

Consumer Characterology

Aspirations and Affluence. Comparative Studies in the United States and Western Europe. GEORGE KATONA, BURKHARD STRUMPEL, and ERNEST ZAHN. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1971. x, 240 pp., illus. \$12.95.

The title and subtitle of this admirable little book just about describe its contents. The object of the study was to compare the people of the United States with those of some selected ("affluent") countries of Western Europe, in their behavior as consumers and in their attitudes toward work, leisure, and education. As it turns out, the book has a good deal to say about the United States and West Germany; rather less to say about Holland and the United Kingdom; and less still to say about France. But all in all, the comparative objective is achieved. Those who have tried to mount comparative studies in the social sciences will be especially aware that this is a formidable achievement, both in conceptualization and in execution, an achievement for which author Katona is apparently entitled to the lion's share of credit.

One reason for the relative success of the venture is Katona's relaxed approach toward the handling of his materials. From the beginning, he avoids the trap, so common in comparative studies, of insisting upon rigidly parallel study designs. He takes what he can find about the behavior of the people in different countries, using sources from Alexis de Tocqueville to Richard Eckaus (though he does overlook one of my favorite sources, Salvador de Madariaga's *Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Spaniards*). He splices these motley materials together with the use of some common questionnaires of his own on attitudes and values. And, presto, he produces some quite plausible and reasonably consistent vignettes for the countries concerned.

There will be the usual caviling from some quarters about the technical shortcomings of the work. There will be reservations about sample size, questionnaire timing, cultural transferability of the questions, and so on. But these are the characteristic complaints that greet most comparative studies. Those who specialize in studies of specific national economies, filled with a sense of the unique complexities of their own areas, often find it difficult to tolerate the hit-and-run intrusions of the comparativist into those areas. But the Katona team demonstrates once again that compara-

tive studies have their place, provided one is sensitive about the weighting problems and the normalizing difficulties that are entailed in such comparisons.

The results themselves are often provocative, especially for example to the New Left. The United States emerges (as of 1968) as a country in which the majority feels it is better off than it used to be and expects to be better off still in the years ahead. The sense of well-being relates not only to income but also to job satisfaction. What is more, these rosy states are seen as the consequences of individual effort, though the degree of that perception is highly correlated with the level of education of the respondent. Neither Germany nor the United Kingdom reports so optimistic a view, either retrospectively or in prospect. Though job satisfaction is fairly widespread in Germany, the Germans emerge as relatively pessimistic and unaspiring in terms of their expectations both for themselves and their economy.

The authors see differences in expectation of this sort as being related to other characteristic differences among the countries. For instance, Germans of all income levels place heavy emphasis on personal savings and tend to eschew installment buying. Americans worry much less about mortgaging their future incomes through installment buying, and many do not even bother to save. There are some interesting tidbits of a less familiar sort, adding extra piquancy to the study. Though not much is said about the French, one does learn that they are widely dissatisfied with their education, much more so than comparable groups in other countries. One discovers also that the Germans waste considerable resources on narrow technical training of their youth which the recipients never get a chance to use. Women's Lib is given a few hints as well, such as the prospect that Holland and Germany will prove hard nuts to crack.

To those who profess to see a rapid convergence among the societies of the Western countries, the book will give pause. Convergence there does appear to be. The young and the better-educated are more like each other in the various countries than they used to be. But there are still great differences, many of them unrelated to income, occupation, or age. And many of these pervasive differences fit the national caricatures that a long line of earlier studies have prepared us to expect.

Books of this sort ought to be especially well indexed; this one falls a bit short in that respect.

RAYMOND VERNON

*Harvard Business School,
Boston, Massachusetts*

Chinese Science

The Organization and Support of Scientific Research and Development in Mainland China. YUAN-LI WU and ROBERT B. SHEEKS, assisted by Lawrence J. Lau and Grace Wu, under the direction and editorial supervision of Ralph J. Watkins. Published for the National Science Foundation by Praeger, New York, 1970. xxvi, 594 pp., illus. \$17.50. Praeger Special Studies in International Economics and Development.

By all conventional economic standards China is still an underdeveloped country. Agriculture, which provides employment for upwards of 80 percent of the Chinese labor force, is still largely unmechanized and labor-intensive. China's steel production continues to lag far behind that of the major industrial nations of the West, indeed well behind that of her smaller Asian neighbor Japan. And in terms of per capita gross national product, the current Chinese figure of approximately \$120 a year stands in marked contrast to the American figure of \$5000. Yet China has already entered the exclusive thermonuclear club; Chinese satellites now circle the earth; Chinese IRBM's are operational; China's scientists were the first to synthesize insulin; and Chinese doctors were pioneers in the development of surgical procedures for rejoining severed human limbs. These are but a few illustrations of mainland China's developmental dichotomy: the existence of sophisticated, modern scientific research and development within an essentially premodern, peasant-based society.

China's scientific establishment—its historical growth, organization, training programs, financing, staffing, priority structure, and control apparatus—is the subject of this important and timely study. Wu and Sheeks have collected, sorted, and analyzed an impressive array of quantitative and qualitative data pertaining to scientific research and development in the People's Republic of China. Their findings help to place China's developmental dichotomy in its proper perspective.

Scientific R & D in China have clearly made impressive progress since