

MILOSLAV PETRUSEK

## SOCIOLOGY OF SMALL GROUPS AND SOCIOMETRY IN CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIOLOGY

Neither research nor theory in the field of small social groups can boast of anything like a long tradition in Czechoslovak sociology. The early more significant empirical studies of the thirties were centered on research into individual social strata, i. e. the working class, the intelligentsia, the peasants, on problems of local communities, to a certain extent on those of urban agglomerations but not of small social groups. A certain exception can be seen in the work pioneering to a certain degree — of Otakar Machotka *K sociologii rodiny* (On the Sociology of the Family)<sup>1)</sup> in which family is conceptually analyzed, from the point of view of a group, on the one hand, the group being defined in the given context primarily by the fact of interaction between individuals of whom it is made up, and from an institutional point of view, on the other. As for methodology, Machotka lays stress on empirical approaches — e. g. observation, use of questionnaire, statistical evaluation processes, etc. and rejects the a priori construed conceptual scheme that is not sufficiently based on empirical material.<sup>2)</sup> Yet not even in Machotka's study was the concept of „small group“ applied as an analytical conceptual tool, which is easy to understand if one considers the fact that in the early thirties the sociology of small groups was virtually only making first steps towards constituting itself. Rather different view-points were applied to the problem of the family by Arnošt Bláha, the most eminent representative of the Czech Structural School in sociology,<sup>3)</sup> who set out to follow — though not in a strictly empirical way — the changes in family relationships and in the social functions of the monogamous family which in their sum total are described as a state of crisis the causes, conditions and consequences of which must be subjected to careful analysis. It is not without interest to note that in his study Bláha anticipates a great deal of that which today forms the subject of literature — nowadays already extensive — which examines the bearing of industrialization

1) O. Machotka: *K sociologii rodiny. Příspěvek k metodám empirické sociologie* (On the Sociology of the Family. Contribution to Methods of Empirical Sociology), Prague, 1932.

2) The results of Machotka's researches were not published until 1939—41.

3) E. g. *The Contemporary Crisis of the Family*. Prague, 1933.

processes and of industrial society upon the structure, position and function of the family in modern societies.<sup>4)</sup>

Thus family was the only type — moreover, an outstandingly specific one — of a small social group that had been investigated in greater detail and theoretically analyzed in the first stages of development of Czechoslovak sociology. This, for that matter, is in harmony with development trends in world sociology where, too, research into family (e. g. in the work of Durkheim, Le Play, in the American sociology of Elwood, Cooley, Ogburn and Groves) preceded the study of other types of small groups and the development of a general theory of small groups.

However, in the forties and fifties Czechoslovak sociology not only lost continuity with its own earlier development but also its contacts with world sociology.

In the first stages of its further development, this time on the basis of Marxist philosophy and general sociology, it had suffered from supercritical and often oversimplifying approaches to microsociological problems which were in many respects not unlike those criticisms of empirical sociology that we can read in Sorokin's works or, though admittedly from other points of view, in a study written by Horowitz.<sup>5)</sup> The classical Marxist tradition of thought, moreover conspicuously deformed in the fifties, had laid stress on the study of macrostructural movement and changes, the study of microstructural problems being regarded as a kind of escape from the topical problems of restructuring the property and social relations. It was only the relatively stable way in which the newly set up social structure worked that made it necessary, even on practical grounds (in much the same way as in the American society of the thirties) to undertake a more systematic study of small social groups which operate in certain organizational systems and modify their working. Leaving out of account the shortlived period of opposition to microsociology based on ideological grounds then not even this phenomenon — the relatively late awakening of interest in microsociological problems — was historically unique or exceptional, a systematic investigation of microsocial processes and structures, their control and restructuring being possible only in a society where the fundamental problems of macrostructural set-up have either been solved to a substantial degree, or where this set-up is at least stabilized.

Unlike Polish sociology Czechoslovak sociology did not pass through a pronounced stage of „Americanization“, this being the case in spite of the extraordinary attention which has been devoted e. g. particularly to American microsociology. To avoid terminological misconception let us put it on record that

<sup>4)</sup> For survey and critical analysis of these writings, particularly of those published in the USA and in Germany see J. Klofáč and V. Tlustý, *Soudobá sociologie* (Contemporary Sociology), Vol. II. of their extensive monograph, Prague 1967.

<sup>5)</sup> Cf. *The New Sociology*, New York, 1965.

we share a certain reserve towards the term „microsociology“ as formulated by Lazarsfeld<sup>6)</sup> in group situations (social psychological aspect), the study of the rise, development, functioning and structural characteristics of small groups, of their mutual relations and their relations to organizational system with which they are connected (sociological aspects). Thus this set of problems had not been taken over „from outside“ but began to develop on the basis of internal social needs and the research interest evinced by Czechoslovak sociologists. The consequences of this were, on the one hand, positive in having prevented a mechanical transfer of empirical findings which has been formulated in a different sociocultural sphere to an inadequate environment, while, on the other hand, the set of terms already worked out and conceptual schemes and especially the available research techniques and procedures were not utilized.<sup>7)</sup>

To begin with, interest in small-group problems is focussed almost exclusively on the research of work groups, and especially on their specific type arisen in the late fifties, on the so called *Brigades of Socialist Work*. Though this problem orientation did to a great extent reveal ideological pressure to the effect that a majority of the studies devoted to these problems consisted of apologies of the social significance of the Brigades of Socialist Work rather than their actual sociological analysis, the choice of the problem in question was in itself justified. The fact is that in 1962 the Brigades of Socialist Work movement involved 905527 persons, i. e. 7,9 per cent of the economically active population, the number of groups competing for the title of Brigade of Socialist Work amounting to a total of 83963. From the sociological point of view the interesting aspect of the problem was that it was an attempt to utilize systematically non-formal interpersonal relationships in the work group as well as interaction outside work itself (joint attendance of entertainments, mutual visits, excursions, etc.) for raising the effectiveness of work, for modifying the psychological atmosphere in the group, and for internalizing social norms. However, an analysis of this movement in current sociological terms formal and non-formal structure and organization, internalization of norms, identification with the group, attractiveness of the groups etc. — was practically not effected until the time when the movement had become formalized to such a degree that it ceased to fulfil its planned social mission.<sup>8)</sup> The first extensive

<sup>6)</sup> P. F. Lazarsfeld „Methodological Problems in Empirical Research“ in *Transactions of the Fourth World Congress of Sociology*, Vol. II, London, 1959.

