Problems of Individualization in the Everyday Culture of Eastern Europe[1]

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Abstract. While the individualization of recent decades has proceeded in the eclectic world view of a society with an eclectic system of values, the system change often requires of individuals a total change in their system of values and world view: indeed, we can say it requires a change of culture in the sense used by cultural anthropology. The authors chose life situations in which the change of cultures or the relation of cultures to each other is striking from the point of view of individualization. Interviews were made with a group of intellectuals who had spent at least one year in the United States, and subsequently returned, so they twice confronted the differences of cultures, and a group of intellectuals who moved to Hungary from Transylvania and who have lived here for at least one year. Both meetings with an other culture having a higher degree of individualization produce similar reactions. The emergence of more individualistic attitudes is accompanied by ambivalent feelings, different adaptation forms and changes in the value system.

Keywords: cultural differences, East Europe, individualization, lifestyle, mentality, socialization, system change, value system.

The subject of our examination is what sort of life problems are caused by the East European changes from the point of view of individualization. The political, economic and institutional sides of the East European transformations have been analyzed by many and from many points of view; however, much less attention is directed at the individual side, i.e. how all these changes affect the everyday life and habits of individuals. From these points of view, we can talk about a slow process of individualization, which, after its beginning in the last century and its repeated, increasingly unambiguous impetuses after the turn of the century,

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has become a mass phenomenon in Hungary from the 1960s; about the change of the value system—shocking for many people, and very radical, measured on a historical scale—that accompanies the process of (political-social) system change; and about the individualization that is occurring on a world-scale with a rising tendency as we progress from the peripheries to the centres.

Individualization shows a close connection with modernization and with the development of bourgeois relations; it gained strength in East European state socialism when the state began to withdraw (gradually, leaving a scope to individual initiatives) from fields where it had previously been present in a dominant, directing way. It is well known that in Hungary, starting with the sixties, with the second economy gaining ground, the household plot, with a part of the intelligentsia becoming free-lance workers, increasingly wider groups were affected by one of the foundations of individualization: becoming independent (of course, until quite recently, independent only in a limited way) in an economic-existential sense.

This was related to the fact that the ideological offensive of politics also decreased, indeed, it increasingly made efforts to depolarize the society, as many observers have shown: it reached an agreement and made a compromise with the private sphere. The next important root of individualization was urbanization which destroyed the traditional society. Similarly, in that period radical changes occurred in the structure of the family: the nuclear family (also determining from the point of view of individualization) became typical. The cultural impacts also helped this tendency: cultural policy allowed Western culture to gain ground in a differentiating way (which communicated a more individualized system of values) and gave scope to the native (bourgeois) cultural traditions, representing similar values. These impacts strengthened each other as well.

This individualization, of course, was very contradictory, and lacked many of those things which characteristic for western societies (perhaps most strikingly the freedom of a self-organizing civil society). Because of this lack, the analysis made by Elemér Hankiss, originating from this period, makes direct use of the concept of negative modernization to characterize the shift of values in Hungary. The peculiarities of this process were, and the sense in which the above can also be regarded as typical ways of individualization, remain further questions, but perhaps it is indisputable that—in some sense—the last three decades in Hungary were characterized by a powerful individualization.

As these processes occurred slowly, over decades, it was only gradually that they became perceptible, and even then they were not perceptible in every field. The system change, however, made it obvious for all that from now on "everything is otherwise," and one important element of this "otherwise" is that in the field of values the "self-asserting" of the individual takes over the place of the "community" (this is so even if more emphasis is given—primarily by the governing parties—to the communality, although, of course, not in its abstract

socialist but in the traditional—national-religious—sense). What has changed spectacularly is the decrease in the paternalist functions of the state, and this suggests very dramatically for many people the view that: "You can only count on yourself." While the individualization of recent decades has proceeded in the eclectic world view of a society with an eclectic system of values, the system change often requires of individuals a total change in their system of values and world view: indeed, we can say it requires a change of culture in the sense used by cultural anthropology.

Since in the final analysis both of the two naturally inseparable processes are parts of the development of individualization within the world system, their most essential features—also within the individual countries—can be grasped when and where cultures with a different degree of individualization meet. When we chose the subject of our examination, we believed that we could most effectively examine individualization in the state of mind of individuals who experience directly and in a manifold way such a meeting with a culture of a different degree of individualization compared to their own experiences.

