opening discussion or to the critique of their mutual isolation. Sopóci incited the new wave of the discussion in the spring of 1995. With several other colleagues, he organized the workshop "Theoretical Diversification of Slovak Sociology." Several contributing papers later appeared in Sociological Diary (No. 2) and in the journal Sociologia (No. 4). Even though the workshop was carefully advertised, there was no audience for the papers other than the workshop organizers.

without one." According to him, there is even a connection between someone's contempt for theoretical framing, and his or her participation in international research projects: "Exactly these sociologists are now extremely valued by our Western colleagues – unfortunately, mostly as a cheap assistant labor force, willing to do the black sociological work. It's a wonder, but under our conditions, even this kind of participation on cross-national projects is highly appreciated." (Sopóci 1993)

The next part of the critique (Roško, 1993, Köverová, 1995) focuses on the problem of conflicts between political and professional roles. According to Roško, "The source of mutual alienation among Slovak sociologists does not lie in the domain of (divergent) theoretical perspectives, in the differing views on sociological work itself, but in their political divergence; we are unable to respect each other as political party members, and for that we ignore each other as professionals."² Štefánia Köverová (Köverová 1995) discusses the problem of communication between the sociological elite and the rest of the scholarly community as a consequence of mixing professional and political merits (namely, resistance to the socialist system before 1989 and political activity afterwards). However, she goes further and suggests that the unwillingness to communicate that is evident among colleagues well-known for their international contacts, may well spring out of an effort to protect their "gold-bearing streams against competitive gold-diggers." Köverová's allusion to a jealous guarding of information about one's Western contacts and funding sources expresses a common belief in the advantages of international (East-West) cooperation. This belief is both the source and the outcome of the lack of mutual communication. It is maintained and preserved due to the obvious tendency to conceal both successful and unsuccessful experiences with international cooperation. Under the prevailing silence regarding even blunt exploitation, scholars who have experienced such subordination and inferiority are "destined" to interpret their experiences as personal failure and/or as their professional impotence in asserting their equal position with Western researchers.

The public explanation of the disintegration of the Slovak sociological community, however, points more often to the time-consuming nature of international cooperation than to internal competition and lack of solidarity. Warnings that the space for open discussion (as is the sociological association or the university) is in danger of drying up are often met with optimistic responses; critics are advised to interpret the dwindling interest in domestic sociological discussion as the necessary outcome of successfully moving and settling into an international space of sociological discourse³.

² Roško here deals with the problem analyzed by Csepeli et al. under the heading "Traditional mission of East European intellectuals." However, unlike Csepeli et al. who take political involvement to be the cause for the depletion of the scholarly circle and altering the classic role of the intellectual, Roško deals with the intrusion of partiality into the very heart of sociological analysis and its fragmenting effects on the sociological community. Remarkably, Roško – having in mind the need to reinforce professional communication – welcomes the forced return of intellectuals from the domain of politics. This return in Slovakia happened in much the same way as in Hungary, only two years earlier because of a different election period.

³ In spite of many colleagues' long-term participation in international projects, the editor of our professional journal has still waited for the first paper written by a Slovak sociologist and his or her Western co-author. The absence of this kind of result from international cooperation seems to suggest that speaking about the incorporation of Slovak sociology into the space of world sociology is, perhaps, more a language convention than the description of "real state of affairs".

The next factor of fading communication among Slovak sociologists seems to be the enormous thematic fragmentation of domestic research projects. It is a bit of an exaggeration to state that every Slovak sociologist (or a research group consisting of a few members) owns his or her individual field of sociological research or his or her own sociological sub-discipline.⁴

In this situation it sounds reasonable to think that, if a scholar's task is to preserve their respective sociological sub-discipline (for instance, sociology of youth, social stratification), specialists are forced to look for feedback to their scientific work within the framework of the domestic sociological community, but in the frame of the international one. On the other hand, the over-specialization and thematic splitting of Slovak sociology is undoubtedly the outcome of received offers for participation on Western research projects. Western colleagues' demands become tacitly perceived as the target market for Slovak sociological products, rather than the domestic intellectual community.

RIGIDITY OF ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS?