<sup>7)</sup> This phenomenon was also undoubtedly connected with the absolute shortage of foreign literature as late as the late fifties, most of the information being frequently taken over „secondhand“, e. g. from Polish sociological literature, particularly from works by Matejko, Hirszowic, Kowalewska and others.

<sup>8)</sup> See M. Petrušek: „Non-formal structure and formal organization of an industrial enterprise in: *Sociální struktura socialistické společnosti* (Social Structure of Socialist Society), Prague, 1967.

empirical research into Brigades of Socialist Work, (i. e. in effect the first major empirical sociological research after 1948 in general) was undertaken by a research team headed by Pavel Machonin in 1960. The conception of the research proceeded from the presupposition that Brigades of Socialist Work can be conceived as very special social groups in which the basic development characteristics of processes in the society as a whole are reflected.<sup>9)</sup> As a result, the subject of the analysis was the link between these groups and certain organizational or macrostructural processes and characteristics rather than an analysis of internal structure and workings of these groups themselves. Thus the analysis had been carried out still in terms of the classical Marxist socio-political theory (division of labour into physical and intellectual, consciousness, spontaneity, collectivity, etc.), the ultimate aim being an attempt at working out a synthetic, complex characterization of socialist society. It is only natural that the logical continuation of an investigation conceived in this way was not a systematic examination of microsociological problems but an extensively conceived empirical research into the social structure of Czechoslovakia, particularly of vertical social differentiation (stratification) and mobility.<sup>10)</sup>

It is interesting to note that even in this investigation a certain attention was paid to microsociological problems which were empirically investigated on the basis of a modified sociometric technique. We proceeded from the presupposition that analysis of interaction patterns derived from the analysis of the respondent's basic social characteristics which in their sum total made it possible to construct a synthetic index of social status (income, occupational position, education, part taken in power and control, style of life), and a number of other characteristics (prestige, mobility path, ethnic and nationality membership, age, locality etc.) will enable us to give at least a partial answer to questions relating to the open or closed character of social strata, social distance, and to some potential determinant of interaction and sociopreferential orientation.<sup>11)</sup>

Microsociology itself then developed — with continuing specific interest in Brigades of Socialist Work — on the basis of special sociological disciplines, particularly of the sociology of industry, of agriculture, of the army, and of education. However, investigations carried out after 1960 already bear marks of familiarity with the basic microsociological literature as well as with research techniques currently applied in western sociology.

<sup>9)</sup> Brigády socialistické práce a sociální přeměny naší společnosti (Brigades of Socialist Work and Social Changes in Our Society), Prague, 1963.

<sup>10)</sup> For an account of the project of this research see the *Proceedings of the Sixth Sociological World Congress at Evian*, 1966.

<sup>11)</sup> Cf. M. Petrušek, Contribution to the Problems of Social Interaction, Preference and Distance in the Research into Vertical Social Differentiation and Mobility of the Czechoslovak Population, *Sociologický časopis* (Sociological Journal), Vol. 6, 1967.

Let us give at least by way of illustration an outline of the information on two interesting investigations of *work groups*. E. Horáková studied a set of work groups in agricultural production. The basis adopted for a description of the set was the kind of work performed (animal and plant production, use of agricultural machines and others), age and sex (let us mention an interesting fact that 99 per cent of all the kinds of work in which agricultural machines are used are performed by men); work groups were subdivided as to size (74 per cent of all groups studied being composed of 3 to 10 members, the rest of 11 to 21 members). Other problems studied by the author included the problem of leadership in the work group, the character of inside-group relationships, identification with the group, and interaction outside work itself. Thus it was ascertained that 94 per cent of the group leaders had been elected by the group members, the criteria for the leaders' choice having been laid down by the group itself — so that at least in the initial stages of development of these groups the leaders' non-formal authority had been ensured. 30 per cent of the leaders were at the same time formally nominated leaders of workplaces in which several groups were concentrated from the organizational point of view.

The analysis of the leaders' psychological and social characteristics yielded an unambiguous conclusion that leaders were capable people with regard to their profession, their character and the quality of their work, their age being lower than the age average of the groups they were leading. (This phenomenon is, of course, to be attributed to the generally high age average of persons engaged in agricultural production). Intragroup relationships were studied, the technique applied being that of interaction observation and consequently not one of the sociometric techniques. 59 per cent of the collectives studied bore the characteristic traits of solidarity, a high degree of cooperation and mutual assistance, in 41 per cent of those collectives major or minor elements of strain, conflict and contradictions were to be observed. Working efficiency was in an unequivocally positive correlation with the characteristics of intragroup relationships. Further, it was established that the type of intragroup relationships depended, to a significant degree, on the basic characteristics of the workplace, particularly on economic results achieved, on technological processes applied, and on the way work was organized. What the analysis of group behaviour proceeded from was an analysis of the manner in which group norms arise, especially those governing group co-existence coupled with an analysis of deviant behaviour. It was ascertained that in most groups these questions were not topics of discussion or of more general interest so that notions about the norms of group life were rather vague, or at any rate — since the problem under examination were Brigades of Socialist Work — not specific, only 8 per cent of the groups being an exception. It does not, therefore, occasion any surprise to find that in 82 per cent of the groups norms of group co-existence were being violated to a prominent degree, only 21 per cent of them reacting in one

way or another to deviant or non-conformist behaviour. An interesting item of investigation with the group: the index of identification selected for this purpose being whether or not the member-group also served as reference group for individuals. 33 per cent of the persons did not regard their own group as a reference group in any way whatever, 16 per cent did so only in the sphere of behaviour at work. Consistent interaction outside work was observed only in 5 per cent of the persons studied, in 82 per cent there was such fortuitous occasional interaction as is common in a local community and thus — from the point of view of the problem under observation — non-specific. However, in 13 per cent of cases interaction occurred between families, in 10 per cent of them even marital relations being affected. Thus although the findings reviewed here do not in any substantial way deviate from what is comparatively well known from sociological literature on the degree of interrelation between the individual variables studied, the entire investigation (in the same way as a series of analogically conceived researches) brought positive results, by having, on the one hand, enabled the investigators to verify a number of statements derived from literature in the specific sociocultural field, while, on the other hand — from the point of view of the social function of the research undertaken — it enabled us to formulate certain empirically justified objections to be raised to the above-mentioned movement being idealized: the fact is that 31 per cent of the work teams studied did not fulfil the basic conditions for being actually regarded as Brigades of Socialist Work.

