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POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN PLURALIST SOCIETY

POLITIČKA KOMUNIKACIJA I DRUŠTVENE PROMJENE U PLURALISTIČKOM DRUŠTVU

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Abstract

The paper discusses the complex relations between the distribution of power in societies (western and eastern) and the communication systems, especially mass media. Beside dominant, in all societies there exists alternative political communication and this comes afores especially in the times of crisis. In such times the media cannot "produce" the societal consensus, and elites are bound to reconstruct at least some of the important Institutions. As to the advent of the new information technologies, they cannot be taken only as a factor of democratization. It is quite possible that they will lead to an unprecedented concentration of power, e.g. in the multinational companies.

Sažetak

Rad se bavi složenim odnosima distribucije moći u društvu (zapadni i istočni) i komunikacijskim sistemima, osobito masovnim medijima. Osim dominantne, u svakom društvu postoji i alternativna politička komunikacija, što osobito dolazi do izražaja u kriznim situacijama. U takvim uvjetima, mediji ne mogu „proizvesti“ društveni konsenzus i elite su prisiljene na rekonstrukciju barem nekih važnih institucija. U vrijeme nastanka novih tehnologija, ne mogu se smatrati samo faktorom demokratizacije. Vrlo je lako moguće da će takve situacije dovesti do koncentracije moći, npr. U multinacionalnim kompanijama.

INTRODUCTION

The present societies have been passing into a new era that has been more strongly defined by modern information processes, participatory communication, the culture of political dialogue, empathic interactional communication, and new information technology. The developed societies, with the possibility of modern interactional communication and confrontation of items of information (and checking their accuracy, complexity and objectivity) will develop new forms of mutual communication, connectedness and cooperative activity. The new information technology will also strengthen the global, universal connectedness of the world's social systems and thus have the influence upon forms of cooperation, their ideologies and political programmes, international labour exchange and their way of life. In pluralist society there is growing consensus that democratization is not merely a matter of social engineering, it is part of a

broader process of redistribution of social power in society.

Thus communication science will have to direct its research strategy more decisively towards the research into the distribution of power and information in society, and the social effects of participatory communication and new information technology. It is obvious that the analysis of political communication cannot be limited to the ideological, media and informational component parts only, but it should be examined within the framework of its material production and reproduction, power and communication distribution.

The analyses of social communication should, therefore, comprise the following fields: (a) the processes of the social production and reproduction (who disposes of the value created by the worker's labour — especially in the powerful information industry); (b) the processes of the political constituting of the state, the distribution of power and information, the forms of the state compulsions,

determining the limits of the »freedom« of the communications systems; (c) the internal connection between the eco-nomico-technical, state and ideological domination; (d) the forms of confrontation between the dominant and alternative communication systems.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND INFORMATION

Some sociologists, especially functionalists, try to prove the pluralistic model of government by means of the development trend, saying that the present-day society keeps differentiating, and that the pluralism of interests, which is not of ideological or antagonistic nature, keeps expanding. They deny the fact that there are classes in the society which have absolutely incompatible interests. The British sociologist Mike Brake /1/ states it quite correctly that »in the bourgeois theories of pluralism, the empiric presence of a number of cultures and subcultures based on the class and ethnicity is taken for pluralism“.

It is obvious that the pluralistic structure of social groups, subgroups and classes in a certain society must be distinguished from the structure of political pluralism. The social differentiation of complex industrial societies does not yet mean that these communities can influence in whichever way political and economic decisions. Brake states that the British and American economies are not distributed in a pluralistic way: the material wealth in the USA is centralized in a few corporations while in Great Britain it is centred in a few elites. The socio-economic elite, the so-called »upper class«, together with the political elite, actually represents the dominating »class«, the executive committee reigning of behalf of the middle classes — according to critical political sociologists (Deutsch, Shattschneider, Chasin and others).

