

## OBITUARY

### PAVEL AND ISTVÁN

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Two outstanding East-Central European sociologists, Pavel Machonin and István Kemény passed away in 2008. Pavel Machonin (6 June 1927–17 July 2008) did play a key role in the rebirth of Czech sociology and so did István Kemény (14 August 1925–14 April 2008) in the Hungarian sociology.

Both of them participated in the first substantial large scale East-European social surveys. In the 1960s Machonin organized and conducted the first stratification survey in Czechoslovakia, the results of which were published only shortly after the Prague Spring. The translated excerpts of this book were widely read by young intellectuals of the neighboring countries (at least in Hungary it was the case). Kemény participated almost in the same time in the first Hungarian stratification survey, headed the first empirical researches on the Romas and on poverty. He also led fieldwork-based sociological studies in factories, continuing a tradition from the interwar period.

In a certain sense they walked backward on the road paved by the Marxian Feuerbach theses. Both of them belonged to the generation that started with the aim to change the social world and arrived at the more modest but sometimes complicated task of understanding it. Both of them belonged to the left in terms of beliefs, ideologies or identities. Pavel was a reform communist and remained a socialist until his death. István – as he plausibly explained in his last interview – started as a young anarchist and became a socially sensitive liberal at the end of his life.

Both of them were heavily discriminated against during the period of state socialism. Pavel was mired and fired after the fall of the Prague Spring. He spent two decades of his life as a clerk in a poultry factory. He was not complaining about this period, when asked, rather talked about it with a bit of irony. As he said his family started the lowfat-conscious diet in those days. István was imprisoned after the 1956 revolution, because he helped the families of the arrested. In the 1970s he could not get a proper scholarly job, so he was forced to leave the country, to get back only when the fall of state socialism started.

Both of them belonged to the group of down to earth, realist, problem-sensitive researchers who respect empirical results and at the same time investigate them in the light of social policy implications.

Both of them had an enormous impact on younger scholars. They had the ability to pay attention, encourage, orient and let others work. Both of them became role models and legends for younger generations of East-Central European sociologists.