In the sphere of *industrial sociology* there have been quite a number of investigations, the most prominent among these being research into the shaping of non-formal relationships inside the work groups and their bearing on the feeling of satisfaction on the part of their members in their work, on work efficiency, as well as on the occurrence of negative concomitant phenomena (absenteeism, changing jobs, accident rate, wastage etc.) Relations between the degree of cohesiveness of the given work group measured by sociometric techniques and labour productivity, and the occurrence of negative concomitant phenomena, as well as between the type of leadership and the feeling of satisfaction resulting from work activity were examined by D. Langmeierová.<sup>13)</sup>

As can be readily seen both the formulation of the basic relationships between the variables under examination and the choice of basic hypotheses was the „traditional“ one, not differing in any significant way from the current approach to these problems adopted by industrial sociology. However, some findings were interesting, as some of the presuppositions which had currently appeared in literature upon the subject were not borne out by the investigation. What the

<sup>13)</sup> D. Langmeierová: Influence of Interhuman Relations in Small Work Groups on Work Productivity and Negative Working Behaviour, *Sociologický časopis* (Sociological Journal) 1967, Vol. 5.

author proved in the first place was that in all groups with prevailing positive sociometric mutual selections a positive correlation between a high degree of the group's cohesiveness and work efficiency can be established quite unequivocally: this was typical of the highly cohesive groups that they, at the same time, interiorized the norms laid down by the enterprise management. Furthermore — though an indirect proportionality between group cohesiveness and the rise of negative phenomena with regard to work it proved impossible to confirm — the existence of a direct relationship was established between them (e. g. between absenteeism and the accident rate etc.). Nor was the presupposition that the number of dissatisfied persons will be considerably higher in groups with an authoritarian type of control borne out by the evidence in the same way as one failed to prove the dependence between the qualification index of the employees and their work efficiency. Of particular interest was the finding that the index of dissatisfaction was higher in cohesive groups than in groups with prevailing relationships of indifference or antipathy: here the more general hypothesis of Dragoslav Slejška seems to have been confirmed claiming that though cohesive groups may be more efficient they do possess a remarkably more positive attitude to work, at the same time being more significantly critical of working conditions, manner of management, organization of labour, etc.

Slejška devoted an independent investigation to this problem which though rather outside the scope of the context of sociology of small groups is, nevertheless, of extraordinary interest in view of its conclusions. What he studied was the relation between attitudes to the individual factors of the work process and the measure of satisfaction accorded to employees by the enterprise.<sup>14)</sup>

The investigation included, on the one hand, attitudes to social relationships in the work groups, to the organization and economic position of those working in the enterprise, to the character of work done, and to the physical conditions of the working process, and, on the other hand, the degree to which the employee identified him or herself with the enterprise, the criteria used being those of the willingness to self-denying and exacting work, of the feeling of satisfaction prevailing in the enterprise as a whole and the willingness to stay on, or possibly even to recommend to one's own children to choose work there as a career. The investigation has shown that there is a conspicuous relation between the positive attitudes to the individual factors of the work process and the decline in the measure of satisfaction accorded by one's enterprise, and, conversely, a relation between the growth of negative attitudes to the above-mentioned factors and the measure of satisfaction with the enterprise.<sup>15)</sup>

<sup>14)</sup> D. Slejška, Tendencies to the Reversibility of Factors of the Workers Identification with the Social Systems of an Industrial Plant, *Sociologický časopis* (Sociological Journal, 1967, Vol. 3.

<sup>15)</sup> Of course, it is necessary to remark that it was only in the case of workers that this phenomenon was observed unequivocally; the interrelations between findings in the

This phenomenon is obviously rather difficult to interpret, if only because here we are concerned with a highly specific phenomenon valid more appropriately for economic systems with a highly centralized and bureaucratic system of management. Here an assumption suggests itself — which would, of course, have yet to be verified by independent research — that the negatively evaluated factors are of long-term character and that the workers believe any change in them to be, for the moment, impossible and that moreover, these phenomena are to be encountered universally in the entire sphere of industrial economy so that one's negative appreciation of them cannot, for instance, motivate one's leaving the enterprise: these factors can therefore be termed „habitually negative“. In a similar way, positively evaluated factors are generally experienced as „pleasant“, yet at the same time, as „matter-of-course“, and thus cannot be acknowledged as a sufficient reason for one's being satisfied with the enterprise as a whole. On the contrary, it is the factors which are of an exceptional rather than of long-term character that underlie actual satisfaction with the enterprise. In this context the hypothesis on the dominating role of the character of interindividual relationships in the enterprise suggests itself since it is these phenomena that belong to the category of those that do not bear universal and unchangeable character.

Slejška's researches into work groups have resulted, among other things, in an interesting attempt at working out a structural typology of small groups.<sup>16)</sup> Theoretically, Slejška had originally proceeded from the more or less traditional Marxist notion regarding the collectivist character of socialist society as a whole in which attention was focussed on how to integrate the work group into the wider structural set-up and, conversely, to project collectivist social relationships and norms of social co-existence into the life of the work group in modern industry.<sup>17)</sup>

These rather *a priori* notions were gradually overcome, this being also due, not in the last instance, to the fact that the methodological tools available at the moment do not make it possible to verify them adequately. On the other hand, particularly the use of sociometric techniques, including those methods which had until recently been viewed rather as an object of „academic interest“ (e. g. multiplication of matrices) has resulted in a reorientation of problems, in the reformulation of hypotheses and of research aims. After a whole series of sociometric researches carried out in the environment of indu-

group of technicians and officials correspond to the „common sense“ presupposition that the growth of positive attitudes to individual factors tends to increase the measure of satisfaction with the enterprise as a whole.