A similar group of the state-communists party elite has been identified in the socialist societies, too: the Stalinist state-party elites became a real »state--bureaucratic caste«. This oligarchic system did away with the possibilities of the working class and the working people's participating in decision-making. As a closed system, it was forced to perform the concentration and centralization of the political power, and it gradually excluded other political and social forces from shering the power /2/. Yet it is obvious that the pluralistic structure of the present-day societies strengthens above all by increasing the number of those social groups and classes that enter public life, which increase is achieved by putting forward new political and ethnic minorities,

new cultures and subcultures that demand their participation in the political process.

1. Forms of Domination and Confrontation Between Communication Systems in a Society

The communication pluralism depends on the power relations among classes and groups in a society. In autocratic and totalitarian systems (bourgeois or socialist ones), the ruling class performs total ideological homogenization. In democratic systems (bourgeois or socialist), there is a *dominant communication system* (the ideas of the ruling class), but at the same time *minority communication systems* of »non--ruling« classes and groups, political opposition, minority parties, ethnic minorities, and subcultures also develop within the pluralistic society.

According to Goran Therborn /3/, the ideological »counter-apparatus« of the ruled classes makes stand against the integral ideological apparatus of the ruling class /4/. Therborn's model of the ideological conflict and confrontation is built upon the class antagonism between the bourgeois and the working classes. With his model, he tries to show the mode of working of the ideological apparatus of the state in the process of political socialization, or in the process of the formation of class members in the contemporary developed capitalist society. The problem of the reproduction of the social order and the »ruling ideology« /5/ is represented by the question as to how the members of the new generation can be subjected and qualified in such a way that they will be well qualified for the performance of social (working and political) roles.

In terms of class ideology this involves, above all, two processes: (a) the inculcation of ruling-class ego-ideology (through ruling-class families and schools, and so on) into new members born into the class ... and (b) the teaching of future members of the ruled classes the dominance of ruling-class alter-ideology over the ideology of the ruled classes (in which the legislative and judicial power of the state, backed by forces of repression, usually plays an essential part). »This subjection-qualification is realized in a system of interrelated ideological apparatuses« /6/.

The ideological counter-apparatuses, which reflect the interests of other classes (particulary the working class), express, although in varying degree, the resistance and discourse of the ruled classes. The counter-apparatuses are made of left political parties, trade unions, its own press, radio and TV stations. It may be institutionally built, as is the case with the system of political pluralism in Italy. It may have an entirely marginal character, such as that in the left movements in Great Britain characterized by

the domination of the ideology of the conservative public opinion.

In socialist state-party system alternative political communication is primarily of a latent character and subject to repression. Studies have proved existence of alternative political communication. The alter-ideology will particularly appear at periods when economic and political systems suffer crises. It is nourished within the public and is -reflected- in the structure of messages in the mass media /7/ .

The alternative communication can be a class-related phenomenon, the result of a conflict between classes within society, or it can be an "alternative" critical political communication that develops within the framework of the pluralism of participatory or self-management democracy, in terms of both public opinion and interests.

The confrontation between the dominant communications system and the minority communication systems can be a manifest and industrial one or a noninstitutional or latent one. Confrontation can go on upon the basis of a broad communication participation of the people's masses (participative or self-managing democracy), but it can also be pushed in the state frameworks of a vertical communication. The public is exposed to the following forces endeavouring to win the public and to create the public opinion: the state with its apparatus, the political parties and the interest groups; since parliament is usually "usurped" by them, it also become a factor of influence. Opinion formation is influenced mainly by mass media not only as the mediators of -higher forces«, but also as an independent force. Furthermore, a public opinion, already formed, begins as such to affect as a factor of influence the public, mass media as well as the state, the political parties and the interest groups.