We chose life situations in which the change of cultures or the relation of cultures to each other is striking from the point of view of individualization. In Hungary, three particular groups appeared to be the best subjects for such an examination. 1. Intellectuals who had spent at least one year in the United States with a scholarship as temporary lecturers or as researchers, and subsequently returned, so they twice confronted the differences of cultures. 2. Intellectuals who moved to Hungary from Transylvania (that is, from the Romanian society that has not passed through the processes which occurred in Hungary in the sixties, moreover, which has very different traditions), and who have lived here for at least one year (so they have sufficient experience of the reality here, too). 3. Intellectuals who, leaving the nomenclature positions they held in the party apparatus, have become (involuntarily or voluntarily) economic entrepreneurs (since in their minds there has been an encounter and changing of two cultures that require very different degrees of individualization: the culture of the "state socialist" bureaucracy and the culture of the capitalist enterprise).

As for the method of examination, we conducted in-depth interviews (5-6 hours in length per person, which were arranged in 2-3 sessions). Thirty interviews of each type were made. Our questions were directed at the main differences between the cultures. Of course, we did not want to explore what the American or Hungarian society is like, but rather the differences which stand out in the minds of people who experienced the meeting of the cultures. What changes did they have to go through, what were their most striking, most unusual, most testing, or even most shocking experiences and observations?

The main fields touched on in the interviews were the following: work, the relation to work, working circumstances, methods of management, working

methods, working style; the customs of leisure time, travel, holidays, the time budget; the forms of human relations, the family, friendship, kinship, neighbourhood, relations at the work place; the customs of child-raising; the division of labour in the family, the peculiarities of the genders, sexual ideals, conflicts and ways of handling them; the home, the way of life, aspects of living, shopping habits, services; the media, TV, broadcasting, newspapers; what can be seen of the world "here" and "there," the segments of world view; politics, the relation to politics; society's degree of hierarchization and the way it is treated, the extent and forms of wealth and poverty, the ambitions, figures of fashion, successful people, the "models;" socialization (impacts at school and outside of it); the habits of conversation, topics of conversation, taboos, the way of communication, symbolic signs; the measure and forms of independence and dependence, people's individuality/uniformity, etc.

In the following, as the change from party bureaucrat to entrepreneur is a special form of culture change that differs in many respects from the experiences of the other two groups, allowing other sorts of conclusions, we select some cases from the experiences of the interviews which were made with the first two groups.

The life situation, which was the interviewees' common experience, has many determining peculiarities. The differences between the culture in which they grew up and the culture they recently got to know affect individuals to an amazing degree. The cultural shock produced by the differences, the globally alien environment often causes a state of depression, leading in turn to escape or slow adaptation. Several of the interviewees reported that the alienation caused in them an inability to create because they did not find anything in the alien conditions which could motivate them. Besides alienation, the mental state of the individual is determined by the absence of a net of connections: the individual feels like being in a void, in a vacuum situation.

All this results in the destruction of self-identity: the subjects of the interview talk about becoming nothing, about the annihilation of the individual, as under the new circumstances all their previous results, experiences, the connections they have built become invalid, void; they feel that they have to recreate the foundations of their lives, rebuild their personality itself.

Individuals can give various responses to these challenges. These solutions are placed on a scale between the extremes of resistance and surrender. On the one hand, we find overcompensation, the unconditional acceptance of the recipient culture, which is accompanied by undervaluing the self and overappreciating the recipient culture. In such cases people strive to ignore all critical elements in themselves, they downplay, in some cases exclude from their perception any impressions which are negative features of the recipient culture. On the other hand, there are techniques of exclusion: on the one side, overvaluing the individual's original culture (or undervaluing the recipient one), a kind

of strengthening cultural nationalism; on the other side, the defence of the sovereignty of the individual, an increase in personal self-awareness. Defences against the pressure of the absence of connections can also be placed on a scale between two extremes: on the one hand, there is the typical excessive toughness, on the basis of the principle "I can only count on myself;" on the other hand, the search, the protection of the ardour lacking in the new environment: the effort to quickly form possible connections and communities which ensure that defence. This can be ensured by special subcultures, by groups of the same origin finding each other, quick marriages between people in a similar situation, etc.

