

THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE OF SELECTED SOCIALIST COUNTRIES OF EUROPE

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SUMMARY

The present paper evaluates the characteristic features of the settlement structure of selected European socialist countries — of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Hungarian People's Republic, the Roumanian Socialist Republic and the Bulgarian People's Republic. The evaluation is based on the differences conditioned by the historical development and concentrates on the basic differences in the urbanization level of the individual countries.

1. INTRODUCTION

At present socialist countries pay attention to the study of the settlement structure from the viewpoint of its genesis and its contemporary state, as well as from the viewpoint its further development. For this purpose it was necessary to work out scientific conceptions of the settlement development, based on our knowledge of the settlement systems of the past epochs.

Within the settlement structure formed in the course of various historical epochs are reflected not only the past conceptions, but also the economic and political situation. In this paper the settlement structure is considered to be the final product of past periods. The contemporary economic life has a close connection with the development of the settlement structure, and is affected by innovation processes depending on the creative abilities of the human subject. (In accordance with Blažek M. 1951, Bašovský O. 1973, Denecke D. 1982, Goldzamt E. 1971, Chabot G. 1958, Pockchichevsky V. V. 1973.)

The inertia of the material and technical basis as well as the more rapid development of the needs of the population give rise to basic inconsistencies between the social and the material aspects of settlements. The problem is the discrepancy between the rapid social changes and the material and spatial inertia of the settlement. The higher the development level of a society is, the more rapidly it changes and the more conspicuous the discrepancy appears.

An important factor in the development of the settlement structure is the rise of permanent settlements and towns. The foundation of permanent settlements is connected with the stabilization of farming. The origin of the artisans' production

conditioned the foundation of the town, which became the basic element of the settlement structure.

In the period of feudalism, villages and towns became relatively independent units within the settlement system of that time. The manufacture production had its consequences in the social structure of the settlements. To enable the full development of the large-scale industry, it was necessary to remove the local enclosure and isolation of the settlements. At the same time also the elementary social and economic links between individual settlements were formed within the framework of state formations and these keep on expanding further along with the foundation of the world market and world economy.

The industry becomes the most important factor in the foundation of towns and it is the industry again that adapts the existing medieval settlement system. The population of villages migrates into towns. In the second half of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century it was the urbanization that had the major influence on the development of the settlement structure. The urbanization process was quicker in the western part of central Europe (the south of GDR, Bohemia and Moravia, the west of Poland) due to the early start of the industrialization and the occurrence of a great number of historical towns in this area. In the eastern part, urbanization becomes increasingly evident after the beginning of this century.

2. THE EVALUATION OF THE SETTLEMENT STRUCTURE OF SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

The important socio-economic changes that took place after World War II, above all the socialist industrialization, the collectivization of agriculture and the changes in the economic structure of the population cause a gradual transformation of the settlement structure. A substantial part of housing and the technical infrastructure of important settlements was destroyed by the war, and the post-war restoration of the settlements demanded a great effort and large investments.

At the beginning of the 1950^s, the individual socialist countries differed in the urbanization level. The highest level of town population was in the German Democratic Republic (about 70 %), in Czechoslovakia (about 50 %) and in Poland and Hungary (about 39 %). The rest of the socialist countries showed a more important increase in town population only after 1950. A characteristic feature of the post-war development of the settlement structure is a rapid development and also rise of new towns due to the expansion of the key industries (e.g. Eisenhüttenstadt, Žiar nad Hronom, Dunaújváros, Hunedoara).

Urbanization in all socialist countries is characterized by the growth of large urban agglomerations, quick industrialization, and reduction of the link with the agrarian milieu. The extension of towns is often caused by intensive construction of new residential quarters in the outskirts of towns. The agglomeration process is most intense in the capitals and important industrial centres. Let us mention the more than two million conurbation of Katowice—Zabrze—Gliwice—Chorzów—Sosnowice—Bytom—Ruda Śląska and the Ostrava agglomeration. The industrialization was often combined with the localization of major works in the direct neighbourhood of towns (Sofia—Kremnikovec, Kraków—Nova Huta, Halle—Halle Neustadt).

The higher stage of development, sometimes called the Soviet type of urbanization, gives the settlements in socialist countries a specific impress and physiognomy

(Chabot G. 1958, George P. 1958, Kielczewska—Zaleska M. 1962). The reduction of social differences in town quarters causes a certain homogeneity of the outer appearance. The differences in the speed and character of urbanization in the individual socialist countries caused differences in their present settlement structures.