The dominant communications system produce the image of politicians, governments, political parties, events in parliaments, political and class struggles. By way of political propaganda they reach into social movements along the lines of the defined policies of the ruling class. But at the same time public is exposed also to the influence of the minority communication systems, to the political propaganda and ideology of »non-ruling« social groups, political opposition and alternative movements, to the influence of »non-ruling« cultures, to the system of ideas and values of subcultures, ethnic minorities and alternative cultures.

The public is also exposed to the influence of the neighbouring or other systems. Each social system can be relatively closed or open for influence coming from the environment. The closing off of the system allows a monopolistic position of the information,

while the openness of the system provokes a competitive situation. Openness means the introduction of innovation, alternatives, »deviations«, social and structural influences coming from other systems. Openness means also the exposure to the various forms of confrontation of the dominating communications systems of great powers in the world.

The systems model of the dominant and minority communication systems (see the scheme) analyzes those essential communication relations, processes and structures, which are the »critical« points of political communication. These are the *systems relations* in a pluralist society: the main forces influencing the public — the state, the political parties, the interest groups and parliament; the dominant and alternative communication systems; the process of functional communication between the relatively independent communication system and the autonomous, critical public; the confrontation between the conflicting systems of ideology and anti-ideologies, between the different systems values.

The systems model is a complex, dynamic abstract construction, which »includes« also the *intersystems relations*: transactional exchange of the system with its environment; interaction between the mass media and the neighbouring and foreign information--communication subsystems; continuous intercommunication among the publics, i.e., the audiences the mass media of neighbouring systems; the processes of interpenetration among the systems; the (un)equal distribution of the power and information.

The systems developmental model »includes« also the developmental mechanisms of destructuring and restructuring. Thus the function of the information-communication system is to enhance social change and development of the society.

2. Power, Consensus, and Consent

The systems in power have developed a form of ideological domination through manifold mechanisms of subordination and ideological pressure. Therborn /8/ has described the following mechanisms: *accommodation* (the rulers are obeyed because the ruled are constituted to regard other features in the world as more salient to them than their present subordination, for instance work performance, leisure, consumption, the family, sex, and sport); the sense of *inevitability* (refers to obedience through ignorance of any alternative, this mechanism may cause political marginalization of large sectors of the population in advanced capitalist societies); *sense of representation* (this sense is an effect of ideological domination, to the extent that »representativity« of the rulers

is actually contested by other ideologies, but it may also be based on charismatic representation); *deference* (is an effect of enunciations of what is good about the present rulers — qualities which are necessary qualifications for ruling). Mechanism of subordination and ideological pressure are often supported by repression mechanisms that give rise to *fear*. Penal sanctions of the judicial apparatus are here primarily implied. Death is not the only sanction for disobedience. There is also fear of being excommunicated or of losing one's job. *Resignation*, like fear, derives from considerations of what is possible in the given situation. It connotes a more profoundly pessimistic view of the possibilities of change. This form of obedience derives from conceptions of the practical impossibility of a better alternative, rather than of the repressive strength of the powers in existence.

The force-and-consent dichotomy is inadequate for analyses and understanding of domination. It tells us nothing about the very different kinds of non-coercive acquiescence and obedience. It neglects the necessary ideological mediation of »force« or sanctions, and fails to see that consent is largely governed by the constellation of force in a given situation /9/. This theory neither does it say anything about a number of other forms of socialization, agreement, harmonization or subordination that seems to be devoid of any force, coercion, or ideological indoctrination. Political domination, therefore cannot be achieved exclusively through ideology; often it can even be attained without ideological indoctrination systems.

In this theories ideologies are considered as petrified systems of ideas and values, and not something that actually goes on within a complex interlacing political ideas and the shaping of social consciousness. The field of political ideology should be observed as a dynamic progressing proces of communication between groups in a society when different an competing ideas, views, and interest are confronted.

