

this respect Masaryk is jokingly compared to his first biographer, Zdeněk Nejedlý. It is as if by his actions he sought to validate Chalupný's famous hypothesis on the „Czechoslovak national character,“ with its so-called „anticipatory nature.“ According to Chalupný, just as the stress is always on the first syllable in the Czech language, so in life we Czechs begin everything with a great

build-up to the event and rarely see it through with any rigour. We can only hope that this hypothesis does not hold for the publication of Masaryk's *Collected Writings*, which has been begun for the third time, in by no means the worst way, with the publication of his *Juvenilia*.

Miloslav Petrusek

Jaroslav Krejčí: Society in a Global Perspective

Praha, SLON 1993, 59 p.

Jaroslav Krejčí, Professor Emeritus at Lancaster University in Great Britain, engages the exciting and complex subject of comparative civilisations in his new introductory guidebook, *Society in a Global Perspective*. In it he attempts both to examine the manner in which cultural, political and social relationships are arranged around the world and to point the way to a theoretical understanding of the differences and, more importantly, the similarities in the way that the world's societies are organised. This short book, while raising anew questions that have intrigued scholars for over a century, does not and indeed, because of its length, cannot come to a complete answer, and should be seen as primarily a guide to further reading and a stimulus for further thought.

Professor Krejčí's erudition is brought to bear on the history of the subject in the essay's first part, which discusses the major theorists of societal organisation and categorisation. Ranging between the vision of the socio-economic foundation of society in Marx and Toynbee's cultural conception of civilisation, he describes the ideas of Max Weber, Alfred Kroeber, Pitirim Sorokin, Talcott Parsons, Georges Gurvitch and Michael Mann, among others. While this allows him the opportunity to summarise many important theoretical frameworks and suggest a substantial amount of primary reading for students interested in the topic, it ultimately fails to excite the reader about the subject at hand. This is partly due to the length of the section; only twenty-five pages are allotted for the discussion of

some of the greatest and most influential minds of the preceding century. Given this, there are an inordinate number of lists of categories that various thinkers have utilised in their attempts to come to grips with the subject. Krejčí's all too brief summaries would likely leave the uninformed reader confused, and the informed one wondering why certain elements of, say, Marx's theories are stressed (the class struggle) and others ignored entirely (ownership of the means of production as a hallmark of societal differentiation.)

The second half of the booklet is more interesting and well argued. In the confrontation between the two predominant ways of viewing the development of humanity, socio-cultural and socio-economic, Krejčí stands firmly on the side of the former. While recognising the importance in the modern era of industrialisation and urbanisation, which would seem to make consciousness subordinate to position in the production process and living environment, he argues that „from a higher vantage point“ the dependence lies elsewhere: „Industrialisation is unimaginable without a series of inventions and innovations which in their turn were due to a substantial change in many people's mentality and value orientation.“ [34-5] He then proceeds to name the eight interconnected complexes that he sees as composing the main issues of social life: 1) human nature, both biological and psychological; 2) the natural environment, both animate and inanimate; 3) the level of production and technology; 4) style of life and art; 5) ideation, i.e. views and values; 6) distribution of work and effort; 7) distribution of income and wealth; and

8) distribution of power and influence. He strikes a cautionary note in relation to these, noting that depending on which of them stress is placed, the results of analysis may differ greatly in scope and value.

Concomitant to his emphasis on the sociocultural view of human development, Krejčí opts for the term „civilisation“ (borrowed from Toynbee) to describe the units of his analysis. Here he alerts the reader to be on guard against the value judgements that can arise from a biased use of this term. Consistent with his cultural emphasis (which is shared by this reviewer) he believes that an „individual civilisation can best be identified by particular sets of ideas of what is considered to be true and desirable, in brief, by a world-view,“ whose construction can be seen in three essentially Kantian dimensions: cognitive (what we know), normative (what we are supposed to do), and transcendental (what we hope for). [39] The identifying marks of individual civilisations’ world views can easily be found in external manifestations, such as religious texts or master institutions. The most important, however, Krejčí finds lying more subtly: in the „interpretation of the human predicament,“ defined as „the sense that people make of their life and... the phenomenon of death, which is the only certainty of everybody’s life.“ [42] The importance of this particular construction for Krejčí can be seen in the comparative and analytical subject of his most recent book, *The Human Predicament, Its Changing Image*. (London: Macmillan, 1993)

His cultural and psychological bent reveals itself again in the manner in which he views human collectives ranging in size from families and kinship groups through larger ones such as classes and nations. Here he again places stress on the less visible marks of collective life experience, subordinating the observable ones (such as common household, language and workplace) to self-image and subjective consciousness of group identification. „Consciousness“ is the key word here for Krejčí, as his two examples amply illustrate. First, he observes that even Marx recognised that the working class needs to be conscious of itself before it can act on

the world stage (and notes that the attempt to create a *consciousness* of solidarity built on common social structure in the former Eastern Bloc failed miserably.) Second, he points to the power of nationalism to penetrate the social fabric (again noting its power in the former Eastern Bloc.)

When viewing the structural component of societies, Krejčí warns against oversimplifying the complex nature of societies and regarding social structure as the key to their understanding. He argues that it is crucial to recognise that „More often than not the structure of society is a conglomerate of various systems each operating according to a different set of rules.“ [48] His examples of present-day Britain (with its parliamentary democracy, market economy, monarchy and welfare state practices working alongside one another), feudal Western Europe (especially in the often conflictual relations between the various states and the Roman Catholic Church) and even the USSR (with the existence of pockets of autonomous culture and pervasive bartering and black market dealing) amplify this point particularly well.

In conclusion, Krejčí discusses the importance of religion and ideology on the one hand, and technology on the other. He argues that religious beliefs are not necessarily an indicator of social structure and arrangement, and that one must always be aware that modern ideologies are often offered as an ex post justification for the way society is already organised. The power of technological advance, he argues, should never be underestimated, although its link to particular socio-economic and socio-cultural configurations cannot be taken for granted. Technological innovation, he concludes in a remark that summarises his view of the importance of human consciousness, is one more example showing that „it is first of all the change of people’s mentality and value orientation which can achieve a breakthrough on a significant and comprehensive scale.“ [59]

Many of Krejčí’s observations in this second half of his short book are worthy of further reflection and elaboration, and the reader is left wondering why he was limited

(or limited himself) to so few pages for such a complex topic. Perhaps it would have been wiser in this respect to have devoted the essay solely to his own ideas and abandoned the attempt to present 150 years of sociological and cultural critical commentary as an introduction, and, instead, to provide a bibliography for further reading. Similarly, due perhaps to spatial restraints, rather than involving himself in the complexities of a particular point, he moves on after warning against oversimplification, or letting one's biases slip into one's analysis or acting on

incomplete data from the past or other geographical regions. The book is peppered with phrases like „on the other hand,“ and especially „we also have to bear in mind.“ This detracts from the power of Krejčí's argument, as does his style in general, which gives the impression that these are only the lecture notes of a powerful mind and wise and humanistic scholar whose more carefully considered and fully elaborated views we would like to hear.

Bradley Abrams