The characteristic features of the present settlement structure of Czechoslovakia are a relatively low population density and a relatively dense network of settlements in the western part of the country. For the purpose of an effective utilization of investments and intensification of the economy it is necessary to pay attention to the development of the present settlement structure. In 1980 the proportion of large-town population was comparatively low, about 17.9 %. The proportion of middle-sized urbanization is 15.5 %, the highest percentage of urban population is represented by the small-town population — 24.4 %. The capital of Prague seems to be excessively developed in comparison with Bratislava and Brno in accordance with Zipff's rule of size and order. Ostrava, the third town, has almost the same theoretical and real size. In the 5th — 20th place, the real size of the towns is lower than it ought to be theoretically. With lower ordinal numbers the real and the theoretical sizes are almost identical. The situation described gives evidence of insufficiently developed towns within the size group of 50—100 thousand inhabitants (Bašovský O. 1982).

In 1976 55.1 % of the population of Czechoslovakia lived in settlements of over 5 thousand inhabitants. Out of this total, the Czech Republic represents 59.4 % and the Slovak Republic 46 %. This difference is due to the different urbanization levels of the two republics at the beginning of the socialist development.

The German Democratic Republic entered the period with the highest level of the population concentration in towns. In the period of 1950—1971, the towns with more than 100,000 inhabitants recorded the minimum increase while the middle-sized towns the maximum one. In the group of 20,000—100,000 inhabitants, the population share increased from 18.4 % to 22.1 %, in towns with more than 100,000 inhabitants, it increased from 20.6 % to 22.0 %. The German Democratic Republic has the most dense network of industrial cities of all the socialist countries. The capital — Berlin has about 1.1 million inhabitants, the second largest city Leipzig has approximately half the size. The population of Berlin was reduced after World War II (due to the division), the other towns maintained their size, so that beginning with the third town Dresden (502 thousand inhabitants), the real population theoretically exceeds the amount given by Zipff's rule. A characteristic feature of GDR, like of Czechoslovakia, is a high proportion of economically active population commuting to towns.

In the Polish People's Republic, the urbanization conception of 1947 is based on the need to keep correspondence between the priority development of Warsaw and its agglomeration and the development of other settlements. For further development have been appointed Kraków, Katowice, Wrocław, Poznań, Gdańsk, Szczecin, Łódź, Lublin and Bydgoszcz. In 1975 55.4 % of the population lived in towns. In 1970 22.3 % of the population lived in 24 agglomerations with more than 100,000 inhabitants. The middle urbanization (14.2 %) and the small urbanization (15.8%) are relatively low.

Before World War II, the Hungarian People's Republic was a backward agricultural country; over 60 % of the population lived in villages. The differences in the settlement structure in different parts of the country are historically conditioned. The Hungarian People's Republic has to solve problems connected with the reduction

of the difference between the high level of the population concentration in Budapest and the low level in other parts of the country. The country shows the highest large urbanization among the socialist countries (26.3 %). Most of the large-town population, however, lives in the capital. The middle urbanization represents 16.7 % the small 3.6 %. The second largest town Miskolc has 10 times less inhabitants than the capital.

The Roumanian Socialist Republic has achieved a comparatively high level of large urbanization (17.9 % in 1970). There are, however, still great differences between the urban and the provincial settlements. In the period of 1950—1960 a relatively rapid development of large urbanization took place. It was quickest in the large industrial centres (București, Ploiești, Brașov). There is still a considerable disproportion between the size of Bucharest (1.5 million inhabitants) and the other large cities, the largest of them being Cluj and Timisoara (220,000 inhabitants). Since 1960 more attention is paid to middle urbanization representing only 11.2 % so far. Since Roumania has a comparatively low level of urban population (47.5 % in 1977), the proportion of small-town population is low as well (12.5 %).

In the Bulgarian People's Republic a rapid change of the settlement structure took place after World War II due to rapid industrialization and urbanization. The proportion of urban population was 52.9 % in 1970. The proportion of large urbanization was 23.6 % in 1980. In the last decade Bulgaria has reduced the speed of the development of large-sized cities and pays more attention to the development of middle-sized towns with over 20 % of the population. Small-sized urban population represents 14.4 %.

3. CONCLUSION

In all the socialist countries, there exists in principle the identical hierarchy of the settlement structure (the provincial, peripheral and local centres — provided with corresponding range and level of services, shops and educational and cultural facilities etc.). Nevertheless, there are still some differences in the hierarchy, not in the common conception.

Most identical features in the conceptions of the development of settlements, in spite of the varying number of appointed settlement categories, can be found in Czechoslovakia (5 categories), GDR (8 categories) and in Hungary (9 categories). In these three socialist countries, the basis is identically formed by localities of permanent importance (furnished with shops selling foodstuffs and household goods and with restaurant) as well as the central localities (the first level of the centralization), furnished with the basic services for the neighbouring localities. These are followed by centres of peripheral importance (the second level) and the centres of the provincial level (the third level), equipped always with a corresponding higher scale of service facilities.

The attention that the socialist countries pay to the planned effective transformation of their settlement systems is in accordance with the basic aims of the development of the socialist society. The basic aims are the following:

- to achieve the most convenient urban conditions for the allround development of man
- to regulate the growth of the population in large cities
- to improve the conditions of provincial settlements

— to remove the regional differences in the quality of services and housing conditions.

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