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THE SCOPE OF CULTURE AND SOME SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF CULTURAL LIFE IN HUNGARY

Serious efforts have been made in recent years in Hungary to elaborate the long-range plans of the country's economic and social development. These 15—20 year programs are supposed to determine the main lines and frameworks of the five-year medium-term plans. For a couple of years now systematic preparatory work has been under way to enable us to plan the whole of our cultural life — both in terms of the aspects of general cultural policy, economic policy and finance. While taking into account the long-range planing of labour power and the living standard, a committee composed of economic and cultural experts worked out the long-term concept of cultural development for the 1970—1980 period. This study envisaged the planning of culture from an economic point of view and in keeping with the medium-term plans. Naturally, such a complex task can be carried out only in an institutional form with thorough scientific preparation. A short time ago, as a part of

this work, we began systematic scientific research on the economic aspects of cultural life so as to work out a long-term plan.

It is first necessary to define what falls within the conceptual sphere of culture; from what sources and with what aims should culture be financed. Socialist culture, on the one hand, is comprised of the whole of cultural goods, values, works. In this aspect, it is a meaning, a message, a purpose. On the other hand, socialist culture is a cultural activity directed towards creating and acquiring values. In the former case we can qualify culture as socialist if its affect on the personality and on socialist thinking is dominant. The socialist character of general cultural activity and education is determined by the degree to which we can communicate valuable cultural works to the broadest possible strata of the population and by the success of our efforts to make this culture an organic part of the behaviour and life-style of the people.

The institutional network of public education is comprised of primary, secondary and university education, including adult education. Schools in our country are state-owned and education is free-of-charge. Students at universities and high schools are given scholarships depending on their financial means and academic results. Theatres, the Radio and Television, publishing houses, the public library network are also state-owned. A significant role in the dissemination of culture is played by the 3.800 cultural centers in the country. In addition to the national, scientific and specialized libraries, about 2.846 general public libraries with 5.876 branches work in the country as well. These libraries are run by local authorities and trade unions. According to statistics for 1972, there are 219 library members and 5.569 borrowed books to every 1.000 people in the country. Financial resources for the 36 theatres, 18 publishing houses, the press, film industry and musical institutions are covered by the budget. Sixty-seven per cent of the common expenses spent on the dissemination of culture is covered by national authorities and 33 per cent by local authorities, as compared to most European countries where a greater part of the expenses falls on local organizations. This comparatively centralized character of financial resources makes comprehensive conceptional economic planning possible. At the same time, however, greater attention must be devoted to local requirements. Bearing in mind the fact that local authorities are national organizations also, the financial sources of cultural development appear as follows: out of all cultural expenses 81,3% is covered by the

national budget, 4,7% by the income of cultural institutions and 14,7% by other sources (for example, the cultural fund of enterprises and cooperatives). Although it accounted for only 2,2 percent of the central cultural budget in 1972, the Central Cultural Fund is worth mentioning. Cultural activities of special importance, the acquisition of politically important books etc. are supported by means from this Fund.

An analysis of international statistics shows that with respect to the European countries there is a lower than average correlation between the per capita GNP and per capita cultural expenses. The cultural development level of a country, however, provided it can be measured more or less correctly, has an effect on economic development in the long run. The proportion that can be spent on culture, on public education depends on national income, but it seems to be decided by the generally accepted economic and cultural policy. In the course of the past quarter of a century, our country has witnessed significant changes in this field. By the 1960s the average annual growth rate of cultural expenditure was higher than that of national income, being 8,7% as compared with the 7,1% growth rate of the national income. In 1970, 2,7 percent of the GNP was spent for cultural purposes, while in 1960 this figure was only 1,8%. According to a statistical publication, the cultural expenditures financed from different sources are growing faster than the GNP and the population of the country. Apart from international comparisons we consider it important to analyse our past cultural life, the history and lessons of general socialist cultural activity and education in Hungary. After the liberation, significant changes took place not only in the structure of social and economic life but in the field of culture. In contrast to the pre-World War II situation our country has witnessed boom-like development in many spheres, in public education, in the construction of cultural centers, in the expansion of the library network and the enlargement of its book-stocks with the help of book-selling advertising campaigns, the readers movement and „economy editions” of the classic and educational books. The average price of an „Economy Edition” book is only 4 forints, less than one sixth of those published in normal editions. The average price of a book is 22 forints, which accounts for only 1,1% of the earnings of an average worker.