However, the positive outcome of the life situation examined is, in any case, being in the particular situation of the observer and the emergence of the capacities connected to this. They become aware of many phenomena which they would not otherwise perceive.

There are some other determining factors in perceiving the differences between cultures. I. People especially realize the differences (1) which are completely unusual phenomena in their own culture (different customs, norms, especially taboos) (the differences of "quiddity"); (2) which are strikingly different in standards or in measures (the differences of "quantity"); 3. which are the manifestations of the same things with totally different contents (differences of "quality"). II. In perceiving the differences, the heightened attention of the individual is directed mainly to the following areas: (a) the role and appreciation of the individual; (b) the peculiarities of the world of objects; (c) the forms of initiating and maintaining contacts; (d) what can be regarded as the key element which holds together the order of the world, the given culture; (e) divergences in the use of language, the systems of signs (namely those peculiarities which instantly draw the attention of the observer).

All this, thus, influences the perception and realization of the differences between the cultures. But what is ultimately observed by those who experience the meeting of the two examined cultures? First, we shall examine the common tendencies, i.e. those which generally accompany the move from a society with a lower degree of individualization to a more individualized one. Then we one by one examine those specificities which can be regarded as the peculiar and typical experiences of moving from the Hungarian society to the USA. (Naturally there are peculiarities of moving from Transylvania to Hungary, too, but the discussion of the questions related to them would be beyond the framework of this study; we would like to deal with these in a separate study).

General tendencies

1. The first great field where the differences can be registered is the observation of the peculiarities of social relations.

   1.1. It is natural to perceive the difference between living standards, and, generally, the differences in the importance of material goods. This relation can be viewed critically, emphasizing the disadvantages of wealth, or with an uncritical admiration. This also depends on the extent to which prosperity is regarded as a value in the sending society, or the strength of other values (possibly prevailing more weakly in the recipient society). The two examined groups differ from this point of view. In Hungary, for several decades the (partly officially enhanced) progress towards the values of material prosperity continued. This increases the positive predisposition towards the society of the USA. Among the Hungarians of Transylvania, communal values are stronger; this principle diminishes the unambiguously positive value attached to material prosperity: many report their amazement that in the recipient society "only money gives the value of man." In both groups, however, important modifying effects are at work. For the Transylvanians the extreme economy of shortage, immeasurably ruining human possibilities, has—necessarily—overvalued the non-prosperity-type values, but when they break away from their original environment, the abundance experienced affects them in an unambiguously positive, "paradise"-like manner. On the other hand, it is not an insignificant circumstance that they meet this in the "Motherland," in Hungary, and so the value of communal identification also strengthens the affirmation of the prosperity model. (They regard this as a Hungarian result which overvalues their domestic, Romanian social state). At the same time (not least due to the lack of communal identification of this sort), the compensatory effect often strengthens in Hungarians going to America: they search for the negative aspects of prosperity. Many people who went to the USA with a positive prejudice, overvalued the values of culture, solidarity, hence non-material values, during their stay there. After all, the balance in the judgement of prosperity, welfare advantages of the recipient societies is a positive one; and we must not forget here that the increased prosperity of the individual is the essential concomitant and condition of individualization: for societies which have stepped on the path of individualization this is always a positive value. Observers suggest the differences in prosperity primarily by stressing such phenomena as emphasizing the pleasantness of shopping, the recording of shopping as a separate ritual, the dizzying variety of goods, the comfort provided by the services, the recognition of the possibility of a quieter life, the propaganda, the priority given in the mass media to material goods and their acquisition, the greater possibilities for enterprise; the materialism, the rationality of the utility principle, which prevails in people's mentality.

1.2. The perception and interpretation of the differences (in prosperity) within the recipient society is connected to the above. These differences in the examined recipient societies are more extreme, more striking, than in the sending societies. This is recorded (with some astonishment) by almost everybody. The importance of that question is strengthened by the fact that at the beginning observers have a lower social status in the recipient societies than they had at home. In interpreting the social differences, in the final analysis, what divides the reactions into two types is whether the observer regards his/her stay here as temporary or he/she wants to adapt himself/herself permanently to this society. In the first case the perception of the extremes strengthens him/her in the decision to withdraw from the recipient society, and he/she criticizes it in what could be called the manner of a "class-struggle." In the second case his/her striving for adaptation makes him/her susceptible to the view that he/she also regards poverty (as the self-propaganda of the recipient society) as a deviancy, as the fault of the poor, and he/she places the emphasis on the charitable efforts of the recipient societies which are striving to reduce the social differences. (Taking note of the institutional protection of minorities, which is strengthened in the case of people who moved from Transylvania to Hungary in contrast with the experiences at home, and in the case of people going from Hungary to the USA by the experiences refuting the one-sidedness of the earlier counter-propaganda, also belong to this category.) The "critics," however, observe with scepticism the self-propaganda of the recipient society, the techniques by which these societies want to conceal the facts and injustices of social inequalities.