The ideological project, as a consistent system of ideas, that functionalizes the interests of a class (a group), and as a reflection of the class (partial) consciousness (the thought of the class in power), is orientied to action. For this reason, it is always at variance with the public opinion of the society at large (ideological consciousness of the vanguard of the class is always »stronger« than that of the society at large). With its ideology the ruling (bourgeois) class clashes with the ideology and systems of values of other classes (the working class). The public opinion pluralism, therefore reflects the severity of class conflicts, too. The conflicts of ideologies of different social groups and political parties call for per-

manent accommodation and enrichment o parties' ideologies and political programmes.

If the ruling class ideology is incapable of accepting the challenge of social development, of revealing the laws of development, explaining social contradictions, analyzing interest-related clashes and conflicts, and offering solutions through political programmes, it will be in a large contradiction with the reality.

Political communications released by parties, governments, parliaments, interest groups, and mass media, depend on realities. When they are incongruous with the economic reality (economic crises, unemployment, decline in the standard of living) and social experience of the public the credibility and persuasiveness of messages will be jeopardized. The wider the gap between declared ideological and political goals on one hand, and actual political and economic position of man, on the other, the more will the political strength of communications become feeble, along with their declining persuasiveness and impact upon public opinion. The gap between ideology and reality will result in a conflicting confrontation between the organized consciousness of the ruling class, and the spontaneous (or organized) consciousness of popular masses.

Today, the media have been viewed no longer as the institutions which merely reflected and sustained the consensus, but as the institutions which produces consensus, "manufactured consent". If the »critical paradigm« has been characterized by its "rediscovery" of ideology, this has been closely related to the fact that ideological struggle has become more pronounced and visible. The media today are engaged in the business of producing consent, because the need to produce consent has become more imperative yet, at the same time, increasingly difficult.

The media (to be impartial and independent) must be sensitive to, and can only survive legitimately by operating within, the general boundaries or framework of 'what everyone agrees' to: the consensus. But, in orienting themselvel in »the consensus" and, at the same time attempting to shape up the consensus, operating on it in a formative fashion, the media become part of the 'production of consent' — shaping the consensus while reflecting it — which orientates them within the field of force of the dominant social interests represented within the state /10/. The 'impartiality' of the media thus requires the meditation of the state, and, having secured the consent of 'the nation', carry the stamp of legitimacy. In this way a particular interest is represented as 'the general interest' and 'the general interest as »ruling«. It is

at this level that media can be said to be 'ideological state apparatuses'.

Political theory has treated the role of ideology in the maintenance and change of political power primarily in terms of the three categories: legitimacy, consensus, and revolutionary class consciousness. Legitimacy refers to a quality of government; a government either does or does not have legitimacy. Consensus, or consent refers to 'civil society', and in this context to its relations with the government. Civil society does or does not consent to a given regime. Legitimacy should derive from, and grounded upon, a social consensus.

But this theory of legitimacy and consensus operate with a reductionist view of ideology and ideological dynamics; each belongs to the world of normative political philosophy. Also, it is necessary to differentiate between consensus and consent. Whereas consent connoted agreement to something or somebody, consensus refers to agreement among a group of people (a basic consensus among the ruling groups themselves, and consent to their legitimacy). Such normative evaluation should apply to the institutions of regime, rather than to the way they are maintained /11/.

It should apply to the rights and powers these institutions grant, in practice, to different groups and classes in society. That is, we should look at the existence and practical degree of freedom of speech, publication, association, assembly, candidacy, and voting, the accessibility of means of popular initiative, control and self-management.

For instance, access to the mass media, which spread ideas in the society is not equal for all the classes. Some groups have greater possibilities of participating in the formation of the "dominant ideology", which gradually turns into the »common ideology«, (the ruling class being the representative of the common interests). Other groups have less power and fewer possibilities of creating and imposing their ideological discourses on the society. They vegetate in the periphery of political life and their »special ideologies" remain marginal.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES AND INFORMATION SOCIETY

Critical research has developed better conceptual and methodological tools for analysing how dominant socio-political groups influence the structure and content of media. Critical theory has contributed to our understanding of hegemonic control of communication and of tendency for dominant coalitions to absorb and re-interpret all new symbols and Institutions in terms of their own drive for ideological control.

