

Preface

In late 1960, following my return from a field trip to rural Austria, I originally conceived a plan for a small conference bringing together people who had recently participated in ethnological research in Central Europe. When I communicated this idea to a number of persons in the United States, requesting suggestions regarding foreign scholars, I received an appreciable expression of interest and promised cooperation. Thereupon I wrote to Dr. Paul Fejos of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research to ask whether the Foundation would be interested in receiving a proposal for such a meeting. Though he replied affirmatively and the Foundation, subsequently under the research directorship of Lita Osmundsen, continued to express its warm interest, not until 1966 did it become possible to issue definite invitations. On January 9, 1967 the five-day conference devoted to Central and North Central European Peasant cultures, generously supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, began at the very congenial Center for Continuing Education in Chicago. Papers included in the present volume represent some of the fruits of the meeting.

Admittedly, the boundaries of the area selected for examination are vague and justification of such a region was both queried and defended by participants at the conference. Roughly, Central and North-Central Europe were defined to encompass the tier of countries beginning in Scandinavia with Denmark and continuing south to but excluding lands bordering on the Mediterranean Sea. The region includes Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia (unfortunately Dr. Olgo Skalnikova could not leave that country in time for the conference), Hungary, Austria (Ernst Burgstaller had also been invited but was prevented at the last minute from attending), Yugoslavia, Switzerland, and eastern France. Papers dealing with countries in this area and presented to participants in advance for discussion at the conference have in most cases been revised or partially rewritten for the present collection. At

the urging of participants, Tamas Hofer amplified his stimulating comparison of Americans and Europeans at work studying Central European villages. The volume opens with this paper. Unfortunately, the printed words cannot give readers the benefit of the critical discussion which most of them stimulated, and which in turn instructively developed many latent implications in the material. I have in my possession professionally recorded magnetic tapes of that discussion, and can make these available at cost to interested scholars. A brief resume of the discussion has been published in *Current Anthropology* (9:229-231).

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