<sup>16)</sup> D. Slejška, *Sociometrické studie* (Sociometric Studies), Military Political Academy of Klement Gottwald, 1965.

<sup>17)</sup> Cf. „Work team in the structure of socialist society“ in: *Social Structure of Socialist Society*, Prague 1967.



strial enterprises Slejška suggested a preliminary typology of work groups based on the following indices:

1. degree of differentiation of the group into subgroups;
2. the group's degree of cohesiveness;
3. character of non-formal authority in the group: whether non-formal authority is concentrated in the „core“ of the group, i. e. in a subgroup made up of a few members attached to one another by positive selections, or whether non-formal authority is vested in an individual, or in a number of mutually unattached individuals;
4. degree of concentration of group structure: the author proceeds from the presupposition that the existence of subgroups need not always necessarily entail mere decentralization of non-formal structure, in the case when all the subgroups are oriented towards the same central non-formal authority.

Thus on the basis of these indices the groups under examination were differentiated into five fundamental types:

1. groups with dispersed structure and no subgroups: these are groups where sociopreferential relations are only in the process of formation, or where there is no objective precondition (e. g. one given by the character of the production process) for such relationships to arise;
2. groups with concentrated structure and no subgroups: these are groups where non-formal authority is vested a single definite individual, or in a group „core“ which is not regarded as a subgroup in the proper sense of the term, since the positive orientation of the other members of the group to this core results in the latter not being perceived as a separate subgroup with decentralizing effects;
3. groups with concentrated structure and subgroups: the subgroups that have arisen within the group are mutually linked by sociopreferential relationships and show a uniform orientation to the same non-formal authority;
4. dispersed structure with subgroups: there is no non-formal authority within the group and the subgroups that have constituted themselves are not mutually linked with sociometric selections, not even in a mediated way.

There are three obvious merits in the proposed typology: 1. it is deduced from empirical materials, and thus is neither an a priori construction, nor an ad hoc typology; 2. it enables the investigator to study changes in the structure of the group in time and as depending on various factors in operation; 3. it can serve as a departure point for a finer typology which would also include „transitional“ types, or even those groups (generally more numerous) in which the structural characteristics of a number of specified „ideal types“ are seen to appear. Finally, let us note that the typology has been derived from an analysis and comparison of differentiated structures which appear and can be identified) in the application of differing sociometric criteria.

Apart from the researches quoted here by way of illustration which — as can be seen — were of theoretical character (the departing hypotheses were formulated, the variables to be studied were specified and operationalized, the conceptual scheme to be applied having been preliminarily analyzed and some generalizations and hypotheses for further possible investigations having been formulated), a whole series of investigations were carried out which were rather of a utilitarian, practical, i. e. sociotechnical character. No useful purpose would be served by describing them in greater detail, since these were current, essentially traditional investigations designed to restructure the groups, to modify interpersonal relations, identify authorities, to describe specific group norms, etc. Yet it is essential to state this fact as one bearing evidence on the contemporary, and, to a certain extent perspective, orientation of Czechoslovak sociology. The „renaissance“ of Czechoslovak sociology was associated, among other things, with widespread publicity given to social functions of sociology with special emphasis on its sociotechnical application, i. e. on the transformation of sociology into engineering. Thus in the minds of public opinion including those of the leading politicians a simplified, yet unfortunately unequivocal notion of sociology as an empirical discipline became fixed whose only sense is to gather together data relevant for practical life, regarding social processes and social behaviour. Thus sociology was reduced to a single one of its dimensions, to a single model of its internal structure, to its single social function. This trend which is being only gradually overcome naturally affected the sociology of small groups as well. It is only recently that a greater analytical and critical attention has been devoted to the existing microsociological theories, e. g. to the conceptions of Homans and Gurvitch, yet even this seems to be motivated by general theoretical interests rather than having a space for developing within a specifically microsociological context; thus for instance Homans's way of building up a sociological system has been studied as one of possible „ideal types“ of the building up of general sociological theory without taking into account its departing „object orientation“ (the analysis of the so-called elementary behaviour, etc.).

One of the attempts at gaining a more theoretical approach to some of the problems of the sociology of small groups is represented by Petrussek's study on sociometry<sup>18)</sup> which in addition to the necessary instructive aims pursues some generally methodological and theoretical questions. The choice of sociometry as a point of departure for an analysis of some pertinent questions of the theory of small groups and interpersonal relations was by no means fortuitous, particularly as within the context of sociology going through a process of development on a basis of Marxist thought shared a paradoxical fate. The fact

<sup>18)</sup> M. Petrussek: *Sociometrie-teorie, metoda, techniky* (Sociometry-Theory, Method, Techniques), Prague, 1969.

is that it had been analyzed either exclusively as a substantive general sociological theory in the classical shape that had been impressed upon it by Moreno as far back as the mid-thirties, i. e. as a conception which is anxious to interpret some macrostructural phenomena and processes in a microsociological „sociometrical“ way and which leads to certain generally known ideological consequences; or, on the other hand, it was rather artificially segregated, only its concrete methodological, theoretical as well as generally methodological analysis. Thus a paradox occurs, sociometry being, on the one hand, rejected *en bloc* as an unacceptable general sociological theory, since it has been — in a not entirely justified way — identified with its „classical“ development variant while no account was being taken of its further development metamorphoses, while, on the other hand, sociometric techniques have been applied indiscriminately without the necessary preliminary analysis; frequently even without using the „compromising name“ (thus sociometric test has been referred to in some East German works as “test of the selection of partner“, in Soviet studies as „quantitative measurements in the investigation of a collectivity and the like), as the term sociometry appeared to some authors to be encumbered with „undesirable theoretical implications“. In Czechoslovakia only a few isolated studies in sociometry as a research technique had appeared soon after the war, i. e. in 1948, and particularly in connection with pedagogy,<sup>19)</sup> and following the artificial intervention from outside into the natural development of sociology not again until after 1963 when I tried to point out how unjustified it was to reduce sociometry both to its departure development variant represented by Moreno's classical work *Who Shall Survive* and to its partial research technique.<sup>20)</sup>

