

Lawson, Andrea Römmele and Georgi Karasimeonov, 1999. *Cleavages, Parties And Voters: Studies From Bulgaria, The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland And Romania.. Praeger Publishing House, Westport, USA.*

This book is a collection of studies, each written by an author who is familiar with the political developments in the respective country, during and after the 1989 revolutions. They are thus in a position to offer a clear analysis of the facts, based primarily on personal observation, and less on secondary sources. The causes and the effects of the revolutions are thoroughly studied in relation to mainstream concepts of political science - such as cleavage, party, and voter.

The editors, Kay Lawson (professor of political science at San Francisco State University and visiting professor at Sorbonne), Andrea Römmele (research fellow at the Manheim Centre for European Social Research) and Georgi Karasimeonov (professor of political science at Sofia University and managing director of the Institute for Political and Legal Studies in Sofia) have first drew a clear outline of their project, and then asked prepared people from each of the countries in question to fill in the structure with proper studies. The Romanian case is treated by Petre Datculescu, managing director of IRSOP, who is able to base his claims on actual results of studies and polls conducted by the Institute.

The book follows the structure of the previous work of Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, but applied to the situation of the revolutions in Europe. Lawson, Römmele and Karasimeonov's book's declared purpose is to apply the concept of cleavage to the emerging party systems in East and Central Europe after the revolutions, and to determine to what extent the definition presented in the original study is still valid today. The editors also wanted to differentiate between Western European and Eastern European party systems, and to show whether or not the Western model can be successfully copied in the East.

The book is divided into four main parts. The introducing chapters are written by each of the editors, and create the theoretical basis of the study. Andrea Römmele enlarges upon the definition of the basic concepts used in the study. Kay Lawson comments on how this book came into being and on the methods of analysis. He tries to establish whether or not the meaning of cleavage has been modified or actually revived in the emerging political systems in former communist countries, and what is the reaction of the voters to these cleavages. The final target is to establish the relationship between cleavages, parties and voters.

Part II concerns itself with cleavages and parties prior to 1989. The case of each country is presented commented upon separately and offers a good inside view on the facts. Petre Datculescu begins his study with an analytic description of the origins and history of the Romanian party system. He establishes four sets of political conditions which have influenced its development: (1) external pressure, (2) internal social structure, (3) limited and

fragile integration of the political community and (4) the national debates over the country's model of development.

Among the first Romanian parties were the National Party, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, resulted primarily from the cleavages between the local and foreign landowners in Romania.

On December 20th, 1937, Romanians were participating in their last free parliamentary elections for the coming half a century. Although, the liberals practically won the elections, they were not strong enough to compete with the rising left. The fascist organization Iron Guard became a mass movement and came third in the 1937 elections, under the name of "Totul pentru Țară". The author explains the success of the fascist movement by their ability to involve social strata which had been neglected by the democratic political forces. But the great strike which destroyed the political community and party system was of course the communist dictatorship, following two other authoritarian regimes: King Carol II's (1938-1940) and Marshall's Ion Antonescu's (1940-1944).

The author briefly presents the political and economic situation under a communist rule, and then enlarges upon the last years of communism and the internal factors that may have caused the revolt. He finds two dominant generators of massive social cleavages: (1) a dramatic decrease of the living standard, combined with deliberate attempts to modernize Romanian society and (2) stricter control and domestic ideological repression associated with the attempt to isolate Romania from the outside world. The two major cleavages generated by these were: (1) between the Communist Party and the working class and (2) between the Communist Party and the technical and cultural elite.

The author focuses then on the dominant political issues inherited by post dictatorial Romania after the collapse of the Communist rulership. The main cleavage after the revolution is the one between former members of the Communist Party and the former dissidents. Petre Datculescu tries to make a distinction here between the former members of the Party and the actual supporters, because it is commonly known that many joined the party out of opportunism or because they were forced to. Another major afterwards cleavage was the one between the Romanians and the Hungarian minority. This was fueled by the constant fear of the Romanians for the Hungarian secessionism in Transylvania.

In Part III, (Cleavages and Parties after 1989), the authors analyze the rebirth of the political systems in these countries, and the main problems they have to face in the new "free society". In the case of Romania, the author attempts to verify the extent to which the new political parties are a translation of true divisions and conflicting interests in the political life. After a brief description of the social structure and poor economic development, Petre Datculescu traces an outline of the rebirth of the multiparty system, starting with the formation of the National Salvation Front, and its fast metamorphosis into a powerful party, winning the first elections. The example of the NSF was soon followed by many others. By November 1996, there were almost 200 registered parties in Romania. Here the author clearly states the difference

between involved, influential, alive parties and the phantoms with a name, but no followers.

Further on, he touches upon the matter of placing the parties into the left-right tradition, which proves to be a difficult task. It seems all Romanian parties after 1989 have strikingly similar political programs, aiming at meeting the people's expectations.

After a short description of each of the most important parties, the author moves on to depicting the reasons motivating parties. He analyzes the emotional divisions within and among parties, the images of the parties and how the voters conceive them.

When commenting upon how the expectations of the electorate were met by the elected parties, Datculescu notes that there has been a constant unconformity which developed into a true characteristic of the new political pattern in Romania.

Other issues in this chapter are the perpetuation of the "fight against communism" after 1989, how the monarchy is perceived, the cleavages between Romanians and minorities and the process of economic reform and social standards. The conclusion of the author is that the political community concerns itself more with economical issues than with values and ideology, and this is mainly because this is what the voters expect. He also concludes that there are no true cleavages yet in Romania, and that there is a poor chance they will develop sometime soon, due to the lack of implication and the concern with economical issues.

The last chapter tries to find out how the voters respond. Petre Datculescu tries to identify the voters, and what makes them vote like they do. He analyzes the electoral records of 1990 and 1996 and watches the change in the social base of different political parties. He, again, uses election results and public opinion polls in order to establish patterns of voter alignment and to explain the social and political origins of electoral change.

In the end, Datculescu concludes that political parties in Romania do not have a distinctive social base, or a clear, strong, strategy to assure the loyalty of the same class of voters. By trying to address each segment of the population, the parties could only fail to meet the expectations of all those who voted for them. This also determines the quick shift of votes from one party to the other. People always hope the next party will be better.

The author doubts there is a real cleavage in Romania now, but that one could be born soon between the large groups of unemployed or poor people and the thin upper class. The middle class is almost extinct, and the two extremes are more and more visible. If such a conflict bursts out in order to protect the different interests of various social strata, Datculescu sees it a possible source of the restoration of the left-right.

The stated purpose of the volume is to study the cases of the post-communist countries and see if the old concept of cleavage is still valid here. In the end, it is not very clear whether the meaning of the word has taken on new senses, or if the phenomena is not present here. But the studies are nevertheless

useful. They offer various statistic to illustrate, sustain or just create a better image of the ideas in the text, thus making them credible and giving the study the benefit of a scientific one. This adds to the fact that the structure of the study follows a clear train of thought, familiarizing even the most ignorant reader in these matters, with the subject.

Another observation is that the publishing house issuing this volume is not Romanian, and although it concerns us very much, it is nowhere to be found in Romanian libraries or bookshops. Maybe it can be found in some private bookcases, handed by one of the authors, like the one I accidentally found. But that does not help much. I wonder whether it was really written for the better comprehension of the concerned parties of their own situation, or if it was written for the West to study and pity, once again, "the poor former communist countries".

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