

KE KRITICE BURŽOAZNÍCH TEORIÍ SPOLEČNOSTI. By *Jindřich Filipec* et al. *Kritika buržoazní ideologie*. Prague: Svoboda, 1974. 161 pp. Kčs. 12, paper.

The proliferation of books and booklets of this kind continues in Czechoslovakia, more than seven years after the memorable events of 1968, indicating how traumatic these events must have been for the guardians of ideological orthodoxy. The present collection of essays, written by a team of authors under the leadership of Jindřich Filipec, addresses the areas of philosophy and political science—areas in which the originality of the Czechoslovak liberalization movement manifested itself at its best. Although titled “Toward the Critique of Bourgeois Social Theories,” the publication should be called “The Critique of the Czechoslovak Contribution to Marxism,” for that is what it amounts to. Filipec analyzes the way cultural critics and followers of the “Prague Spring” present and interpret the complex problem of “scientific-technological revolution,” and traces connections to Western schools of thought. František Charvát, at present director of the Sociology Division of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences, sums up Marxist objections to current Western stratification theories but mentions significant Czechoslovak theoretical and empirical work of the critical 1960s only in passing; his focus visibly differs from that of the coauthors. Zdeněk Javůrek deals with two subjects: the interpretation of the Marxian concept of “praxis” by Western Neo-Marxists and the affinities between the Frankfurt School and the existentialists on the one hand and the Czechoslovak “revisionists” on the other. Jakub Netopilík approaches the topic of the social and moral implications of scientific and technological progress from a special angle: unlike Filipec, he examines what he labels “irrational” Western critiques of the technological age, such as those of the French Neo-Thomists and of Martin Heidegger. An analysis by René Rohan of the “ideological background of the attempt at a revision of the Czechoslovak political system” concludes the collection. The editor may have intended Rohan’s essay to crown the entire volume—readers who fail to become sufficiently indignant or alarmed at deviation by an important segment of the Party’s intellectual elite here have the dire political consequences of such heresy demonstrated.

As in so many studies that have preceded it, this booklet is consistent in one respect. It proposes to judge the merits of social theories chiefly on the basis of their likelihood to promote or to challenge the dominant position of the Soviet Union in the international Communist movement. Yet, one must acknowledge several interesting insights found in the volume. For example, in his study of the influence of the Frankfurt School on the Czechoslovak chapter of “creative Marxism,” Javůrek points out that the way to “socialism with a human face” via Frankfurt was an unnecessary detour in Czechoslovakia; this line of thought could have been built on the domestic tradition of Thomas G. Masaryk. One could not agree more. The fact, however, that this correlation has been stated, and with such clarity, by someone who was called upon, by the ruling system, to bury the heritage of humanistic democracy, is astounding—or perhaps encouraging.

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