1.3. Many report how they observed a very subtle stratification in the recipient society (a) in the way residence, social status, and consumption habits, or other sorts of behaviour are connected to each other; (b) (in connection with individualization) in how wide and internally stratified the middle-class is; and (c) in how the recipient society forms some sort of subtle caste system. (The newcomers may necessarily be more sensitive to perception of those barriers in the path and therefore of the mobility of newcomers). At the same time many report that they are less able to notice (in the signs of dressing, of behaviour) the differences than they are at home, and they ascribe this to the greater degree of equality. There is no contradiction between the two observations: in the more individualized society the differences are greater, but also more gradual, more subtle, and they are less perceptible because of the more sophisticated character of the differences, and if we regard the "middle class" as one social group, then the process of the rise of more and more groups into the middle class with the parallel increase of individualization can also be seen (from the level of a society with a less differentiated middle strata) as a homogenization.

2. There is an equally emphasized difference in the divergence of values. The higher degree of individualization is directly perceptible in the divergence of the

value system, in the presence of the more individualistic order of the recipient society's values. Individuals, however, can least disregard such direct collisions of the value systems: the tendency that observers receive the phenomena of the recipient society with aversion is most observable in precisely these cases.

2.1. The members of both examined groups rank the recipient society as a colder one than their sending culture. The coldness in family relations is especially striking: the less bodily contact with children, less frequent expression of emotions, etc., the spread of the nuclear family (the disappearance of grandparents, of kinship relations), the "exaggerated rationalism," pragmatism of human relations.

2.2. While they report more civilized, more polite forms of contact in the recipient societies, they almost unambiguously state that these forms of contact are superficial, that they lack real, intimate conversations (the observers of American culture also add that the lack of both theoretical and personal topics in everyday conversations is striking) and intimate forms of communal life within which men "understand each other without words."

2.3. Some observers also mention that people have less endurance in the recipient societies than in their sending society. They are less able to adapt to difficulties. (In the Transylvanian-Hungarian relation it is also mentioned that "they live better than we do, and yet they complain more.") Here, their opinion is likely to be inseparably affected by the subjective judgement that they—who would be happy with the living standards of the recipient society—are less sensitive to the troubles of that society, and the objective fact that harder conditions of life necessarily make people tougher.

In both examined groups, all these differences of values originate directly from the fact that in the sending societies the communal dependence of the individual and, in connection with this, the emphasis on communal values is stronger than in the recipient society; and while in the case of differences in living standards the advantages of the higher living standards, in any case, are more unambiguous than the disadvantages, the indubitable advantages of the spreading individualistic value system are in fact accompanied by many losses, as a consequence of the retreat of communal values more characteristic to the less individualized societies.

3. On the other hand, the more individualized societies are emphasized unambiguously in the observations related to self-esteem. People emphasize the higher degree of independence of the people from recipient societies.

This is primarily observed in the process of its evolution, and both groups find that even the children are more sure of themselves, they communicate more easily, and their means of expression are also more developed. All this is explained by the prosperity, providing security (in the case of America, by letting the child stand on his own feet earlier) and not least by the techniques

of socialization which serve to strengthen the child in his/her individuality, to indicate to him/her that he/she is a value in himself.

The only negative judgement so far linked to the recipient society, perceived as unambiguously better in this respect, is that because of these contrast effects they, the outsiders, feel too little, dwarfed, compressed in this society of people who are sure of themselves.

Peculiarities: America

1. Several of the observed peculiarities of the more individualized society were mentioned only in the case of Hungary – USA. Most of these were related to the differences in "mentality."

These mentions paint a picture of the self-asserting mentality of the atomized individuals of a highly organized, enterprise-based society, the mentality of modern individualization. People judges as positive those things which carry them closer to this individualization.

