

THE DECISIONAL PROCESS SPECIFIC TO ROMANIAN TRANSITION

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***Abstract:** The prescriptive-normative approach of the phenomenon of post-communist transition in the Central and East European countries starts from the hypothesis that a society doesn't change alone, by itself; rather it may be changed by political initiative. Under the influence of the intervention from the international institutions, the approach of the post-communist transition changed from the identification of the pro-capitalist option, with the destruction of the communist system of organisation, to the introduction of the post-communist societies' capacity of economic and social development as performance standard, describing the analysis of the transitions in the broad area of the development. As result, the political agenda of the different Romanian governments experienced interesting evolutions, largely steered by the reform or by European integration as umbrella-objectives. The coexistence, the simultaneity of what has been, and can no longer last, at least under the same form, and what will be, make of the transition period one of the milestone moments in the history of a nation. It is a symbiosis between a terminal point and a fresh start for a particular society.*

***Keywords:** transition, industrial technocracy, intellectuality, decision-making process, institutional politicization*

The prescriptive-normative approach of the post-communist transition phenomenon in Central and East European countries starts from the hypothesis that transition must have a certain result, eventually pre-established, analyzing the social reality in order to establish if this was achieved. *The particularity of these countries, including Romania, is that they generally have a conflicted socio-politic situation that lead to a politicized public and institutional area.*

We shall try to analyze below the characteristics of the post-communist transition in Romania as process, how it begun and how it evolved and if the objective of the

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Romanian transition, in the limits it was clearly established from the beginning, has been achieved.

Within the context of the analysis of the post-communist transition we shall use the hypothesis that a society does not change itself alone, but it can be changed by politic initiative. Within this context it is absolutely necessary to elaborate a **project of transition** that would allow a planned social development, strategically designed. The transition from communism to the developed capitalist model was named generic *post-communism* and represents a special type of transition. Under the influence of the international organizations' intervention the approach of the post-communist transition changed from identifying the pro-capitalist option, implying the destruction of the communist system of organization, to implementation of the capacity of economic and social development of the former communist countries as standard of performance, introducing the analysis of the transition in the extended field of the development. Within the context of this change of paradigm the politic agenda of different Romanian governs had some interesting evolutions, mainly influenced by the reform or European integration as umbrella-objectives.

The transition represents the transfer of a social system to type of organization to an other (Mihăilescu, 2003). The classic theory of (re)construction of the capitalist socialist has personal characteristics in the case of the former communist countries in the Eastern Europe and, implicit, in that of Romania. The transition represents for these countries the process of identification of a new middle way between socialism and capitalism, a way that would combine the capitalist advantages of an economy regulated by the market's and participative democracy's reactions, and that has a rationalized (re)distribution, so that everyone has a decent level of life. This definition is the closest to the model of reform necessary in Romania where a functional market economy must support in a solid, articulate manner a protection system and a social solidarity within a general frame established by the democracy.

We believe that transition must be identified with the ensemble of quantitative changes that lead to a new type of society. The co-existence of what it was but can no longer last, at least not under the same shape, and what will be makes the transition period one of the most outstanding moment of a nation, a symbiosis between a final point and a new beginning for a certain society.

1. The beginning of the Romanian transition

The transition of the Romanian society towards *a society capable to adapt to European and world system* did not start, as certain politicians said, at the end of 1989, at the same time with the change of the politic regime of Nicolae Ceausescu, but much earlier, in the 60' (Zamfir, 2004, p. 19). It was initiated the transition from a rigid socialist regime, build on industrialization, to a new context, qualitative, that lost

the competition with the capitalist economy and the effort to make the system flexible, even to incorporate some elements of capitalism, or the vague search for some third way alternatives. The communist model of Soviet type imposed after the Second World War was not totally accepted by the population of the East European countries. The experiment from Czechoslovakia, to which Romania adhered, to build a “communism with human face”, though suppressed in 1968, marked the possibility to build a reformed communism as alternative to a dysfunctional communist system. In public opinion and in dialog spaces parallel with the system and the imposed model of society new strategic alternatives of change started to be debated. Those alternatives varied from a reformed socialist, without Ceausescu, to the reconstruction of the democracy and return to the Western capitalist model. These real programs of changing gathered around intellectuals, technocrats, which assimilate and even create a certain politic culture that, though approached different ways, was preparing the population for change.