The part of the paper Csepeli et al. which deals with the rigidity of domestic institutions (causing the loss of young gifted scholars) seems less commensurate to the Slovak situation. The meager interest of young scholars in entering the yearly competition for Ph.D. scholarships has a more trivial cause: the scholarship offered cannot feasibly cover their life expenses. This condition is, however, beyond the power of 'rigid and malicious' academicians; it is connected to the system of wage regulation in the entire public sector, aimed at limiting the threat of inflation. Since 1991, the Slovak Grant Agency for Sciences has fulfilled the role of granting funds for independent research. However, the state budget funds given to the agency are dwindling and grant holders (from both the natural sciences and humanities) are usually unable to fulfill their research plans without taking part in Western research projects and funding. The domestic grants awarded are in no way sufficient for covering travel expenses, facility equipment, and so on.

This financial situation has led to a new development. In the last five years, international cooperation (or more precisely, the ability to raise foreign funding) has become the important criterion in judging the competence of grant applicants and entire research institutions. The function of the criterion is not only to encourage domestic scholars to improve the standards of their work, but to reduce pressure on domestic funding. The skill in raising funding for travel or field research from foreign partners has become an expected constituent of a scholars' professional competence. With dwindling domestic funding sources and the tacit acknowledgement that the need for bare reproduction of the technical basis for the sciences is now most urgent, the criteria for scholarly competence has apparently softened. The achievements of international cooperation are then measured and judged not only by the number of published papers and by the index of references to them, but also by the social scientists' ability to cover their expenses themselves and to gain for their workplace (often incompatible) facilities, software, and so on.

⁴ Recently, I was visited by a colleague who came to assure herself that I would not be offended if she chose a subject for her research project that is close to what I work on myself. This personal experience suggests that the fragmentation of sociology and the monopolization of thematic fields has begun to be perceived not as a pathological feature, but as the accepted standard.

In such an unfavorable situation, even the minute contributions of western "colonizers" are perceived to be of considerable benefit. In this regard, we can speak about readiness and voluntary acceptance of a redeeming western colonization. The pleasure of technical toys and of travelling, which in Slovakia are still far from self-evident and taken-for-granted, is so simple and heartfelt, that it seems incorrect to speak of a general recognition of achievements of international cooperation. Rather, we have to speak about a shift in the interpretation of what scientific achievement consists of.

The most serious cause for inhibitions in domestic scholarly discussion and raising of sociological reflexivity, seem to be the increasing external attempts to infringe on autonomy in doing social science. In other words, the products of Slovak sociology are often discussed by statesmen and their court journalists. The mere presentation of the findings of international comparative projects (the quality of which was discussed by Csepeli et al.) evokes fierce critical reactions from the present ruling elite. The political critique aims mostly at the comparative analysis of the transformation process, and on the interpretations of findings that document a certain backwardness and dilatory transition in Slovakia. Such research projects, as well as the Slovak sociologists participating in them, are passionately reprobed for "harming the good reputation of our young Slovak Republic." The critique of sociological research in journals close to the present ruling elite, not infrequently results in calls for taking provisions and measures against scholars who are perceived as being harmful to Slovakia.⁵ Perhaps in some western countries such calls would not arouse much concern. However, the Slovak scholarly community (similarly to those in other former socialist countries), has fifty years of experience with political purges that often wear the face of professional, scientific critiques. This historical experience nourishes a fear that scientific arguments will be misused, and restrains willingness to address similar critical comments and to discuss the adequacy of comparative models. On the other hand, such a critique could be taken by the rest of international sociological community as an expression of xenophobia and isolationism that are then assumed to be covers for professional incompetence.

In this regard, I am sure that if a paper identical to that written by Csepeli et al. were to appear in Slovakia, its authors would be suspected of close adherence to nationalist political parties. Their vocabulary would serve as an easy, clear signal of a nationalistic and xenophobic position. In Slovak public discourse, words such as "jannissary" or "renegade" belong to the sharpest expressions of public condemnation; they are only used by

⁵ The example by such a call is the paper of J. Handžárik (Handžárik, 1994) published in the leading journal of the Slovak Writers Association, in which he shares his impression of the sociology and political science conference "Slovakia - Elections 1994 - Causes - Outcomes - Perspectives". Even the headline of his paper ("Confused babbling - or partly from idiocy and mainly for foreign money") concentrates primary suspicion on foreign cooperation. He not only asserts that the critical analysis of Slovak transformation is the direct result of foreign funding of research, but in his concluding remarks, he directly advises the Ministry of Education and Science to "think twice" about whom to allow to work at Slovak universities and the Academy of Sciences.