However, this research has given much less attention to analysing the factor leading toward redistribution of social power and democratization, to alternative subcultural patterns of communication and the dissident communication of radical movements. In the post-war period, the new cultural forms are linked to the expansion of the mass media. The new mass culture has shaken traditional identities. But the effects were ambiguous: there were undeniable effects of massification and uniformization, but this media-based culture also contains powerful elements for the subversion of inequalities. Laclau and Mouffe /12/ state that the emergence of new antagonisms and political subjects has led to the expansion of the democratic revolution in the direction of »a radical and plural democracy".

The multiplication of political spaces and the preventing of the concentration of power has become the precondition of very democratic transformation of society. Modern political communication, especially participatory communication, can be a necessary part of a broader process of redistribution of social power and productive resources /13/.

Processes of Structural Change and the Change in Communication Patterns

Some critical communications theorists have been largely concerned with explanations of the processes of social change as global and organic. They did not attempt to explain emergent processes of social change, the new models of political, economic and socio-cultural organization, neither the emergence of new structures of communications.

A number of communicologists have not included the crisis of the present-day political state into the field of their research work. It reveals itself in the crisis of the legitimacy of social states, in the fact that political parties and parliaments are torn away from the »demos«, and in the predominance of unparliamentary power centres [modern corporations). The discrepancy between the political state and the civil society deepens. The civil society seeks its existence more and more in autonomy, its own identity, and in the system of self-regulation [it could be said that the socialist »civil society« has found the authentic forms of self-regulation in self-management democracy).

In the sphere of communication, the crisis of the state's legitimacy is reflected primarily through the fact that it is not capable of preserving its ideological domination, for ideologies and communication patterns represent component parts of broader cultural configurations. Cultures are formed, reproduced, and transmitted both historically and socially, and they are, at the same time, also constituent elements of the entire social reproduction.

The concept of culture is manifold; philosophical and sociological approaches define it differently — in accordance with its theoretic aspects. Sociologists define culture for the most part as the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thought, speech and artifacts, and depends on man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations.

Some scientists /14/ research into it on the level where social groups develop recognizable life patterns and give expressive form to their social and material life experiences. These theoreticians believe a culture to be a praxis that realizes and objectivizes life forms in a senseful form. The practices of social structure consists of groups (classes), the culture and its practice cannot be completely separated from the political power.

Culture, according to Gutknecht /15/, serves at least three functions: legitimation, motivation, and integration. First, a culture provides its members with socially legitimate patterns of interpretation and behavior for dealing with culturally relevant problems. Second, a culture provides its members with hierarchical motivational structure that links their identity to culturally relevant roles and values. Third, a culture provides its members with symbolically integrated framework that regulates social interaction and goal attainment through the creation of cultural meanings.

Culture is reproduction of social relations in the sphere of consciousness, therefore in its sphere, too, there is a fight of the ruling class for the hegemony of the dominant ideology. Thus the ruling class provides its own definitions of the social reality and its own cultural patterns with legitimacy. The dominant culture is presented as the representative of all the cultures (and subcultures) of a certain society. Unless its ideological bases are challenged, it will be considered the all-embracing, universal culture. Nevertheless, other cultural configurations are not just subordinate and will try to transform the dominant order; they will try to withstand it or even to destroy its reign — its hegemony. Therefore the dominant culture finds itself in a continuous conflict with other »nonruling« cultures, which would like to become dominant cultures themselves.

In each complex stratified society, there are not only dominant systems of ideologies and values, but also alternative ones, and there is an ideological confrontation between them. The systems of ideas and values are in a perpetual dynamic process of accommodation, self-confirmation and preservation of dominance.