The most important pressure factors for change in the communist countries were economic and financial. Romania had an industrial system imported mainly from capitalism that depended upon the trade with the communist countries. Due to this Romania had to participate in a world economic system that was functioning according to the rules established by the developed capitalist systems (Pasti, 1995). The rules of the economic game made the trade with the West less and less profitable for the socialist countries. The solution chosen by Romania within the context of cheap exports and more and more expensive imports was *to reduce the consumption for the population*. This measure proved to be in the end more efficient than other method of counter-propaganda of that time. It provoked an increased discontent among population reaching a climax at the end of '80 when favorable conditions for the revolution were created among population. The civil society in formation, consolidated due to the authoritarian control of the Communist Party towards the politic system, found different methods of dispute that added to the growing social tensions unleash the revolution in December, 1989.

The moment 1989 marked clearly on the Romanian politic agenda the objective to build a country with a democratic politic regime, and an efficient market economy that will adopt all the measures necessary to integrate Romania in European and world systems, and that would ensure the effective involvement of the collectivity in decisional process. This moment represents the beginning of the post-communist transition.

2 .The evolution of the power groups during communism ■

If we make a comparative analysis between the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the post-communist transition from socialism to capitalism, we may

notice that in the first case the transition to capitalism was divided in stages and was long enough to allow a gradual interpenetration of the aristocracy with the bourgeois, up to the consolidation of the industrial bourgeois. This happened mainly due to the fact that it was a transfer from a type of owners to another type. In the case of communist countries almost the entire property was nationalized; the forms of private property were marginal or parallel with the system. Therefore, the class of small private owners during the communist period was infinitesimal and powerless. Two other classes were prepared to take the political and economic power after the collapse of the communism: the industrial technocracy within the former communist nomenclature and the intellectual dissidents that were the pillars of the new civil society, and, in certain situations, a strange combination between these two classes. During the communist regime has been formed a political class that was not the democratic expression of the entire population's interests, as the communist ideology demanded, but used its dominant position within the communist organization to promote its personal interests (Zamfir, 2003). Even though they were defined as the leading social force of the system, the industrial workers and peasants became very soon manipulated masses, controllable by the political oppressive system and technocracy. Deprived of power and effective means of expression, the workers and peasants had rather social benefits (unlimited access to jobs, free access to houses, wages almost as high as the technocrats etc.). The ruling communist elite or *nomenklatura* (as it was called the Soviet one that inspired the term) erected itself into a distinct social class, with a life style different from the rest of the population. A special moment in the evolution of the communist political class was the cleavage between its two components that represented the two types of power: the party activists, which represented the political power, and the industrial technocracy, mainly the enterprise directors, which represented the economic power. The industrial technocracy was represented by specialists that occupied high technical positions and cumulate a powerful position with the legitimacy offered by personal competency. This class had the tendency to consolidate an institutional system oriented by the political decisions, but non-political by its structure. Compared to industrial technocracy, the political activists were rather a powerless group without the support of the technocracy and administration. An important part of the party activists originated in poor families from the rural environment, had a simple education, later completed with intensive courses at the "party school". Hence, the representatives of the industrial technocracy would rather control the political decisions than accept the alteration of their own decisions. The objectives of the industrial technocracy were the modern transformation of the society following the Western model and an economy based on rationality. The socialism crisis, in general, and the crisis of Ceausescu regime, in particular, lead to certain autonomy of the technocracy and, implicit, of the sectors controlled by the technocracy. Even though the technocracy achieved the competences necessary to initiate the transformation of the communist

regime and had established the social nets based on certain cohesion, it did not succeed to develop a clear politic orientation of transformation.