Thus the above mentioned work shows sociometry to be an influential component of contemporary substantive theories (the already mentioned Homan's theory of elementary behaviour, frustration theory, theory of cognitive dissonance, etc.), and outlines prerequisites for converting sociometry into an independent substantive theory of sociopreferential behaviour. It goes on to analyze this as a research technique both from the viewpoints of the traditional, „text-book“ concrete sociological methodology (typology of tests, validity of data, reliability of sociometric techniques, choice of sociometric criteria etc.) and from the viewpoint of general methodological problems which in sociometry have become „entangled“ in an extraordinary and very inspiring manner (operative defining, choice of indicators, character of sociometric indices, etc.) and which have not yet been analyzed in any greater detail in sociology oriented in the

<sup>19)</sup> Cf. the study by V. Gádorová; The Sociogram Method, *Pedagogická revue* (Pedagogical Review) 1948, II. pp. 86 ff.

<sup>20)</sup> M. Petrušek, Sociometrické techniky a marxistická teorie společnosti v *Otázky marxistické filozofie*, pp. 486 ff. (“Sociometric techniques and the Marxist theory of society” in “Problems of Marxist Philosophy”).

Marxist way, and last but not least even from theoretical points of view which cannot, of course, be separated from a recapitulation and appreciation of its historical development.

I proceed from the presupposition that in the development of sociometry all substantial trends of development of American sociology from the thirties are projected which are in their turn affected by sociometry as a research technique (and thus as an instrument of the cumulation of immense empirical material). Thus the development of sociometry from the speculative vision of organization or restructuring of society (the stage of pseudounity of substantive theory of the speculative type and of the relatively exact methodological points of departure in the beginning of Moreno's creative activities in the USA) through its link with a pronouncedly empirical current of American sociology to the contemporary stage of „searching for new theories“ which are influenced by sociometry not only by its conceptual scheme and the immense number of empirical generalizations which it affords but also by having opened up a new set of research problems as far as their objects are concerned, and thus even a sphere of a new possible substantive theory.

An interesting — and to my mind rather essential — problem of sociometric theory is implied in the character of sociometric indices and of the central concepts of the sociometric conceptual scheme. It has been pointed out on more than one occasion that the construction e. g. of sociometric indices (and thus also the determination of central concepts) had been an *ad hoc* construction.<sup>21)</sup> Most of the central sociometric concepts had been derived from a certain kind of arrangement of the empirical material which had been obtained by the application of sociometric research methods, and thus was not deduced from any explicit theory of behaviour. Thus sociometric operative definitions are „quasi-operative definitions“, as they have not been introduced in dependence on some of the existing alternative definitions of theoretical concepts but, on the contrary, their relation and the degree of their approximation to these alternative theoretical definitions being sought *ex post*. Thus e. g. sociometric indices of cohesiveness, integration, coherence etc. though serving today as a useful tool for comparison of data obtained in several comparable groups have a small and often problematic explanatory value since they can hardly be brought into relation with any of the more elaborated theories of small groups: they do not by themselves explicitly relate anything about group cohesiveness, integration, coherence etc. in the theoretical sense. Thus it appears that a more viable road towards theoretical integration of empirical material accumulated by sociometry is one of building up a partial substantive theory of sociopreferential behaviour the

<sup>21)</sup> Cf., for instance, J. Coleman, *Mathematical Models and Computer Simulation*, in: R. Faris (ed.): *Handbook of Modern Sociology*, Chicago 1964

subject of which is indirectly defined by the sphere of applicability of the sociometric research techniques, rather than one of seeking to link „sociometric empiricism“ with the existing theoretical conceptions. It appears that the existing empirical material could now be gathered into a partial — relatively closed — system which would have the status of theory.

Another problem implied in this formulation is the problem of universal or, conversely, of specific character of sociometric findings. Though most authors presuppose sociopreferential behaviour which can be convincingly established in all sociocultural spheres to be a universal human phenomenon, there has not yet been a sufficient number of empirical studies which would permit us to formulate more significant statements concerning the specific or, conversely, general character of certain concrete expression of sociopreferential behaviour, of sociometric configurations, their determinants etc. Thus while, on the one hand, a relatively universal applicability of sociometric techniques appears to have been more or less established as a fact, no „transfer“ of relevant findings on sociopreferential behaviour from one sociocultural sphere to another appears to be feasible. This naturally tends to complicate the problem of building up a more general substantive theory whose expositional, or possibly, predictive value would not be limited to one or several outstandingly similar sociocultural spheres.

In this connection it is fitting to observe that in works written by some sociologists of Marxist orientation a notion has cropped up that sociometry — but also sociology of small groups in general — is firmly linked not only with the specifically American social environment but also with the practical needs of the American society in a certain stage of development.<sup>22)</sup> Of course this ~~notion was not meant to discredit sociology of small groups in general but~~ rather to point out its specific contemporary form, its being tied down to a quite definite sociocultural sphere, and thus also the risk of transferring basic empirical findings (but possibly even conceptual schemes) to other spheres in a mechanical way. As it happens this notion is in harmony with Cartwright and Zander who state the place and time of the rise of group dynamics is conditioned by the existence of American society in the thirties which had created favourable environment for this intellectual movement to develop in.<sup>23)</sup> This statement is acceptable in so far as we assume — as referred to above — that the problem of research but also of influence upon group life is conditioned by the existence of a relatively industrially advanced and stabilized society where the need for such research is felt more intensively than is the case in less developed and less stable societies. The development of sociological thought in

<sup>22)</sup> For instance in the study by the Polish sociologist A. Kloskowska, „The problem of small groups in sociology“, *Przegląd socjologiczny* (Sociological Review), 1968, XII.

<sup>23)</sup> Cf. Group Dynamics. Research and Theory, New York, 1960, p. 10.