The communication research into the dominant and the »subordinate« cultural patterns do not represent just one of many different analyses of

the class structure of the present-day society, but also unfold to us the structure of the dominant communication systems, »subordinate« and minority ones, alternative and other systems. The situation becomes even more complicated if it comes to the coexistence of a number of cultures, the coexistence of nations and nationalities in one community (Canada, Switzerland, the USA, the USSR, etc).

The study /16/ has revealed some symptoms of the gap between the normative-legal structure of messages and the social realities. This indicates the redundant, stereotype, and inefficient structure of messages. The empirical study revealed also a growingly critical attitude towards the substance offered by mass communication media. This may also be illustrated by the growing number of readers' letters addressed to editors and by the growing needs of delegates and citizens to get objective and complex information from domestic and also alien mass media. They think that the open, democratic and critical system of communication is of exceptional importance to a self-management democracy.

2. The „Reflection“ of Reality and the „Reduction of the Complexity.

Communication sciences has, by means of different approaches and theories, restored to life the philosophic question about the »reflection« of reality in the social consciousness, and has applied it to the „reflection“ of reality in the message structure of the mass media. The majority of researches arise from the supposition that the mass media cannot »reflect« the social reality complexly neither can they show the „objective image-, of this reality. The mass media, with their criteria of ideas and values, select the items of information (objects) on the social reality, and thus perform the „reduction of the complexity“ of the social reality. In this way the mass media construct a new reality, stereotype the people's »conceptions« of the world, and produce a “distorted” image of the world /17/.

The mass media play the main part in defining our own experience, and mediate to us the categories of the classification of social happenings. Stuart Hall /18/ points out that the mass media provide the bases on which groups and classes construct the life image, meanings, practices, and values of other groups and classes. The world is classified within the framework of the „discourse of the ruling ideologies-, by constantly tracing out the limit between the »chosen« messages, which offer gratification, and the „excluded- messages, which do not belong to the „symbolic universe-.. The limits between the “normal” and the deviant messages are

drawn by means of the subtle mechanisms of the construction of reality.

An other approach comes from the »array« perspective of the dispersion proces of media. The ability of a person to see the political complexity of any event or idea is affected both by the degree to which he/ /she has had experience with the art of critical consciousness, and by the array of information she/he has available in the time and place in which she/he lives. Some researches argue that the most common form of manipulative socialization by the liberal democratic state does not seek to change values, but rather to perpetuate values that do not aid the working class to interpret the reality it actually experiences. Hochheimer /19/ concludes that the ability to analyze sources of information critically is not incalculated in most members of the working class. This serves to perpetuate acceptance of the norms and prerogatives of those in power.

3. The New Information Technology — Tool of Authoritarian Communication?

Some theorists think, that the new communication technology will give rise to a new democracy, to a new Athens.

Obviously, they recognize revolutionary potential only in technology. They treat the new computerized technology as a special force — beyond history and policy, beyond production — proprietary relations and influence of socio-political forces. The new information elite (industrialists, technocrats and scientists) are portrayed as the keepers of new technology, and not as the future ..ruling class- which will usurp information power in order to itself create history, and its political, economic and cultural reality. Therefore, it is still uncertain how people will use the fruits of the third communication revolution, and to what purposes they will be put by different social groups.

Information technology is of a kind qualitatively different from older technologies, for it does not primarily process matter and energy but organizational work in the social domain. Informational systems and information technology are much more connected with man's intellect than any other technology in history. Also the modern corporate structures result from the use of information technology, computers and computer network, for data processing and corporate decision making.

The corporate headquarters (the modern socio-economic elite) use the new technology not only to automate processes of production (robots and automated offices), but primarily to process, correlate and condense vast quantities of data and to prepare decisions that are better informed. »In the emerging

information society*, said Krippendorff /20/, "corporations are amassing so much capacity to display intelligence ..., that the social use of this capacity increasingly dominates older forms of organization including those traditionally charged with the responsibility of government". Corporations employ the most well informed lobby in the U. S. Congress. Members of corporations occupy top level positions in the U. S. government. It is the information that is processed in corporate structures, not people, that governs the contemporary economy. »The corporate use of information processing technology has made corporations the 'social brain' of the emerging in information society" /21/.