3. Industrial technocracy and the anticommunist programmatic intellectuality

The intellectual dissidents erected themselves, soon after the revolution, in leaders of opinion of the transition period and proceeded to consolidate the civil society. Among all the Romanian elites, the humanist elite manifested during the communist regime a high interest and access to the international mass-media. Many of the representatives of this class were known on international level and there for had the possibility to travel abroad or to maintain connections with the Western intellectuals. During revolution a part of the dissident intellectuals, perceived by the population as persecuted by the former regime of Ceausescu, took upon them the mission to mobilize the masses by discourses. The Romanian dissident intellectuals benefit from the advantage of the precedent created by the Citizens Forum from Czechoslovakia that brought the politic power for this class (Pasti, 1995, p. 239). The members of this elite believed that the crisis of the communist regime was rather human and moral than economic as it was considered by the industrial technocracy. The dissident intellectuals should take credit for initiating and promoting the changes pertaining to the fundamental human rights and individual freedom and for establishing an active civil society on these bases. The project for re-inventing the civil society initiated during the communism, at the end of the '70, was basically an anti-bureaucracy program critical towards the state, emphasizing the respect for the fundamental human rights and liberties. It was not attractive for the industrial technocracy, which had economic objectives and development programs. Even though, the industrial technocracy and the intellectual dissidents agreed that both the socio-economic development program and the program for building a civil society represent components of the strategy of forming for a democratic capitalist society.

The trap in which the representatives of the intellectuality fall at the beginning of the '90 was a sort of hunt for witches in "Jacobin" style to identify the members of the former communist nomenclature, guilty of the moral sickness of the Romanian society.

Because of the lack of a coherent program of development of the economy and society the dissident intellectuals were not able to play an important role in the post-communist government. They would return to the public attention after they had deliver and renew the anti-communist program during the election campaign in 1996 when the historical parties, leaded by PNȚCD, succeed to win the elections based on these revival messages and reaffirming the support for change promised by the West (Dobrescu, 1997). The intellectual dissidents saw the Romanian society build after

the communism as one if not a functional capitalist after the Western model, at least a rational society (Eyal et al., 2001, p. 250). Within their endeavor the dissidents succeed to un-legitimate the state socialism and to accumulate a considerable quantity of symbolic capital. Even though it was a small group, mainly philosophic-esthetic intellectuals, it benefit of the advantage of an intensive exposure in mass-media, especially because they promoted the healing of the society and a moral elitism, in the spirit of the Western idealized models (Gavrilescu, 2006; Șiualea, 2003). Combining this moral elitism with the lack of competences for government this group put itself outside the politic parties' area, even though they supported the historic parties and called themselves the voice of the Romanian civil society. The message they sent reflected, nevertheless, a deep frustration caused by the incapability to create a strategic program of development. From its "ivory tower" the "anticommunist and radical moral programmatic intellectuality" supported the government of CDR from 1996-2000, mainly through the Group for Social Dialogue, which justified in its analysis many of the failures of that government based on the poor state inherited from the prior FSN (PDSR) govern (Zamfir, 2004, p. 113). After a long period spent far from the public attention the radical moral intellectuality return as actor involved in the election campaign in 2004 supporting a new leader totally opposed to PSD, which was seen as an unformed party of the former communist leaders, Traian Basescu, who will become president.

The new president promised at the celebration of 15 years since the Proclamation from Timisoara that he "will defeat the old structures where they still exist". After a call addressed to the intellectuals in March, 2006, the president Basescu decided to take upon him the mission to condemn the communism and to establish a Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania, led by Vladimir Tismăneanu. On 18th of December, 2006, Basescu presented the report of this commission in Parliament; within his discourse he declared the former regime "illegitimate and immoral". He was supported by the representatives of the dissident intellectuals and he draw upon him again the aversion of the representatives of the opposition.

Using an excellent political maneuver Basescu manage to obtain the conviction of communism, which was a strategic objective on the government program of the National Liberal Party that supported all this time the activity of the Institute for Investigation of the Communism Crimes, led by a state councilor of the Prime Minister. After 2004 the group of these intellectuals published different letters of support for the president Basescu. The climax was reached in a protest letter against the vote of 322 representatives of the Parliament that voted to be suspended.

