

## Elections and Politics in Slovenia

(Volitve in politika po slovensko: ocene, razprave, napovedi; zbornik, ur. Frane Adam, ZPS, Ljubljana, 1993)

A miscellany entitled "Elections and Politics in Slovenian Fashion", edited by Frane Adam, published by Znanstveno in publicistično središče, 1993, did not "polymetrically" reduce the issue of electoral systems and processes to the electoral technique, but drew back the electoral curtain and uncovered a variety of characteristics in the second democratic elections and in electoral behaviour in Slovenia (1992). But it is not only a question of studying a special section of the recent curriculum vitae of the Slovene nation, but of an analysis of broader extensions of political life and of establishing democratic orientations. Thus in the book, in addition to descriptions of the course of the elections and commentaries on electoral results, we also find a number of excellent contributions dealing with the media presentations of political parties, or rather, with the socio-economic foundations of individual parties, the connection between socio-economic status and electoral preferences, the influence of cultural style on electoral behaviour, value-orientation of sub-elites, comparison of electoral results in Eastern, or rather, Central Europe, the question of political stability and the structuring of the political scene after the elections, and more. If for nothing else, then for its breadth and quality the book deserves an appropriate response by the expert and broader intellectual public.

The pluralization of politics and the distribution of power in post-socialist countries - including in Slovenia - have otherwise created conditions for political and communicational pluralism, but did not completely realise the new paradigm. On the other hand, the multi-party state triggered sharp conflicts among political subjects, and the political scene grew strongly ideological. A new elite formed, seizing the levers of visible as well as of invisible power. The public, for the most part, reduced itself to a multitude of passive consumers of products of media deregulation and the free market economy. Public opinion is controlled by "deformed" propaganda. However, we cannot attribute all the problems with the newly developing democracy just to the previous authoritarian regime or to the process of transition, but also to various long-term historical factors, as well as to the degree of acuteness of socio-economic problems the new democracies inherited.

Here, the function of elections - as realistically established by Sartori - is not to make democracy even more democratic, but to facilitate it in the first place. At the moment we accept the need for elections, we minimize democracy, because we are conscious of the fact that the sense of elections is in the selecting of leadership and not in the maximalizations of democracy. The elections are a component of all interactions in the political system; they are one of the instruments for relating demands to the ruling authority, an indicator of support, a determiner of priorities in decision-making in accordance with electoral promises and with wishes for reelecting and a way of communicating with the public which should improve the response of the government. In modern societies elections are a final valid instrument, defining the identity of key decision-makers, trust and control over them as well as the restoration or the transfer of power. Getting used to the change of roles de-

mands not only time, but also a liberation from ideological patterns. A condition for this is political tolerance, from the highest ethical standpoint - a path to objectivity as such.

On the other hand, elections can be an act of concealment, an alibi-function, competition between persons and parties, disguising social antagonisms and giving a *carte blanche* to decision-making which does not depend on consensus. These are meta-theoretical premises about the state and society which substantiate the attribution of different functions to elections. With this, credit in this book goes to socio-critical origins because the discussions on institutional problems were again connected to issues of complex social development, or rather, modernisational processes in Slovene society. Since equal electoral systems in different circumstances give diverse results, and we cannot mechanically move electoral systems from one place to another, it is especially significant, in studying them, to take into consideration the fact that the actual functions of the elections are determined by three structural elements: the structure of society, the structure of the political regime and the structure of the party system. Dealing with elections is thus also a measurement of the heartbeat of political society, political participation, public opinion and public discourse, party articulation and competition.

Electoral systems are almost always established (and changed) sooner for the protection and favouring of certain interests, than for the realisation of some "ideal" electoral laws. Therefore we must agree with Nohlen's well known remark that an electoral system is accepted on the basis of and by taking into account specific socio-political goals. The choice of an electoral system can be explained by the logic of the democratization process and by the negotiable power of political parties and by their ability to compromise. From this viewpoint we could characterize this process of democratization as a "negotiated revolution" (Lijphart). Although the influence of foreign models is great, the choice of the electoral system is primarily through inner political contemplation and so the systems are very specific and complex, as is ours. We can also say that this primary choice will survive longer if these new democracies turn out to be capable of living (with limited new economic possibilities and a lack of democratic tradition and culture). Establishing democratic rule (government) does not mean that conditions are created, or rather, foundations for political stability, which, apart from consolidation, the so-called setting of rules of the game and mechanisms for processing conflicts and agreements, also demand the inclusion and efficiency of the political system.

This "second transition" from a democratically elected ruling authority (government) to an institutionalized, factorial political regime will be longer and more complex than the starting transition from authoritarian (totalitarian) rule. It may also stagnate into a futile and undefined situation if a way is not opened to an institutionalized form of representative democracy which will quickly lead to stability, meaning also the inclusion of elements of consocial democracy and neocorporatism. From this viewpoint it was necessary for the authors to relativize the institutional autonomy of the electoral (sub)system in relation to the global political system. The political development and process are the results of factors of various origin (historical, cultural, economic). They cannot all be attributed only to elections and the electoral process.

Politics is an area of interests and social conflicts and with this a certain social and political dissatisfaction. Elections are also a political act, also mirroring political conflicts. Socio-political circumstances, traits of social and political conflicts, political standpoints and forms of political behaviour are thus a characteristic indicator of transformation and development of democracy in Slovenia. Slovene society is not a society of developed and durable parliamentary competitive democracy. The Slovene constituency does not have, after the long-term practice in the so-called plebiscite elections and polling without choice, much experience in democratic elections. It is therefore understandable that political culture as well as parties are in the phase of reforming and profiling. Since Slovene society, which is in the phase of demonstrative and selective representation in elections, could not develop a democratic electoral culture, it is also hard to expect an "introversion" of democratic political values.

Only a formed democratic political culture can be a kind of Barrier for party manipulations of the dissatisfaction of the constituency. At the same time it is also a defence against political electoral consumer psychosis that would lead us to "the shepherd and the herd" and would be, for the electoral culture in Slovenia, too cheap to establish itself, but not excluded in backward economic and political circumstances in the form of confrontation between the new and the old elite. In the book there is also an assessment that a great deal depends on the LDS, as the strongest party, and on its reformation into a moderate party. It is interesting that the personalities of the old elite had a better "image management" than some important and powerful personalities of the new elite, which did not have much success at the elections. Personalities which personify the party stood out mainly because the parties were not recognized by their manifestoes, which was also apparent from the instability in electoral behaviour.

The process of intellectualization and inner democratization has not as yet established itself in the parties. Party-identification of the electorate is, in greater part, not as yet deeply anchored. The differences in electoral and political behaviour can be explained more clearly by a scheme - traditional - modern, than by ideological orientations, e.g. left-right. The Slovene political scene is more differentiated by cultural-value than by ideology-class; thus the major split is cultural. The conflict of traditionalists and modernists is one which will determine Slovene political life and electoral processes in the near future. For teaching Slovene citizens criticism and resistance to political manipulation is very important and in this the book certainly contributes much. The social scientific research into various aspects of elections, media presentation, perception of political personalities and a broader context of electoral behaviour, as presented by the authors in this miscellany (I. Lukšič, S. Kropivnik, D. Podmenik, U. Vehovar, Z. Šadl, B. Luthar, G. Tomc, D. Zajc, J. Makarovič and F. Adam), is without doubt an important step in this kind of education in Slovenia, from the content as well as from the methodological aspect.

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