The emerging information society with its tremendous increase in the human-societal potential is indeed an expansion of the human mind, but at the same time it will »create« the most powerful elite in history, *the new computerized informational technocracy*. The new hazard is pointed out by many communicologists: The modern technocracy will invite the people to participate in a ritual of control where fascination with technology masks the underlying factors of politics and power. We already know that the new information distribution of power is magnifying informational inequalities in societies and in the world.

Therefore it is very difficult indeed to answer the question as to what social consequences the new electronic technology will have. Some sociologist /22/ , think that the computer technology will have no negative effects on the future development of the democratic political system, but will, on the contrary, even render it possible that a larger number of people will be able to take part in the main trends of the democratic participation and decision-making.

The following facts speak in favour of the above-mentioned supposition:

- 1) with the new technology, the information pool and the amount of the publicly accessible information will increase immensely;
- 2) the number of people that will use the new technology actively will increase, too, which is expected to broaden the political space for the people's participatory democracy;
- 3) the new technology will be an incentive to people's greater activity in public life — owing to the larger number of items of information on the social and global happenings;
- 4) the new forms of the two-way, interactive communication will represent an incentive to activity, and will lessen the narcotizing function of the mass media;
- 5) the possibilities of exercising public control over information will also increase, which will lead to greater objectivity and complexity of information, on the one hand, and to smaller possibilities of creating the mass-media "construction of reality«, on the other;
- 6) information

will become more and more global and universal which will result in greater interrelation of people, and in the diminishing effects of "ideological discourses"; 7) according to its nature, computer information is public, of all society, and cannot remain or become a monopoly of private corporations — therefore the possibilities of manipulating items of information will become smaller; 8) the new structure of information and the new communication culture will introduce new, information literacy, which will urge upon the future generations a more complex understanding of nature, the society and the world; 9) new life styles will be formed by the informational culture with its new world-view, its new manner of living, and new literacy.

In spite all these brilliant »advantages« of the new system of the information connectedness of the future society, this optimistic prediction of the development of societies should undergo a critical analysis.

New cybernetic relations and the findings of the modern system theory urge upon us new knowledge of nature and the world (this could be the topic of a separate paper). At this place, we can only deliberate upon the question whether the new information technology will influence the production relations and forces to such a degree that a beginning of a new historic social formation could be foreseen. Although we can already speak about changing the modes of production of material goods and information (which will by all means represent an epoch-making step forward), the question concerning the changes of the basic social relations, the abolition of antagonistic classes and class relations still remains unanswered.

The class character of the production relations among the people depends upon who has disposal and control of the value created by the worker's labour. The private-proprietary appropriation of capital, which defines the class character of social relations, however, remained essentially unchanged even after the "managerial revolution". There is no reason to believe that the "information-technocratic revolution" could also essentially change, all by itself, the class character of the social relations in the information society. The information of a new corporation elite which will appropriate, in a private-proprietory manner, also the centres of the »social brain«, only points towards new, dangerous distribution of social power: a shift from parliaments, representing crystallization of the people's will towards unparliamentary centers, oligarchic minority groups. The new information elite will perhaps all alone manage and manipulate the information system and thus immensely increase its strength, while the majority of other classes, the

masses, will be only »users« of the new technology and will change into the "plebeian masses of the computerized culture".

Therefore it is not possible to claim altogether persuasively and sovereignly that the social implications of the new technology will lead to the democratization of society.

This still remains the task of the progressive mankind. The man's vision of the democratic society in which men could communicate with each other as equals and not as subordinates remains still vivid. It is this man's desire and his social responsibility that can be considered the willful social power that has been already inevitably forcing mankind into the forms of participatory and self-management democracies and democratic communication.

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