Radio and recently television have been playing an important role in cultural life. Parallel

with the rise in radio and television sets, however, the role of cinemas and theatres tends to show a decline. The number of museum visitors has been showing a slow upward trend and new forms of culture have come into existence, i. e. study circles, amateur movements, participation in popular educational lectures, etc. The raise in TV-set-owners to 2,084,000 in 1972, with 201 subscribers to every 1,000 inhabitants, posed new tasks for our cultural policy. Expenditures on radio and television is increasing considerably — the expenditure of the Hungarian Radio and Television totalled 921 million forints in 1971. The program-making capacity of the institution should be expanded but greater attention should also be paid to the fact that a considerable part of our population spends its spare time in front of the television, watching the „guggle-box”. A not insignificant part of the population makes no use of cultural possibilities other than television. This fact calls for a high level of responsibility on the part of those deciding on the television program. Our requirements of cultural institutions have undergone an important change, including the fact that our cultural centres must be developed in a way suitable for small-group programs as compared to previous tendencies oriented towards large public entertainment.

In the course of elaborating the cultural plan it is important that a major part of spiritual and material efforts focus on promoting the general education of workers. As the „effectiveness of culture” can be measured best in the life and activity of youth, the cultural plan should devote special attention to the cultural activity of youth. While there is no separate youth culture within the socialist culture, young people should be offered special cultural opportunities. This goal is promoted by preferential tickets, free entry to museums and special youth programs.

Within the time at my disposal I can give only a short and general summary of the economic aspects of our cultural life. Research on the economic aspects of culture on a scientific basis was begun in our Institute only a short time ago, so I would rather speak of plans and some special important features. It is well-known that countries with different social systems apply different accounting methods. Several difficulties are caused by the differences in the Material Product System and the System of National Accounting. Upon analysis of cultural expenditures, significant differences may arise in the use of the GNP, GDP, or NNP as a basis of comparison and the different set

of data given in the statistical publications of different countries. Valuable studies have been published for making the necessary comparisons possible after analysing the foundational structural background.

In analysing culture from an economic point of view, difficulties arise in choosing suitable mathematical and statistical methods. I think the results of educational economy can offer great help in this research.

Sociological results and methods can be used, for difficulties in class strata requirements should be taken into account when elaborating cultural policy.

We must realize that culture is not only an external factor of economic life but also constitutes an integral part of it. A special branch of industry is needed for „producing culture” and maintaining cultural institutions. The planning of this branch should be closely connected to the planning of public education as a whole. But to take into consideration the quantitative economic aspects of cultural life is not enough for either research or planning. For example, a lower level radio program can be made with more expensive equipment. Statistics on the number of books sold per capita, museum attendance, etc., can only serve as an orientation, for while one person can spend hundreds of forints, for this purpose a year, read much and visit museums regularly, another may almost never do so. The problem can be similar in the case of certain social strata or even entire underdeveloped regions. Thus, the economic aspects of culture comprise not only the financing of culture but also several sociological examinations and analyses of social values.

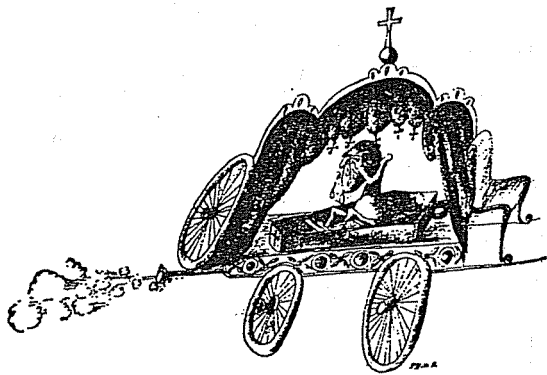
We regard it as important that we began to examine the economic aspects of cultural life at the same time as when the effect of the Scientific-Technical Revolution started to be felt in our country. The Scientific-Technical Revolution considerably increased leisure time and the way of life and working methods underwent a rapid revolutionary change. This fact gives culture and general public education a double role. They are to promote technical development and to help understand and accept what is new. On the other hand, culture serves to influence one's adjustment to changes, to form new attitudes as required by technological development and to help people avoid major shocks in the rapid transformation of society. In view of changes in technology and life-style we must strengthen the socialist character of our public education.

In dealing with the economic planning of cultural life we have widened the notion of economics, the „psycho-economist” seems to exist not only in science-fiction and the expert today thinks more and not more only in numbers, production results, and material utility, but also in terms of social values. Consequently, in elaborating an economic, cultural-political plan the problem of the „quality of life” should also be examined.

To the best of my knowledge a scientific analysis of the „financing of culture” was begun only a short time ago in a number of countries. Thus, it is very useful, during these initial phases, to have an opportunity to coordinate research programs and become acquainted with different scientific methods.

I hope that during our meeting I will be able to become acquainted with data and publications which would be of help to the research work now being done by our Institute for Culture. In the elaboration of any kind of common research program, long-term economic and social assessments should be taken into consideration. We must endeavour to coordinate these research works within such a broad circle.

In our domestic research we regard historical and scientific analysis as our most important task. Thus we try to gain clear insight into the development of the past period, the direction in which changes are heading and the economic conditions of the cultural political tasks now facing us. Of course, we will make use in our work of the results of UNESCO's research and would like to consider the tasks and aspects of this internationally coordinated work.



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