Noticeable is that the former representatives of CDR ant of the dissident intellectuality that were in command of the country in 1996-2000, former president Emil Constantinescu and former presidential councilor Mugur Ciuvică, leader of the

Group of Political Investigation, abandoned in 2004 condemnation of PSD and initiated a vast media campaign meant to criticize and discredit Traian Basescu. Another important representative of the same government, Dorin Marian, former head of the presidential administration, was appointed at the beginning of 2007 state secretary and coordinator of the Prime Minister Chancellery. This action consolidates the staff of the Prime minister; considering the old conflicts with Traian Basescu, Dorin Marian was a real “anti-presidential fighting dog”. We may observe here the first cleavage of the anticommunist programmatic intellectuality between those politic involved in ruling the country, which started to support the liberal Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu against Traian Basescu and the others, which wanted to be rather the humanist elite supporting the president’s moral battle against the “villain system”.

The only organized class with structured functional relations and a certain spirit of solidarity was during this period the technocracy. The revolution brought a consolidation of its position because the officials and the politic bureaucracy of the Communist Party, the only ones that interfered with the technocracy’s activity and decisions, have been removed. In the period prior to the Revolution the industrial technocracy and the dissident intellectuality reached a consensus: the change of regime was necessary in order to give to the country a direction based on the values of development and modernization after the Western model of democratic society. The Romanian technocracy was characterized of what we may call *managerism*, meaning a government mentality, a vision of the way the society, the market, the companies and the individuals may be submitted to control and management (Eyal et al., 2001, p. 119). It represented a powerful social class, with a strong position, which had a direct interest in building a new functional system. The option of the enterprises’ directors was difficult considering their relation with the state; on one side, after they managed to escape form the political directives of the Communist Party, they wanted to remove the state control, and the other side they need the economic support of the sate to overcome the problems they faced, problems that will get deeper during the transition. In the attempt to accumulate capital in order to consolidate their position in a forming market economy without its own capitalists, the enterprises’ directors tried to increase their personal benefits to enterprises’ detriment and using the resources for personal gain. A weaken enterprise could easily be taken over partial or take its subventions and state aids by the so called “parasite-companies” controlled by the enterprises’ directors, their families or even politicians that support their functioning (Brucan, 1996). Such an example is the enforcement of the Law of trade companies in 1990 and the establishment of the so called administrative borders of Western inspiration, which unlike the Western one (where the members censure each other in order to maintain a balance of power and a profitable company) became maneuver tools of the directors. This was facilitated by the composition of the borders: employees interested to maintain their jobs and

did not care about the profitability of the enterprise. Because, in general, they did not have the resources necessary to participate in the privatization of the enterprises, the industrial technocracy slowed its rhythm and set down on its politic agenda this objective required by the Western model. At that moment there were, practical, no internal sources for privatization and the external sources were not sufficient. Even though they should be primarily interested in restructuring and re-launching the state enterprises, the directors became interested in purchase them, but did not possessed capital. Therefore, they wanted to slow down a process they could not actually participate in. The strategy adopted in the end was total and rapid privatization; the main promoter of the strategy was the West and the international organizations based on the argument of removing the inefficient areas in the economy that absorbed constant and unjustified resources from the budget. This strategy was supported from interior by the first post-revolution governs, the historic parties and the dissident intellectuality.

The technocracy, former managing elite of the enterprises, acted on two ways simultaneous on its path to build the new class of capitalists, called by some authors the building of capitalism “from the bottom to the top” (Eyal et al., 2001, p. 250):

- parasite on state enterprises and use for personal gain of the resources allocated from the budget to re-launch and restructure the enterprises;
- negotiation of the enterprises’ sale to foreign investors and obtaining managing positions in multinational companies.

After it gained the economic power the technocracy was interested in obtaining the politic power in order to apply its own programs. The larger part of the technocracy originated or had connections with the politic parties that resulted from the former FSN: PSD and PD.

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