

THE ECONOMICS OF SOCIALISM: PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE OPERATION OF THE CENTRALLY PLANNED ECONOMIES IN THE USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE UNDER THE NEW SYSTEM. By *J. Wilczynski*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1970. 233 pp. \$8.95.

CLASS INEQUALITY AND POLITICAL ORDER: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN CAPITALIST AND COMMUNIST SOCIETIES. By *Frank Parkin*. New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1971. 205 pp. \$7.00, cloth. \$2.95, paper.

Wilczynski's *Economics of Socialism* is a neat little job designed for second or third-year undergraduate students in a British university course, and presumably for their counterparts elsewhere. It brings together, clearly and concisely, the elementary principles which govern the operation of the centrally planned economies of Eastern Europe (USSR included). After giving a brief glossary of socialist economic terms, the author reviews the background of modern, east of the Elbe socialist economics and devotes a chapter to each of the following topics: planning and the market, profit, production and growth, accumulation, consumption, labor, land, pricing, money and banking, fiscal policy and control, domestic trade, foreign trade, international economic cooperation, and socialism versus capitalism. Each chapter is followed by a list of suggested references available in English. There is also a short guide to periodicals relevant to socialist economics, and an index. As a pedagogical tool, the book is useful: the chapters are short, lucid, and readable, the subjects chosen for review are timely and important, and the workmanship is good.

There are a few flaws in this book, none of them too serious. Perhaps the most delicate and elusive is—what shall we call it?—a certain muted optimism regarding command-type socialism in general and the recent reforms in particular. On the face of it the book is as balanced and unbiased as they come, but there is in it this undercurrent of disarming enthusiasm, which now and again just misses offending the critical faculty. The author exaggerates the importance attached in practice by the recent reforms to profit as an index of enterprise performance and efficiency, and underestimates the ability and determination of the paper-pushers to run afoul of “economic levers” whenever and wherever possible. In any event, as Soviet experience has shown, profit expressed in centrally fixed average-branch-planned-adjusted-cost-plus prices has a knack of turning into a unidimensional success indicator, not very different in its distorting capacity from the infamous *val*. The problem of grafting market-evolved instruments onto a centralized administrative system is much more formidable than the book allows. The socialism-capitalism dichotomy on which the author rides through his work is a dead mare. The terms “socialism” and “capitalism” are not descriptive of real-life economies, and are being hurriedly thrown overboard by the profession. The inclusion of Yugoslavia among “socialist” systems is debatable, to say the least. However, given its insertion in that gelatinous mass, the author fails to give its special chemistry the thoughtful consideration called for. Information on Czechoslovakia looks dated, harking back to the Dubček abortion. There is too much repetition, most of it remediable with the help of a pair of scissors. These are worrisome but not deadly faults in what is generally a welcome undergraduate manual.

Frank Parkin's examination of social stratification in capitalist and socialist societies (meaning, as it turns out, Western and Eastern Europe, USSR included)

yields the following speculative results. Capitalist societies reveal a two-class inequality based on the occupational order which is derived from the division of labor, determined in reward terms by the marketability of skills, and strengthened by the ownership of property. The boundary line between the dominant and the subordinate class is drawn between the blue-collar and white-collar occupational categories. The occupational order is the main source not only of material benefits but of various social and symbolic attributes: status and power being among the more important. Capitalist society makes use of a number of social mechanisms to keep the lid on the stratification order: one of the more significant being social mobility, most of it taking place on the margins of the class frontier. Another consists in strategies of accommodation and acceptance of low social position by the underclass, a process abetted by the educational system and religion. In short, "in the absence of a centralized state and the apparatus of physical coercion and control, the problem of order tends to revolve around control of the normative sphere" (pp. 70–71). The normative mechanism of control is examined at length in chapter 3, in which the roles of the dominant, subordinate, and radical value systems are seen as promoting respectively deferential/aspirational, accommodative, and oppositional interpretations of class inequalities.