Czechoslovakia (but not merely in Czechoslovakia)<sup>24)</sup> to prove that here, too, a similarly „suitable environment“ has been formed. However, one question though supremely interesting one from the sociological point of view has not been posed yet, i. e. the question of a programmatic comparison of obtained empirical *generalizations within the framework* of differing socioeconomic formations, i. e. of social systems with differing property relations, differing structure of political power, differing mechanisms of integration of individuals into organizational wholes and their substructures, etc. Put in a very general — and thus in a not sufficiently exact — way the problem has not yet been posed whether the change in the macrostructural system that had — in its basic dimensions — been stabilized at least in the sense that no qualitative transformation can be anticipated, has also led to a change in interpersonal relations, interaction patterns, sociometric configurations, etc. The results achieved by research into the style of life of economic and political élites in Czechoslovakia though not yet evaluated seem to offer such comparison at least to a partial and limited extent.

Further more, the idea suggests itself that the pedagogical system of A. S. Makarenko; the Soviet educationist which had for a long time dominated not only Czechoslovak educational theories but also research into interpersonal relations in the class at school (i. e. a sphere which is, after all, the traditional sphere of research in the sociology of small groups) represents a specific Soviet variant of „group-dynamics“, a variant brought to life by the specific social conditions and practical requirements of Soviet society in the twenties and the thirties, i. e. by circumstances and requirements of similar specific character as those in the USA in the thirties. Makarenko's pedagogical system was not unlike the analysis — including sociological analysis — in the sixties, particularly in Poland. It has been essentially established and wellnigh generally acknowledged that it represents a system whose pedagogical generalizations and sociotechnical directives are not universally valid for social systems of the socialist type in so far as they do not apply the „Soviet model“ of socialism.<sup>25)</sup> Makarenko's model of an ideal small group in which the educational and specially reeducational process is to be put into practice is based on the

<sup>24)</sup> Apart from Polish researches (Matějko, Malewski, Malewska and others) one can quote the comparatively intensive development of microsociological researches in the USSR some of which of course still persist — verbally at least — in taking up a hypercritical attitude to any attempt in the West pursuing anything like a more theoretical aim. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to note a rising standard of these researches, particularly in their methodology (e. g. in studies by Olshanski]), nor to discern first trends aimed at constituting a microsociology conceived in a Marxist spirit though formally this appears to be developing in psychological rather than specifically sociological context.

<sup>25)</sup> Even in the latter case as proved by no other than the experience of Czechoslovakia in the fifties a mechanical application of Makarenko's pedagogical system results in a whole series of undesirable deformation in education.

fact that Makarenko was working with youth that was morally neglected, often even delinquent, whose notions about the norms of group co-existence are simply unacceptable for any educationist as a starting point for the process of re-education. Thus the group had to lean back on norms that had been motivated from outside, on a set of comparatively tough sanctions by means of which the observation of these norms was being enforced, on the domination of the so-called „active“ of the group's „core“, i. e. a limited number of persons who were, on the one hand, able by reason of their non-formal authority to influence the other members of the group, while, on the other hand, forming at the same time a connecting link between the pedagogue and the group, etc. These were in fact strongly autocratic groups which demanded of the individual to involve his entire personality in group life, while not admitting of any plurality of group membership (these were young people without any family ties, their „group background“ generally being the gang), and in which ideological determinant of the ties between individuals etc. were strongly accentuated. Makarenko's conception of „collectivism and especially of the so-called basic collective“ some characteristics of which are not unlike those of the primary group found in Cooley influenced for quite a long period researches into small groups carried out within the framework of pedagogy. Makarenko's emphasis on functional elements in interindividual relations, his efforts to prevent the basic collective from reverting into a merely friendly configuration, into a „closed group of friends“ inspired some studies in which „personal-selection“ and „functional“ relations were differentiated also in terminology, the highest level of personal selection relationships being designated as „friendship“, while the highest level of functional ties was referred to as „comradeship“. It is only natural that any attempt at measuring either of these types of relationships called for the application of sociometric technique modified in one way or another, although verbally critical objections to sociometry were still being raised. The most substantial of these was that sociometry overestimated the subjective realization and experience of interindividual relationships while underestimating the significance of the „objective situation“: thus, for instance, it was claimed that in the research of leadership sociometry neglected the individual's objective prerequisites for leading people, and overestimated the views of group members on some individuals' capacities for leadership.

This objection rests partly on misunderstanding, or lack of methodological knowledge (the question here being particularly one of relation between observation techniques and the sociometric test in a complex research into the basic structural characteristics of small groups), partly on a mechanistically interpreted Marxist conception of the Object-Subject relation.

It is only recently that a number of interesting empirical researches in the field of youth pedagogy and sociology have been undertaken which have not been tied down by an inadequate conceptual scheme, nor have proceeded from

unverified ideological premises, particularly from the presupposition of a „collectivistic character“ of interindividual relationships which is more or less given by the collectivistic type of property relations. These include the researches of an extraordinary significance by Juraj Čečetka,<sup>26)</sup> a Slovak pedagogue, who has tried to establish the specific character of the formation of small groups among adolescents, both of those with a task dominant and of those formed spontaneously and based, therefore, primarily on socioemotional contacts and relationships. What the author has above all established is readiness on the part of adolescents to join groups comprised of a larger number of members (10—13) which interestingly enough essentially corresponds to the „limit number“ of the basic collective arrived at from observation by Makarenko, while, of course, it holds good that those groups in which more exacting claims were put on the partners were less numerous (about 8 persons). On the other hand — as can be easily surmised — in all larger groups there arose a comparatively small core, relatively more stable than the group as a whole. Furthermore, the fact conclusively established by the author is that the smaller groups formed by adolescents do not fulfil merely the function of a „defensive set-up“ of youth in the sense of the so-called generation struggle between adolescents and adults but also the function of protecting them from the anonymity of mass society. Independent attention was paid by Čečetka to problems connected with leaders and leadership in small groups of young people. He examined — essentially in keeping with analogical classical investigations pursued in other countries<sup>28)</sup> — a set of psychic and personality characteristics which are relevant for assuming the leading position in the group, and came to the conclusion, which appears to be convincing enough, that these traits include in particular such characteristics as authority, organizing abilities, resourcefulness, resoluteness, sociability, popularity in the group, and energy. Though he did not examine the ways in which these traits were apprehended inside the group (what may be assumed here is the possibility of tension between the „objectively“ established characteristics and its evaluation by members of the group, an assumption that is implied primarily in the sociometric approach to the problem of leadership) he essentially proved the interdependence between the leader's role and situational factors: leadership is a function of the situation, a finding that is borne out by a number of empirical studies as well as theoretical reflections in other countries. From the empirical material he went on to deduce three sociologically relevant conclusions which in their turn are not contradicted by findings established in different sociocultural conditions: 1. the leadership role is un-

<sup>26)</sup> Čečetka, *Medziludské vzťahy a zoskupovanie mládeže* (Interhuman relations and the grouping of youth), Bratislava, 1967.

