

Introduction

The following “comparative research” of seven socialist constitutions and two post-socialist ones is presented in the format of textual commentaries and drawings. It deals with the constitutions of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (since 1963 Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and People’s Republic of Romania (since 1965 Socialist People’s Republic of Romania) as well as with the 1991 constitutions of post-socialist Romania and newly emerged states of former Yugoslavia.

The researched constitutions are: 1946, 1953, 1963, 1974, 1991 (Yugoslavia) and 1948, 1952, 1965, 1991 (Romania). The early constitutions of Yugoslavia and Romania are quite similar in content (both 1940s constitutions being an almost exact copy of 1936 Soviet constitution), focusing on the first stage of transition from capitalism to socialism. The 1950s constitutions share some similarities in regard to the working class and the communist party’ role. However, Yugoslavia in 1948 broke up the relations with the Soviet Union and as a consequence it began the process of socialisation of property (early self-management) and the transfer of state property into social ownership. Romania’s 1952 constitution on the other hand proclaimed friendship and alliance with the great Soviet Union.

The 1960s constitutions are already very different; while Yugoslav constitution “promoted” self-management, associated work, as well as socialist social relations, Romanian constitution further enhanced its involvement in the state economy and had a monopoly on foreign trade.

For the first time a notion of what could be considered a “middle class” appears (as “intellectuals” in the Romanian constitution and through a new vocabulary of the 1965 economic reform in Yugoslavia, which was a kind of legislative framework for market socialism). The decade was known as a decade of fast economic growth for both countries, opening to the West, to the Non-Aligned Countries, promoting trade and cultural exchanges. This era was also marked with the beginning of “consumerism” and subsequently enabled a formation of a new socialist middle class. Eventhough the question of the middle class in socialist states had been widely disputed among the scholars we can nevertheless discern that the “middle class” as such had been completely absent from all seven socialist constitutions that we researched. However, there are numerous writings from that time,

especially Yugoslavia that are critical of this new class eventhough it did not officially exist as such, for example Milovan Djilas in 1957, and later in the 1970s Milan Kangrga and Stipe Šuvar. In Romania in July 1971, Nicolae Ceausescu gave a speech against intelligentsia, the infamous July Theses.

In the 1980 middle class in Yugoslavia could be seen as partially responsible for the growing nationalisms which later on enabled the formation of the so called “constitutional nationalism” in almost all new post-Yugoslav states’ constitutions. Similar processes could be observed in 1991 Romania as well. With the entrance of Romania, Slovenia and Croatia into EU the “middle class question” in those countries acquired another dimension as can now be compared, researched and statistically evaluated in different kind of frame than before.

However, the question remains: is the middle class a carrier of political changes in the society and if so, what kind of changes?

A short explanation about the format:

The black letters are excerpts from the constitutions. The colored letters are commentaries either by us or by other authors. The drawings “illustrate” specific articles from the constitutions and are a kind of visual tool to help understand the usually dry bureaucratic language of the constitutions.

Of course, the format is neither a closed research nor an artistic project; in order for it to become useful it requires a participation of other voices as well.

The research “How the middle class was born?” is conceived in the frame of the larger project Glitter(y) and Misery of the European Middle Classes organized by Nebojša Milikić, Livia Pancu and Florin Bobu of tranzit.ro/Iași.

We would like to thank Livia Pancu, Florin Bobu, Delia Bulgaru, Ovidiu Gherasim-Proca and artistul Nebojša Milikić for their advice, comments and help with the research.

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