1.1. The most determining feature of mentality observed is pragmatism. This pragmatism is observed when they talk about the fact that here everything can be bought at any time, when they emphasize the priority of the purposive rationality, from organizing the use of time, through the purposefulness applied in the forming of friendships, to the meticulous specialization of jobs; they note the speed of information processing and the fastness of the whole way of life, e.g., the spread of the disposable objects, McDonalds and similar chains, and other homogenizing mechanisms; etc. According to observers, all this means a mentality that indubitably ensures a much smoother and quieter life, but allows much less scope for sensitive creativity than the prevailing mentality of the sending society.

1.2. Another often mentioned characteristic feature of the mentality is the "keep smiling" attitude, which is related to the—also very often mentioned—very negative valuing of failures, and which expresses the attitude that you must not admit failure (far from recounting, complaining about it to others, which would show weakness), you must emphasize the success in everything, the individual must stand his/her own in a harsh, competitive situation, rely only on himself/herself (as the figure of the lonely western hero who is the model of this mentality). All this can positively affect the individual: the smile gives him energy, the feeling of "all right," the permanent emphasizing of successes gives self-assurance. At the same time, the price of the competitive harshness, the ability to win, according to the judgement of the observers, is a sort of mental dullness, the continuous pressure to prove how good you are, and the definitiveness of the failure of those who cannot stand up from defeat. (Here one

can not expect help, if somebody falls, everybody turns away from him/her, it is regarded as natural that he/she must struggle to his feet. The agelessness in connection with competition isalso observed by many: old-age is a sort of failure and so it should be hidden).

This is again the source of the successful preservation of physical condition and at the same time the psychological burdens of fear of failure. We must not leave out the observation that at the same time competition is not merely regarded as a struggle, as in Europe, but, so to say, as a parlour game, a challenge to the individual, and so the less help is balanced by the more general spirit of "fair play."

1.3. The concomitant of both, competition and pragmatism is hard work, accompanied by the necessary ability to manage, to sell oneself. The individual himself/herself must estimate his/her ability, and if his/her efforts are justified, he/she can count on recognition. Since success is the highest measure of values, its achievement as a reward is a very great mobilizing force, it can bring a strong pressure to perform. Here it should be noted that several observers perceive that despite there is an absence in the authority principle (for example, the teacher has no automatical rights in face of the students, but he/she must prove his/her right), the principle of authorityprevails. Thus, the fact is that authoritydoes not follow primarily from a certain role, but depends on the degree of successes achieved. In relation to this mentality, observers call attention to the great degree of productiveness and democratism it ensures; on the other hand, successfulness can become entirely independent from the real value of performance.

1.4. Another striking element of the mentality is also connected with the competitive view, the atomized state of society, the emphasis on "privacy." The point is not merely that the individual can count only on himself/herself, but that his/her "private sphere" is a value which must be ensured by as many means as possible (because of this, the school report is secret, it is the child's and his/her parents' business only; because of this, the result of the university exams is signalled only by a code number; because of this, it is important that the individual has a connection with his/her bank, drugstore, etc. by a channel as closed as possible). (The privacy ensured in most fields of life on the one hand increases the refinement in forms of contact; on the other hand, it excessively atomizes the individual, it not only protects, but also isolates him/her.

Thus, East Europeans, confronted with the American way of life, primarily value the practicality, the successfulness of this culture, and at the same time they record losses with respect to the ideal of humanity and cultural wealth.

2. There are more negative value judgements in the area of "cultural values," although an effort is often made to try to understand, from within, the peculiarities of American culture, so different from their sending culture.

2.1. The tastelessness of American culture—proclaimed by many—is almost a truism. However, many connect this with the other fundamental peculiarity

of this culture, the absence of the past. European culture and its norms of taste have been built up over centuries, in many fields, from human relations to the arts, and this cannot be compared with a "present time" culture (and that culture necessarily is a "present" one and two-generations-ago is already perceived as history). Moreover, the value judgement of European people has a great importance precisely from the point of view of individualization: the individualization of a culture may not be effective if it is not built on the antecedents of this culture. For this, the American model in its present form seems to be a much less attractive model for individualization for the European cultures.