<sup>28)</sup> Let us refer at least to the well known research and secondary analysis carried out by Charles Bird as early as 1940: *Social Psychology*, pp. 377 ff.



stable in groups of adolescents; 2. adolescents are not willing to accept the leadership role if it is formalized or institutionalized in a prominent way even if they possess the required personality prerequisites, with the proviso that the acceptance or refusal of the leadership role is substantially conditioned by its general evaluation in the group's "public opinion"; 3. in some informal groups it was impossible to identify the leader so that it is evident that the presupposition — sometimes too apodeictically assumed — that the leader's role is occupied even when members of the group do not acknowledge its existence has no universal validity.

Let us also refer here to sociometric researches that were carried out — with regard to age characteristics — in analogical conditions, i. e. in the army.<sup>29)</sup> In one of these researches the way non-formal authority depends on the extent and the clear-cut character of interests of sociometric "stars" was examined. The investigations have shown that non-formal authority is highly correlated in a positive way with a smaller number of clear-cut interests, i. e. that natural authority in groups of soldiers is enjoyed by individuals possessed of more profound knowledge and skills in one or but a few (usually related) clearly defined spheres of activities rather than those with many none too stable interests.

First researches were also carried out among juvenile delinquents serving their time in prison. The investigations of the origin and character of interpersonal relationships led to relatively unequivocal conclusions that the rise of "friendship" in the current as well as the sociological sense of the term in the conditions of serving the sentence in prison is rather sporadic, the sociometric structure of the groups under investigation being dispersed, the absence of non-formal authority being quite obvious, while there is a tendency to refuse sociometric selection ("I have no one to choose", etc.) with predominating mutually negative attitudes, etc. These findings though not having as yet acquired representative character signalize the existence of serious problems in the re-education process, and indicate the necessity of intensive sociological work in this sphere which has hitherto been neglected in this country.<sup>30)</sup> In recent years there has been some development in *the studies of hospital as a social system* in which researches into interpersonal relationships have also won their place — for the time being, however, between individual doctors, be-

<sup>29)</sup> O. Píffl: Sociometrie, její vznik, vývoj a možnosti použití v marxistickém sociologickém výzkumu v armádě (Sociometry, its origins, development and possibilities of application in Marxist sociological research in the army), Studies of the Military Political Academy of Klement Gottwald, 1965/4.

<sup>30)</sup> Problems of deviant behaviour and social pathology have been the object of rather theoretical interest which has not yet found expression in more intense research activities and could not therefore result in any formulation of potential sociotechnical measures.

tween doctors and nurses etc. rather than studies of relationships between patients and the nursing staff, between individual patients, etc.

We now have to add a few observations on a field which — in view of its specific character — had constituted itself a long time ago into an independent sociological discipline which it is not usual to subordinate under the sociology of small groups, i. e. on the *sociology of the family*. The family had been the object of the researcher's interest even in the period when the right of sociology to independent existence had not yet been officially acknowledged. It is natural on the whole, that the family, its position in the social structure, its basic functions and development transformations were the object of theoretical, and not unfrequently of speculative, deliberations rather than of empirical research which has — only in the last few years — very substantially revised and corrected many an inadequate idea. Authors have failed to link their efforts with the comparatively rich theoretical as well as empirical tradition in the study of the family in this country devoting their attention to problems of the family from ethical and sociopolitical rather than sociological points of view. Hence the inadequate notions on the rapid and radical transformation of the family's position in society in connection with the change in the latter's macrostructural organization, on restructuring its functions, on changes in the system of values as well as in relations between partners. These notions, however justified they may be ethically and philosophically, have not taken into account the significance of the time factor, i. e. the fact that substantial changes in this sphere dominated more than others by tradition are not, and cannot be, matter of 10 to 15 years even should the macrostructural changes have such ideal character and social consequences as have been theoretically envisaged. Here not unlike other spheres of social life, a development tendency or perspective has been treated as reality. This is all the more paradoxical since the *historical* development of the family — in a certain though not servile and mechanical dependence upon the analysis made by Engels<sup>31)</sup> — has received intense attention.<sup>32)</sup> The first empirical researches had been concerned with the notions about marital co-existence and its conditions entertained by young betrothed couples, while recent studies have been concerned with the family

<sup>31)</sup> Cf. F. Engels, *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*. It was only in recent years that a number of misrepresentations of facts by Engels often resulting from undue dependence on literary sources at his disposal at the time have been corrected.

<sup>32)</sup> The first Marxist works on the subject appeared as early as in the thirties written by S. K. Neumann, poet and writer. Cf. *Monogamie* (Monogamy), *Dějiny lásky*, 1932, (The History of Love) 1925, *Dějiny ženy* (The History of Woman), 1930. Though undoubtedly works of high originality in their basic polemical cast and appreciation their sociological as well as historical value is problematic in many respects. An attempt at a similarly widely conceived view, though much more precise historically, is represented by the extensive monograph written by J. Klabouch, *Manželství a rodina v minulosti* (Marriage and Family in the Past), Prague 1962, conceived, however, with an emphasis on the legal aspects of development.