Though attempts to dismiss such scholars have not transpired, in 1995 the Ministry of Education and Science decided to postpone funding for new research projects until it could "get acquainted" with them. Even though they had won grants from the Slovak Grant Agency, the research projects still have to wait for a final decision. They were submitted (only on September 26, 1995) to the session of Slovak government for passing judgment on their "suitability." The government found the material on the project incomplete and returned it for elaboration.

orators who assume their mission is looking for the enemies of "our young Slovakia". Because of its political connotation, the word "jannissary" is disqualified from use in a scientific text even as an innocent metaphor.

THE RIGHT OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

I return to the metaphor of "fallow field", used by Sopóci (Sopóci, 1993) to illuminate the state of theoretical work in Slovak sociology. The metaphor and his emphasis on the necessity of Slovak sociology to adopt and apply some other (non-marxist) theoretical perspectives, contrasts with the statements by Csepeli et al. about the collapse of a unique research apparatus of the East European social sciences that might have existed before the western colonization. The Slovak sociological community is aware of its⁶ as well as the small size of Slovak society. The meaning of smallness is far from a bare recognition of the numerical population; rather, "smallness" seems to represent the level of spirit and trust in national intellectual competence and creativity. The acceptance of "smallness" is nourished by historical experiences and the inherited notion that a society of such small size can only be changed and modernized by adopting outside patterns, not only in the domain of economy and techniques, but also in the cultural domain. This intellectual tradition has made Slovak intellectuals more open, flexible, and ready to adapt foreign ideas, but on the other hand, less trusting of their right to think independently. Calls for more careful study of our own cultural traditions are, at best, perceived as the product of romantics. This intellectual tradition substantially contributes to our readiness and voluntary acceptance of the western colonization of Slovak social science.

EAST EUROPEAN COMMUNICATION

I warmly commend the attempt of Csepeli et al. to point out the negative effects of the disintegration of the East European scholarly community. However, it seems to me, that so-called traditional mistrust and language barriers are maintained primarily because of material misery. This misery nourishes a new type of distrust, linked to our firm certitude that we are competing against one another for Western funding.⁷

⁶ At present, there are little more than fifty sociologists who remain active contributors to the professional sociological journal. However, since 1964, when the study of sociology was reestablished at Comenius University, more than 600 students graduated from sociology. To this number we should add the dozens of graduates from other social sciences, who in the sixties and seventies re-qualified themselves as sociologists. The problem with the influx of young gifted scientists is the same as was described by Csepeli et al. in general. However, the few young scholars who had the chance to enter postgraduate studies to Western countries are not perceived by older scholars with suspicion. On the contrary, the academic institutions rather look to them with respectful hope, trying to win them for work at the University and Academy. However, they look only at their backs, as they march to private market agencies or foundations, where they have no time for developing theoretical beliefs.

⁷ This collective certitude has been partly grounded in the experiences of Slovak sociologists with western researchers' habit of approaching Czech research institutions, and asking them to run surveys on both republics. Symptomatic of the belief of Slovak sociologists that the other post-communist countries' social scientists profit considerably much more from East - West cooperation, is the comment of a colleague of mine, after he finished reading the essay of Csepeli et al.: "I can hardly believe that the authors are Hungarians. I guess they have done much better! They have to be much more successful in raising money from Western funds!"

Though I can imagine positive effects of revitalizing Central European cooperation, I am not very optimistic. First, a project of wider cooperation does not seem to be realistic if it does not receive support from a third party, that is, from Western funding agencies. Second, it seems much too ambitious to think that the intellectual community, now struggling for bare reproduction, could manage to resist a more general tendency in sociology to orient itself towards simple data and analyzing, towards literal "camera science" - which Raymond Boudon, for instance, has pointed out (Boudon 1993). Boudon demonstrated that a considerable part of the problems that face social sciences in post-communist countries has to do with general shifts in the social status of sociology. The foggy proposals by Csepeli et al. concerning of institutional changes in the cultural sphere (privatization, abolishing the monopoly of Academies of Sciences) do not give grounds to hope for more substantial changes of our situation. Even in the unlikely instance that we would be paid enough in domestic currency, the main consumers of "sociological production" will still be those who have an interest in "data", that is, in the products of "Big Science"; and the "invisible hand" of the domestic market for sociological products will force us into the position of data collectors. Slovak experience with the lack of mutual interest in the reading and discussing of other colleagues' texts, do not provide the basis for creating some alternative (intellectual) market for sociological products (and perhaps, in products fashioned not in the Big Science style). However, thanks to the provocative study of Csepeli et al. I begin to feel a tiny hope that at some point we might be able to create such a market on the broader territory of Central Europe. The first step seems to have been taken.

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