Chapter 4 examines the fate of radical value systems in capitalist societies, the systems which challenge class inequality and derive from a mass political party: the Social Democrats. Parkin concludes that Western socialist mass parties have been deradicalized (de-egalitarianized) in a series of separate stages beginning with the *embourgeoisement* of proletarian leaders and the bureaucratization of the party apparatus. Not the least important aspects of this political acculturation of underclass party leaders is the socialists' commitment to parliamentary methods and the meritocratic interpretation of socialism embraced by the Social Democrats. A certain melancholy pervades this part of the book: egalitarian ideals abandoned, forfeited, and torn to shreds by the market machine and political pluralism. There are all those self-assured, comfortably-off Swedes sitting at a well-stocked long table in stratified order. If only the table were round! But then the fare might just possibly be more meager and drab, not to mention self-assurance. Chapter 5, "The Problem of Classes in Socialist Society," is just a wee bit more cheerful. After an initial period of social leveling, came the campaign against *uravnilovka* in the Soviet Union (replayed later elsewhere in the socialist world), and then some narrowing of income differentials. Despite a differentiated occupational and reward order, it is not possible, according to Parkin, to "represent the reward structure of socialist society as a dichotomous class model on exactly the Western pattern, since there is much less of an obvious 'break' between manual and non-manual positions" (p. 147). (How about the collective peasants, one wonders?) This is in part due to the importance of political or ideological constraints upon the market—that is, to the planning priorities attached by central planners to different occupations and sectors. There is, the author finds, a dominant class depending largely on noninheritable political privilege, but there is also a much greater range and extent of upward mobility in socialist society than in the West: "Thus, if we take a synchronic view of the present socialist reward system we can detect a distinct social boundary between the 'new class' and the rest of society. . . . If on the other hand, we take a diachronic view of the same system we are bound to note that this boundary is a highly permeable one in the sense that movement into the 'new class' from below is continuously taking place" (p. 158).

The unresolved dilemma of socialist societies is "whether it is possible to establish the political conditions for egalitarianism while also guaranteeing civil rights to all citizens within the system of 'socialist legality'" (p. 184). "Egalitarianism seems to require a political system in which the state is able continually to hold in check those social and occupational groups which, by virtue of their skills or education or personal attributes, might otherwise attempt to stake claims to a disproportionate share of society's rewards. The most effective way of holding such groups in check is by denying them the right to organize politically, or in other ways, to undermine social equality" (p. 183). In capitalist societies ruled by Social Democrats there is class inequality and really no political equality, since the latter "presupposes sufficient social and material equality to enable contending groups to utilize formal political rights in roughly the same degree" (p. 185). In socialist countries there is a synchronic but not a diachronic class system, and there is political coercion intended to keep potential reward claimants in check. If Parkin is right, the absence of social stratification can be achieved only if the state continually deprives some occupational and social groups of their civil rights, which does not signify to the author any abuse of the ideal of political equality. Perhaps a little tolerable imperfection in class and political equality is the most humane solution, although not the most visionary.

The book is conjectural, thinly documented (United Nations tables notwithstanding), often sweeping, at other times too restrictive: the U.S. experience, for example, refuses to fit into Parkin's two-class model, despite occasional references to "aspirational values." In the preface the author states that his aim was "to write about only those issues which interested me most and to forget the rest." It shows.

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THE SOVIET RURAL COMMUNITY: A SYMPOSIUM. Edited by *James R. Millar*. Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1971. xv, 420 pp. \$12.50.

This is a "must" for students of Soviet agriculture. The general standard is high, there is relatively little repetition, there are many valuable and clear statistical tables, and altogether this is a volume which no one interested in the Soviet rural sector should be without. All of the fifteen contributions have merit, and in a short review it is not possible even to mention them all, let alone to praise them individually. George L. Yaney explores in an original way the special role of the agricultural specialists; after the flight of the gentry and the destruction of the *zemstvos* they were an essential link between the (Soviet) administration and rural areas. The specialist strove for the consolidation of strips, and also supported the looser forms of cooperation. Yaney is right to remind us that most of the so-called *kolkhozes* in existence in mid-1929 were of the small "TOZ" type, in which peasants were still largely individual producers. When in 1929 the party launched its new and drastic policy, the specialists would not carry it out, and the party had to "improvise" a crude and inexperienced rural administration out of virtually nothing. The resulting excesses and disruption—given also the instructions received from the center—were scarcely surprising.

There is much to learn from Robert F. Miller's careful survey of agricultural