

NEOCORPORATISM IN SLOVENIA?

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The Centre for Theoretical Studies research team at the Faculty of Social Sciences has been studying, in the context of a broader project "The Description and Modelling of Modernization Processes In Slovenian Society", the particular question of types of regulation of social systems most adequate in terms of the autocentric-nonperipheral social development of small systems in transition, with particular reference to Slovenia.

Small states have a greater opportunity to make decisions on a consensual basis, since they have at their disposal a "higher communication density and a higher interactive interrelation" than bigger states. This is why small states are often of a consociational democratic and neocorporatist nature (see the article by F. Adam and his references to Geser). Such conclusions would seem to indicate that neocorporatism is the type of social regulation likely to have a favourable influence on the stability of the political system in the autocentric-nonperipheral development within Slovenia.

Up till now, concrete regulative practice in Slovenia has deviated from the neocorporatist pattern. Despite numerous institutional arrangements of a formally neocorporatist character, Slovenia cannot by any means be counted among the group of (transitional) states characterized by neocorporatist regulation. In the case of Slovenia one simply cannot speak of a systematic and institutionally arranged participation of significant interest organizations such as trade unions and employers associations in the shaping and executing of governmental economic and social policies.

The unstructured nature of industrial relations in transitional societies is their basic characteristic. Such a deficiency is not beneficial to neocorporatism. But since the example of the Czech Republic indicates that the shaping of relatively efficient neocorporatist arrangements in such unbeneficial circumstances is possible (see the article by M. Orenstein), our research group effort concentrated on the factor which is, in the Slovenian case, in obvious inconsistency with the logic of the neocorporatist tripartite arrangement. This factor is the Slovenian trade unions. Interest organizations at work in Slovenia are already highly structured, but the logic of this structure is contrary to the logic of neocorporatism. The basic characteristic of the Slovenian trade union scene is in fact inspired by politicized trade union pluralism.

This is why the Centre for Theoretical Studies research group attempted to obtain a more precise insight into the "logic of interest structuring" generated by Slovenian trade unions. At the end of 1993 and at the beginning of 1994, we carried out a series of interviews with representatives of all potential "social partners", the emphasis of our interest centering on four representative Slovenian trade union organizations. The data gathered in these interviews represents the basis of the analysis in most of the articles making up the main bloc of this issue of *Družboslovne razprave* (Papers in Social Sciences).

The implicit question of the present analysis concerns the "costs" of instaling neocorporatist regulation in Slovenia. Will the effects of "gains won" by neocorporatist regulation outweigh the investment into this regulation? The second, transitional question concerns the existing regulation: if neocorporatism is still nonexistent in Slovenia, what then is the nature of the already existing regulation? Slovenia has a rate of unemployment comparable with the highest rates of unemployment in developed West European societies. A high rate of unemployment is not exactly a characteristic of classic neocorporatist regulation. High rates of unemployment are rather a consequence, and also a condition, of another type of social regulation, alternative to neocorporatism. Is Slovenia at a point of postsocialism where neoliberalism has established itself, despite the tripartite enthusiasm of social partners and despite a rather sophisticated discussion of neocorporatism? How does the existence of such a doubt affect the formulation of an autocentric-nonperipheral conception of Slovenian development?

The articles of the main thematic bloc are divided into three groups.

The first group of articles analyses the nature of the relation between Slovenian trade unions and politics. The first article in this group, "Democratic Corporatism in the Light of Developmental Strategy in Small Countries" by F. Adam is of a more conceptual nature. The author understands democratic corporatism (neocorporatism) as one of the key conditions for the shaping of developmental coalitions and for the consensual formation and effective execution of autocentric non-peripheral strategies in small states.

D. Fink, the author of the article "Trade Unions in the Policy-Making Process" thematizes the role of trade unions in the policy-making process, using the concepts of policy networks. She concludes that our trade unions influence the shaping of policies (above all of unemployment and social policy) by lobbying and by other interest coalitions with political parties "attempting to assert neocorporatist institutional and normative solutions". Coalitions with political parties are significantly marked with political-ideological divisions between old and new social democracy and between old and new trade unions. The cooperation of trade unions in the shaping and realization of policy is understood as an indicator of the openness of the political elite to the development of a consultative political culture and of a general inclusion of civil society in politics.