2.2. The very high degree of technology—in the spirit of the prevailing pragmatism—can be made totally independent from the cultural expectations (a very good example of this is that children learn to write and read by computer, but the rate of functional illiteracy is rising steadily), the possession of (cultural) education in the European sense is not required, not even from intellectuals: apart from a narrow elite intelligentsia, only effective practice in the respective special field is required from the intellectual. (A part of the higher culture—for example, classical music is practically only attainable to a well-to-do middle-class, so it is not only a matter of culture, but also of financial welfare). The higher culture is less built into the structure of society: as remarked by an observer, while in Europe the cities settled around the universities, in America the campus left the cities, it withdrew into its own world.

2.3. However, a striking peculiarity—but one that logically follows from the above—is the cult of health which is general in this society. Here illness carries within itself the dangers of falling behind in competition, and where the costs of health service are so high, great importance is attached to body culture and sports.

Most of the cultural peculiarities—with the exception of the physical culture—are experienced by Europeans as an absence, they do not recognize them as a model of individualization for themselves.

3. The peculiarities of the forms of establishing and maintaining contacts follow from both the mentality and the cultural customs.

3.1. In interpersonal communication—in keeping with the general pragmatism—agreement or (business) information has a great role. The seemingly informal, purposeless conversations are preparations for important decisions; they touch the surface of different standpoints, and try to sketch out possible alliances. In American conversations, official or informal, the establishment of consensus has a very important value: much time and energy is spent on this, but this is an indispensable necessity in this—in many respects pluralist—society. However, Europeans require a fairly long period of learning to adapt to the fact that information in America serves an entirely different purpose and has a different meaning, and so it has a totally different construction than in the sending society.

3.2. The other often mentioned feature of human relations is the absence of their stability. This comes from the peculiarity of the pragmatic lifestyle, so the individual can change his place in the world without serious shocks, even surmounting great distances, depending on where he/she finds the most favourable conditions. These frequent moves, in turn, make the individual's long-lasting embedding impossible: it is a general phenomenon that the individual quickly establishes and also quickly terminates relationships. (Relations in the neighbourhood are very important for practical reasons, but due to the moves, naturally, these are also re-established.) Families are also fragile, there are many divorces, provisionality is one of the most important characteristics of contacts. An East European sometimes values this as easiness, but more often he/she qualifies it (based on his/her culture, emphasizing the more communal values) as superficiality, as the absence of roots.

After all, the forms of establishing contacts are not among the attractive components of the American model of individualization either; they cannot explain the impact, the appeal (for Europeans, too) of that model. 4.1. There is a striking difference in the spirit of primary schools. As it was pointed out by an observer, the European school constantly directs the attention of the child to what he/she does not know, while the American school points out what he/she already knows, this way suggesting that everybody is outstanding in something, thereby establishing a lasting self-esteem. This is also helped by the more direct contact and interaction between school and family (e.g., the initiation of the parents, the role of practical household tasks among the school aged). The requirements suddenly increase on the higher levels, but by then the child has already developed the ability to accept responsibility.

4.2. Socialization in the family is also directed towards this. Money has a very direct role which begins at birth: in the wide middle strata a bank account for the child is already opened at the time of his/her birth (to accumulate the costs of future education) and the child learns as early as possible to sell and to take a job, in order to be able to support himself/herself independently, away from his/her family by the time he/she becomes eighteen (it is generally a custom).

4.3. The best universities are places of elite education in more than one sense: the relations established here can be converted later into a political or business career, and the university years are schools of power, from the point of view that it is the student who – on the basis of high tuition – can make demands of the – providing – teacher (while, of course, very hard work is demanded of him, and he has to meet this).

Thus the East European recognizes in the field of socialization primarily those features which—contrary to his/her own bureaucratic-centralized model of society—prepare individuals for a life of competition.

5. The political model is viewed by observers as a factor which plays a totally different role in everyday life compared to the model to which they are accustomed, but they often mention with recognition the sober pragmatism which also prevails in this field.

5.1. They state that high politics or membership of a party are far less important in America from the point of view of the individual, but the local politics, where the decisions influencing people's lives are made, have a very great importance. (The strong appreciation of this pattern is expressed as something which is missing in the sending society, where civil society is undeveloped, etc.).

