

Book Review

Odmiany czasu terazniejszego. By Jan Szczepanski. Warsaw, Poland: Ksiazka i wiedza, 1971.

The Polish title translated into English means Changes in Contemporary Times. The author is a prominent Polish sociologist and a recent president of the International Sociological Association. The book contains selections of his articles published during the last 25 years. These articles focus on the problems of social change in Poland that accompanied industrialization and its impact on workers, youths and students, and intellectuals.

Szczepanski's book opens with a lengthy study of the Polish intellectual workers at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. His statistical and quantitative data illustrates an interesting sociological point: during the above period Szczepanski points out that Poland had a large proportion of professionals and intellectuals such as pharmacists, architects, university professors, etc. Historically, however, he notes that invading powers have usually sought to destroy or reduce the number of educated Poles. For instance, before World War II Polish university lecturers numbered about 2,500, whereas, even though today Poland has approximately the same size population as in the 1930's, there are about 19,000 lecturers at Polish universities.

Szczepanski also focuses attention on issues currently relevant to sociology in Eastern Europe; for example, he discussed a socialistic model of a university; also, how one can plan a culture, or literature and sociology. Included is a discussion of contemporary Polish sociological methodology--the extensive use of personal documents such as letters, diaries, biographies, etc. Also, in a discussion of Marx, he analyzes a questionnaire on workers that was developed by Marx.

Concluding the book is an article originally published in 1968 describing Polish sociology. The article emphasizes that the predominant concern of Polish sociology has been the survival and maintenance of the whole nation, or the whole of Polish society has been the survival and maintenance of the whole nation, or the whole of Polish society. This is indicated by the predilection of Polish sociologists to grapple with problems of growth and development (both social and personal) via analyses of biographies, diaries, etc. This preference clearly reflects the influence of Catholicism on the value orientation of both the Polish people and sociologists alike. Thus, while Catholicism is not discussed by Szczepanski in other parts of the book, it is certainly a social force to be considered in Polish life.

Changes in Contemporary Times reflects Szczepanski's wide range of interest in and knowledge of world sociological literature. Topics that interest him should be considered significant; nevertheless, there are a few problems in his analysis, e.g., the power structure of the present Polish government is not discussed. Szczepanski's book indicates the special position in which Polish sociology and society find themselves. Though handicapped by the absence of certain liberties, Poland vigorously seeks to maintain contacts with world sociology. In particular, the current wider access to Soviet sociology creates a unique position for Polish sociologists.

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