as an independent social unit. Actually, the book summarizing the study of 379 married couples<sup>33</sup>) is the first empirical — well-grounded both theoretically and methodologically — publication on the subject since the forties. Apart from its informative, i. e. descriptive, sociographical value this study is valuable by rectifying, among other things, some unjustified notions which have become fixed in the public mind and in journalism. Thus, for instance, it modifies the rule formerly formulated in too explicit terms of “the attraction of the same social groups“ and the rule of “the same or approximately the same education of marriage partners“: though 44,5 per cent married couples did have the same education (out of these as many as 46 per cent possessed only elementary or lower secondary education without the school-leaving examination), whereas cases in which women who were university graduates had partners with lower education than themselves represented only 26 per cent. This seems, therefore, to prove the hypothesis proposed by Berelson and Steiner, i. e. that women tend to enter into matrimony with persons possessed of higher education while men tend to marry persons possessing lower education than their own.<sup>34</sup>)

After all, similar, even more specific findings were arrived at in the preliminary stage of research into social stratification and mobility already referred to above where the object of study was socioprofessional homogamy followed on a six-grade scale of complexity of work: tendency towards homogamy was found to be most noticeable in the first two categories where 67,2 per cent of respondents live in matrimony with a person of the same socioprofessional category: it is seen to be substantially the lowest in the third category which is graded to a pronounced degree “on a descending scale“ (74,7 per cent of wives belong to a lower category than the respondent). An equally low homogamy is also to be observed in the highest categories.

In analyzing their motivation for contracting marriage both men and women attributed essentially the same significance to the same motives (love and desire for understanding, desire for a child, for independence, for a home of one's own, etc.). However, a pronounced difference was established in the evaluation of the sexual aspect of marriage which is mentioned as significant by every second man but only by every fourth woman. Nor do the data regarding the sources of marriage conflict where the first place is taken by the bringing up of children and immediately the second place is occupied by controversies concerning finances and the way they are to be used: thus the existing material condition of the marriages under observation is still far from making it possible for financial questions not to constitute one of the determining factors of marital harmony. The author also focussed his attention as a thing apart on attitudes to the employment of women, i. e. on a question

<sup>33</sup>) S. Banhegyi: *Sociológia súčasnej rodiny* (The Sociology of Contemporary Family), Bratislava 1968.

<sup>34</sup>) B. Berelson, G. Steiner: *Human Behaviour*, New York, p. 306.

which is closely connected with some simplifying views on the emancipation of woman in modern society: 75,1 per cent of men respondents are against women being employed, provided such activity is not absolutely necessary from the financial point of view, while 51,7 per cent of women respondents hold the same view. However, the attitude to wage-earning activity is differentiated according to age (persons belonging to higher age categories taking up more expressly negative attitudes), and according to education (a relatively highest proportion of positive answers come from persons possessed of higher education who naturally often quote other than purely material motivations for taking up employment). All these conclusions essentially fall in with analogical investigations carried out in France,<sup>35)</sup> in Austria, and in the German Federal Republic<sup>36)</sup>. The extent of the present study does not permit us to report in greater detail on a number of further interesting findings, e. g. on attitudes to divorce, sexual harmony in marriage, on parents' problems and the bringing up of children, etc. What we have been concerned with is rather to illustrate the basic trend in contemporary sociology of the family in Czechoslovakia: its characteristic feature is the stress laid on the cumulation of empirical material, the endeavour to obtain data which could be comparable with those on the situation prevailing in other industrial societies, with the first attempts at generalizations based on the existing theoretical conceptions but also with the traditional interest in historical aspects of the problems and in wider, let us say macrostructural continuities of the problems followed. Further development of the sociology of the family is, of course, not in the least degree tied up with the level achieved in the elaboration of the general theory of small groups and on working out specific research techniques which has hitherto been limited to panel investigations, or possibly a guided interview.

In an attempt to summarize briefly the present situation and the principal trends of development in the sociology of small groups within the context of Czechoslovak sociology let us proceed from the presupposition that apart from non-formal or "unofficial" groups that arise outside the framework of any institutional system there arise, operate, and function small groups in *all* basic institutional systems, i. e. political, economic, religious systems, etc. This underlies the interdisciplinary penetration of the sociology of small groups and of concrete sociological disciplines — i. e. sociology of politics and political behaviour, sociology of industry, rural sociology, sociology of the army, of education, of the family, and so on. We have tried to show at least by way of illustration that research into small groups has been going on in practically all these dis-

<sup>35)</sup> M. J. Chombart de Lauwe: The Status of Women in French Urban Society, UNESCO, *Int. Social Science Journal*, 1962, Vol. XIV.

<sup>36)</sup> L. Rosenmayer: The Austrian Woman, *ibid.* E. Pfeil: Die Erwerbstätigkeit von Müttern, Tübingen 1961.

ciplines, with the possible exception of the sociology of politics in which the importance of small groups, particularly of non-formal and non-institutionalized groups (such as cliques, pressure groups, etc.) though verbally acknowledged and appreciated, has not yet been subjected to empirical investigation. This is, not in the last instance, given by the fact that the sociology of politics and political science are at present — for understandable reasons — focussed in a more pronounced way on research into, and analysis of, political systems, on problems of institutionalization of interests, and on the formation of interest groups, on the stage of the mechanism of political power, and on the creation and operation of correctives, whether social or civic, of the ways in which political power is exercised, etc. However, investigations into the structure and division of political power in local communities are under way in which appropriate attention will also be paid to the significance of non-formal affiliations.

The sociotechnical, and thus often onesidedly utilitarian, character of the investigations that were being carried out had largely relegated into the background problems of the *general* theory of small groups which ought to constitute the natural (even theoretical) foundation of the empiric orientation of the individual sociological disciplines. Any cummulation and generalization of empirical material in its present form is an extraordinarily difficult and often practically impossible task to accomplish. Similarly, little has been done in working out some basic methodological problems. An outstanding example of this is the fact that empirical researches employ only a limited body of research techniques among which, as mentioned above, the pride of place is occupied by sociometry. Application of observation techniques has been sporadic, technically far from perfect, and the relationship between data acquired by sociometric methods and observation techniques often remains unclarified. This is, among other things, due to the fact that the importance of general sociological methodology has not hitherto received its due measure of appreciation so that a majority of both methodological manuals and treatises do not rise above the level of information on how to carry out and evaluate empirical research. Without underestimating the importance of such an approach, particularly where more complex quantitative methods are concerned, there appears to be a necessity for devoting a larger measure of attention to the more general implications of empirical research, to social determination of sociology, its social functions, etc.