

## **A CITIZENS' STATE – SLOVENIA BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN AND THE FRENCH MODEL**

The issue of Slovenia ahead of the elections is first and foremost an issue of its development challenges, which should become reflected in the optimisation of social and economic life with regard to the norms of our common European structure, more precisely of the more developed member states of the EU. Without doubt, Slovenia is a country that has, in less than two decades of its existence, passed an enviable path. From a former socialist republic of non-aligned Yugoslavia, Slovenia has, after having obtained its independence, progressed in a more and more evident harmonisation with the standards of the European continent. In the first half of this year, this culminated in the presidency of the European Union. This achievement represented the climax of Slovenia's way, for which, at the end of the eighties when everything began, even the greatest optimist could only have said that it was a science-fictional fortune-telling.

In its crucial decisions, the Slovenian way was based on consensuality outside of the sphere of party-political life. A silent social consensus was first achieved with regard to the worn-out and outdated nature of socialism as a social system, already in the beginning of the second half of the eighties. This time represents the root of the theory of "giving up power", which was used by the former League of Communists to become close to the citizens of Slovenia in its aspirations. In Slovenia, this was a form of a soft transition of power, where the former monopolistic League of Communists, concentrated around its Secretary General Milan Kučan, skilfully used its conflict with its Serbian and Montenegrin colleagues within the bodies of the federal Party to promote national sentiment, which was felt by the Slovenians in this time as seldom before in our history. Here, the League of Communists, which was "stepping down", began to create its starting advantage, through which its former monopoly was transformed in the decade of transition (which lasted until the last elections in October 2004) into sets of smaller monopolies, with the aid of which it managed to control, through the use of its "satellite structures", important areas of social and economic life in the country.

We could say that already the first step into democracy was led by precise planning by the former League of Communists, who wanted to make use of these steps, which were unconditionally necessary for a normal society, to ensure a certain strategic advantage, which was afterwards used for manipulation, with the intention of retaining the largest possible amount of

power that was accumulated during totalitarian times. Next spring, we will see the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this first step, namely the victory of the relatively unknown Janez Drnovšek against Marko Bulc, the official candidate of the SZDL (Socialist Alliance of the Working People), the socialist umbrella organisation of socio-political forces, on the basis of consultative elections. Drnovšek himself was relatively unknown, but the method of his presentation and subsequent consolidation of his position was known and recognisable. Drnovšek was namely proposed as candidate by the SZDL itself, while the citizens were not allowed to propose own candidates in a democratic procedure. In this way, they could only decide between two personal options of one and the same nominating body, that is the then SZDL and the League of Communists of Slovenia. In this way, at its very beginning, a democracy, which was supposed to reflect the will of the people, cunningly changed into a democracy made to reflect the will of the rulers. For two decades, Slovenia has faced and struggled against similar tactics; even today, such temptations still exist.

Nevertheless, Drnovšek was consensual in his own way. He was first chairman of the collective presidency of socialist Yugoslavia, and later he was for more than a decade prime minister of the Republic of Slovenia. He won two elections convincingly and never lost any election, even though he had to face a second round at his last election for President of Slovenia. The consensuality of Drnovšek's authority showed a sign of external success, since Slovenia carried out all the necessary reforms, which enabled it to join the European Union and NATO in May 2004. To the inside, this consensuality was not optimal, as it only included those classes that identified themselves as heirs of the modernised League of Communists, and no one else. Internally, during Drnovšek's era, Slovenia was in a state of stagnation due to the continuity of the Communist Party's authority, which was never interrupted in key fields of the functioning of the state. We should add to this the fact that Slovenia was, at the time of the arrival of democracy, practically the only country to elect a former chairman of the Central Committee of the League of Communists as president of the state and the only country of the former Eastern block to fully avoid adopting lustration laws. This occurred in spite of a public disagreement by many intellectuals, mostly united within civic-social groups, such as the "Nova Revija". These persons regularly warned about the regression of the state with regard to democratic standards, in the form of miscellanies, reports and also resounding public appearances (e.g. the "Hour of European truth for Slovenia" in 1997, the "European challenge" in 2003). In their work, they witnessed a large public resonance, but only little effective success. Often,

such criticism also splashed across physical borders of Slovenia, e.g. in the words of the renowned academic and writer Drago Jančar. Speaking about such endeavours, we also have to mention the Catholic Church in Slovenia, which struggled vividly and fought for a pluralist truth within the society, above all in the form of the former Ljubljana archbishop, now Cardinal Franc Rodé. Notwithstanding all that, Drnovšek's era managed to softly cement the continuity of the Communist party within the society, mainly in its most sensible segments, the economy, banking, the educational system and the media. In spite of international criticism, Slovenia started to develop in the direction of an auto-generative system, in which the social elite, which was recruited only according to political criteria, controlled the entire society without competition or control. This could still be acceptable, if such an atmosphere had not started to create conditions for economic corruption, the face of which showed itself in the beginning of the current decade, when the public was inundated by banking, economic and real estate scandals, mostly connected with members or sympathisers of left-wing political parties.