5.2. They stressed the integrating force, the ideology of the "land of opportunity" as the essence of the strong American patriotism, which is strengthened by continuous immigration; some talk about this with recognition, others with criticism of the hypocrisy which maintains this attitude. Many observers' attention is extremely sensitive to the question of "racial conflicts" (stressed by the counterpropaganda of recent decades). For some, the positive discrimination of the minorities is striking, but many emphasize that this is often largely formal (for example, they take good care to have coloured people among the positive heroes of movies, but it is at least as important that they remain in their own social medium, we do not very often meet mixed race couples in these movies).

5.3. The intensity of American mass information is also a truism among European observers. This obviously makes it more difficult for observers to identify with the recipient culture.

All these differences observed in American society are really peculiarities, specificities, but if we dismantle their formal contingency, we find the generally valid tendencies, too. The pragmatism, the success orientation, the isolation, as well as the fragmentation of the culture, emerging parallel with the development of mass culture, are phenomena which became characteristic in the individualized society..

At the same time, we must beware of overgeneralizations. Although from a certain point of view this trend of individualization exists among the individual cultures, most of the phenomena cannot be interpreted at all as a linear growth or impoverishment.

We can enumerate at length phenomena which in the Hungarian society are somewhere in between the USA and Transylvania from the point of view of individualization. are the most common, or on the contrary the most rare. Yet we can draw some cautious conclusions about the peculiarities of facing a society of a higher degree of individualization.

Some conclusions

Facing a society of a higher degree of individualization always produces mixed feelings. On the one hand, people are attracted by many features (greater opportunities ensured by prosperity, the strengthening of self-esteem, the higher degree of efficiency, the smoother organization of life), on the other hand, they dislike some peculiarities which they consider impoverishing (the increase of social differences, the coldness isolation, the competition threatening the safety of personality, the community, the culture). Value systems collide, and the individual feels that if he/she gives his/her previous value system up, he/she will win. In practice, he/she can lose, too.

What can be won by changing the value system is not quite unambiguous. It seems to be clear that the higher degree of individuality, of individual freedom, autonomy also means the enrichment of the individual. At the same time, the more individualized world seems to be more homogenized, the individual in it more endangered from many points of view. In addition to this, the collision of the value system in the case examined has two sides: the traditionalist values of the pre-capitalist East European traditions collide with the value system of the developed bourgeois world (indeed, it is more complex, since a Hungarian entering the American conditions can perceive the differences from his/her peculiarly European, particularly East-European, or just particularly Hungarian point of view), but this is coloured by another sort of collision between the value systems, too: the system of "collective" values, propagated in the state socialist system, which is mixed with the traditionalist values, but which is different from them in many respects, also collides with the same bourgeois world.

(Nevertheless, this confrontation can be better understood now than previously. While in the ideology of state socialism the features of the traditional value systems were declared to be more primitive, and the "socialist" features to be more "progressive" than bourgeois ones, today it is clear that the East European development, together with the market economy-type modernization, is moving towards increased individualization.)

The individual can react in many ways to meeting a culture with a higher degree of individualization than his/her own culture. Those responses which reject the model of individualization are irrelevant for our examination. But acceptance also takes many forms. a.) One response is when the individual gives up the different points of view of his/her sending culture and resolves the ambivalence in favour of total acceptance. b.) Another, perhaps the most common, type of adaptation is when he/she does not adopt the whole of the other culture, but strives to adapt, to incorporate into his/her own practice only some parts of it. In this case, of course, the most important question is which part of it should be incorporated. As reflected by the standpoints described above, in the case of American culture,

the cultural or political model acts as such an example at a lower degree, and many people try to adapt, to incorporate into their own previous relations the key elements of the mentality (pragmatism, success orientation, strong competition, or the model of childhood socialization).

It can perhaps be said that in the case of a cultural shift generally these (or these among others) are the key elements through which successful adaptation takes place.

Probably, cultural shift within a society, and hence individualization within the society (mentioned in the introduction), also primarily proceeds through this same process.

The adaptation can be regarded as effective from the moment when a transition occurs from one cultural model or value system to the other, when the key element of the worldview to be taken over is adopted. Finally, it must also be mentioned that the process of individualization presented here is not predetermined. A third ("c") type of adoption (or the solution of the ambivalence) is possible, in which the ultimate result is not the adoption of the other (in our case the more individualized) culture, but the creation of a new culture or value system, synthesized from the values of the sending culture (or value system) and those of the new culture (or value system). The analysis of the possibilities of such a synthesis would greatly exceed the framework of this study.

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