In the text "Social Democracy, Trade Unions, Corporatism?" U. Vehovar determines that a strong and united social democratic party does not exist in Slovenia. The potential social democracy is deeply ideologically split into social democracies of the liberal and conservative camps of Slovenian politics. The trade union movement is also divided. The author sees the causes of this division in the ideological relations between the two dominant trade union confederations. He estimates that there is little possibility in Slovenia of establishing even a moderately strong neocorporatism of the Austrian or Nordic type, because this would presuppose a tie between a strong social democracy and a united trade union movement.

In his article "The Political Orientation of Slovenian Trade Unions" G. Tomc determines that at present, the Independent (new) trade unions are orientated towards the participation with government and are confrontational towards the managerial elite, whereas the Free (old) trade un-

ions are confrontational towards the government and more participative towards the managerial elite. A more productive approach for the trade unions would be to distance themselves from the government as well as from the economic elite, and to elaborate a common strategy of trade union activity, centered on privatization, collective bargaining and social pact.

Concerning the second, more heterogeneous subgroup of articles, the first three deal with the evaluation of the influence of the existing neocorporatist institutional arrangements on the regulation of industrial relations in Slovenia. In his article "Neocorporatism and Trade Union Pluralism" M. Stanojević thematizes the effects of combined neocorporatist institutional arrangements and politicised trade union pluralism. According to his estimate, such a combination has strong neoliberal effects. The probable result of the process as a whole will be a system, characterized by neoliberal as well as by neocorporatist regulation.

In her article "Trade Unions and Management (Employees) - Waffengleichheit?" D. Mesner Andolšek concentrates on the analysis of the institutionalization of industrial conflict which, in the case of Slovenia, should stimulate neocorporatist structuring. On the basis of the comparison of the legal arrangements of collective labour disputes in various European societies she determines that under a neocorporatist political arrangement conflicts are legally more limited than in systems where decentralized industrial relations prevail. The contours of the present Slovenian trade union scene are more in harmony with a decentralized system of managing industrial relations. Such a development goes hand in hand with a weakly institutionalized system of managing open conflicts.

In her article "Trade Unions and Privatization" A. Kanjuo Mrčela estimates that the possibility for shaping neocorporatism as a dominant and effective form of regulation of the interests of labour and of capital in Slovenia is small. The future role of trade unions will be strongly influenced by their attitude towards the employee-ownership which the process of privatization until now has exposed as the most characteristic tendency.

The text "Public Opinion Initiatives of Trade Unions", co-authored by M. Stanojević and M. Omerzu, and the "Analysis of Public Media Reporting on Trade Unions" by D. Podmenik find that the public gains a rather unclear picture on social agreements from the media but, on the other hand, discern a surprisingly clear inclination of public opinion towards neocorporatist solutions. In other words, public opinion without any doubt whatsoever supports the neocorporatist inclusion of trade unions into the shaping and execution of governmental economic and social policy.

In his article "The Development of Trade Union Movement in Slovenia Before the Second World War" S. Dragoš opens the historical extension of the analysis of neocorporatism in Slovenia. Between the two world wars the trade union movement in Slovenia was fairly strong and characterized by disunity of action and mutual ideological competition. Similarities with the recent structure of the Slovenian trade union scene give rise to the hypothesis that there has been a surprising maintenance of political-pluralist patterns of trade union organization. It seems as if half a century of discontinuity only temporarily froze them.

The third subgrouping of articles offers at least a partial insight into the international environment. In his article "Towards the European Trade Union Movement", T. Kuzmanić develops an estimate according to which we are "perhaps... once more at the entrance of a new... period of conflicts and confrontations between the spheres of employers and employees". The concluding text of the whole bloc is the article "The Czech Tripartite Council and Its Contribution to the Social Pact" by M. Orenstein. The text is particularly interesting for Slovenia because it describes a postsocialist neocorporatist experience from a Central European environment close to Slovenia.