In October 2004, the consequences of such scandals brought Janez Janša to power. Tone Rop and other heirs of Drnovšek did not have the political wisdom, skilfulness and power needed to manage the state as Drnovšek did. This could be seen as the first reason for a break, which occurred at the 2004 elections, while the second reason is of a deeper nature. The "consensuality" of governance, in which a handful of privileged persons ruled the majority of citizens without an opportunity for choice, had worn itself out. The Slovenian man matured to a point when he was able to assess correctly the acts of the transitional political elite.

In the beginning of 2005, Janša's government presented an almost revolutionary programme. Its basis was a liberalisation of the economy, the introduction of principles of a liberal or libertarian state, in its origin seen as a concept of a state belonging to its citizens. Here, the Slovenian way would align itself with the standpoint that showed itself in the homeland at the end of the eighties, at the time of the fall of the Berlin wall. An individual would contribute, according to the principle of equal opportunities, to the creation of the GDP or, in a wider sense, the creation of a "political", i.e. ideological and metaphysical superstructure within the society. In its origin, the government's programme was devoted to democratisation, a socialisation of the state, which was made more open for the interests of the individual. The economic reforms that were started showed a reduction of the tax burden for small and medium enterprises, which represent the most propulsive and economically effective group of companies in the state. Companies dealing in information technology deserve a special mention here.

Such endeavours were registered in the first year of this mandate, in 2005. However, already in the autumn of that year, a radical blockade of the government's efforts occurred, a restoration, if we should call the first phase a revolution, according to the French principle: liberty, equality, brotherhood. At the end of 2005, these three virtues started to fall apart, as interests from the background became more and more involved in this game. Such interests commanded that the Communist Party's state must remain intact, with regard to its flag bearers and above all its privileges. A group of people in the shape of the so-called "Free trade union", led by Dušan Semolič, started to become involved. This trade union triggered demonstrations of several ten thousand people, with the aim of blocking changes within the society.

At the same time, a media monopoly strengthened, the evidence of which is horrifying in the current electoral campaign: printed media, mostly in the hands of former members of the League of Communists, now organised within the framework of the Laško brewery, are launching lies and affairs, while Slovenian journalism is, with very rare exceptions, showing its servile, socialist face. We have to remember that, during the period of socialism, the journalist was a socio-political activist, an advocate of the a-priori truth of the League of Communists at all costs.

The Slovenian path towards a citizens' state will be long. However, this fact is only true in one way. A way of a withering of privileges from the former socialist state, which is leading in a direct line towards a state of the citizens, which was established in the West according to the model of the French revolution, with all reservations as to its aberrations, the Jacobins and Girondists. A citizens' state is a state where the individual can acquire privileges simply on the basis of his work, his capability and his diligence. The model of the citizens' state clashes with the Russian model in another fundamental point. In 1990, Yugoslavia's last socialist government led by Ante Marković provided for formal possibilities of "wild privatisation". When Anton Rop's government was in charge, an act was prepared, which formally envisaged the option of a takeover of companies by their managers. Let us here not deal with the causes for this, but rather speak about the consequences: whoever was employed in the management of a company, was able to purchase this company, if he was only granted a loan by banks. Since Slovenian banks, above all the largest, the Nova Ljubljanska banka, are still under the control of the old elites (the CEO of the Nova Ljubljanska banka is the former head of the office of prime minister Drnovšek), loans were being massively abused, the consequence of which were two facts. Firstly, the former socialist elite, gathered in the so-called "Forum 21"

(founded by Milan Kučan), got loans, with the help of which it was able to – without having to face any outside competition and often abusing insider information – purchase companies. Secondly, companies were weakened, since they were encumbered with mortgages and even even the slightest worsening of the economic situation could shake their credit standing. The above-mentioned persons are also becoming owners of the largest media companies (Delo, Dnevnik, Večer etc.), and in this way, they are, against the will of the citizens, accumulating a similar power, which was being formed – relatively speaking – in the nineties in the former Soviet Union.

At the elections on 21 September 2008, Slovenia will be deciding between one model and the other. At no previous moment in his political life, a citizen of the Republic of Slovenia was faced with such a global responsibility, not only for the past, but also for the future arising from this past. If we have managed, in such a causal nexus, to show both, our aim has been fulfilled.

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed friends, thank you for your attention.

Statement by Boštjan M. Turk