

SUMMARIUM

UNEMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Unemployment has been a new reality in Central and Eastern Europe after the democratic transition of 1989/90. The totalitarian regimes of the region, under the Soviet influence and the impact of the great economic crisis of the early XX. century insisted upon a full employment policy. They exhausted the state run industries and agricultures for their political purposes offering social security for everybody and extending party and state control over them in their workplaces. A combination of full employment policy with central control on the production as well as political control on the citizens led to the abolishing of market forces, economic incentives as well as political freedom. From the mid-1960s, reform circles argued for larger economic freedom and less central control in countries like Hungary, Poland or Yugoslavia. Yet, market economies and private ownership could not break through until the collapse of the Soviet empire.

Today, new democracies of the CEE countries face the frustrating dilemma of political democratization with economic crisis. Unemployment is an element of it. Can the societies of the CEE countries tolerate the decline of their economy in order to gain new incentives from the European market and the world economy (which is also stagnating)? How can education help ease the tension of this transition?

L. Laki (School and Unemployment) analyses the characteristics of the "unemployment culture". Most of the economists deal the question from one particular point which is the need for a workplace. The author, however, points out various life styles of the unemployed which may or may not save the individual from personal collapse. It is particularly serious among social groups of the northeastern part of Hungary since they belong to minorities (mostly gypsies) and are uneducated. Education, the author stresses may not only improve their status on the labor market but also contribute to their personal, family and social integration.

Cs. Bánfalvy (Youth Unemployment) deals with the transition period between schooling and employment. Unemployment figures went up to 11% of the labor force by the end of 1992 in Hungary (it means around 600.000 unemployed). Youth on the labor market has higher requirements for their future jobs like interesting work, safe environment, high educational requirements. They are less interested in actual salaries or the conditions of commuting between their home and workplace. All in all young beginners, mostly because of their educational levels

represent a better position of negotiating and by that give a hope for better employment policies in the future.

I. Liskó (Employed in Risk) studies an other group of the work force, those who face the risks of future unemployment. This group consists of youngsters without junior high school graduation at the age of 16, those being dropped out from vocational training institutions, or beginners trained for state owned heavy industries. She points out the cumulation of those effects in cases where unemployment is already a sad reality (70% with poor graduation from general schools, 80% from uneducated parents, 40% from broken families). She argues for a social policy that has to be connected with new education and training programs.

A. Csanády (Vocational Training and the Second Economy) says that education may not help us against unemployment since the employment reality is different from market economies. In his historic study the author stresses the agricultural tradition of the Hungarian population which were connected with peasants' mentalities and village cultures. Re-training and in-the-job training activities are addressed to individuals and groups with industrial backgrounds. The author suggests new strategy for education and (second) training that would meet with the special needs of the population of CEE countries with extensive village cultures and peasants' mentalities.

M. Csákó & B. Benyó (Vocational Education and Demography) publishes a follow up of his earlier study. Supporters of vocational education (VET) used to say that VET is ideal in case of demographic wave even if their training programs are somewhat outdated. Data of ten years, however show that VET in its traditional forms (starting at the age of 14) was declining in Hungary from the turn of the 1970–1980s. From that time on it never fulfilled its demographic role. The reason for keeping VET in its initial forms was more politics than demography or labor economy. New forms of VET (including its beginning as late as the age of 16) can only contribute to the solution of the present unemployment crisis in Hungary.

S. Kopátsy (Toward A New Consumers' Society) sharply criticizes the conventional wisdom the traditional economists. They argue for more capital both in the form of physical as well as financial capitals. The author presents us with a different calculation. According to it, the values of the per capita physical properties declined while the values of the intellectual properties increased in the most developed parts of the world economy. It is a trend in which manual work is constantly devaluated on the market while intellectual work is constantly valued. The radical change in the characteristic of labor (and laborers) leads to the change of its education, training, life career and living styles. Education is valued not only as a practical training for job security but also as an element of producing that new kind of labor for the XXI. century.

TAMAS KOZMA