

## **Svob-Dokic, Nada (Zagreb) 1994**

### ***Impact of the New European Countries on the Structure and Transformation of World Society***

The new European states analyzed here include Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, FR Yugoslavia, and Ukraine. They are the outcome of the breakup of the former socialist federations, namely, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, and they were recognized by the international community between 1990 and 1993. The new independent states of Central Asia, as well as all the other former socialist countries, are taken into consideration only occasionally, mostly for purposes of structural analysis and sometimes also for comparison.

There is hardly any systematized body of knowledge on the new states and their societies. In the past, they used to be treated mostly as parts of larger entities, so that only very particular phenomena or values (e.g., historical, cultural, etc.) were studied specifically from the perspective of these countries. It was assumed that their cultures and societies possessed authentic features, but it was thought that they were of no interest in international relations. Research on these countries is still scarce even now, and to the extent that it exists it is mostly domestic and not always in keeping with the international methodological and other standards. That is why conclusions on the processes of change in these societies are often drawn per analogiam, and are not always reliable.

Differences among the new European states are substantial. They seem to share only two common characteristics:

- (a) their present position as new sovereign European states which gained their independence in the period 1989 -1993,
- (b) their common experience of socialism as a system and an alternative model of development.

It is very difficult, even impossible, to analyze these countries as a homogeneous group. Most of them had enjoyed long periods of statehood in the Middle Ages, but they did not function as recognized independent states in the modern history of Europe (the exceptions were Montenegro and Serbia in the period 1878-1918). Until the end of the First World War, they were mostly integrated in the great European empires, while new forms of their integration emerged between the two World Wars or after the Second World War. In the post-Versailles world, these countries were relegated to Europe's periphery, or the world's semi-periphery, where they still find themselves.

As already noted, the particular and unique experience of socialism is their second common feature. It has now earned them the status of "countries in transition". As a major form of restructuring of society and economy, transition is defined in the context of the "national paradigm". This chosen paradigm represents also an option for closer links with the Western world. Having failed in the attempt to develop an alternative model of development, these countries must now rely on the vestiges of their historical experience from the time when they (or at least some of them) were parts of the Western world. However, history can hardly serve as an effective springboard for the restructuring of economies and societies. The new countries seem therefore forced to turn desperately to the West, thus confirming their semi-peripheral position and compromising their sovereignty.

This particular position in the world system is a feature of the transition period. It stimulates overall instability and confusion. The transfer of "democracy" and "market economy" is not as smooth and quick as previously expected. It has become obvious now that it requires not only time, but also much clearer concepts and goals of change and transformation, and much more self-knowledge and self-analysis than previously thought.

The concept of modernization through transition is becoming the key issue in defining the newly independent states of Europe. It gets formulated, elaborated and implemented through communication and exchange within the international community, or world society. It is increasingly evident that the process is a complex one and that the relationships are established with difficulties.

Is there any inner cohesion among the newly established European states? All the available evidence supports the view that there is none. They do not even know much about each other, nor have they clearly identified their common interests. Even if some of their interests are similar, there is no awareness of such similarities. It seems that the new states will need some international forum or arena in order to discover their proper similarities and possible common interests. Since they are not numerous enough to invite a concerted international action to support their own efforts, they are practically left to themselves and thus encouraged to remain passive in international relations.

The international community takes a similarly passive approach to the new countries, although it has invested time, efforts and money to sustain their transition. Regardless of whether it is faced with conflicts or peace, stagnation or development, insoluble problems or issues that are easily solved, the international community demonstrates impassiveness and reacts slowly to the most challenging problems of these countries. Foreign influences may trigger change, but many effects are being lost or amortized on the national level, which testifies to the character of entropy created by the fall of the previous system. The sources of instability generated in the new countries remain limited to them and are controlled only as a potential danger for the international society.