

Josip Mihaljević, *Komunizam i čovjek-odnos vlasti i pojedinca u Hrvatskoj (1958. – 1972.)* [*Communism and Man: The Relationship Between the Government and the Individual in Croatia (1958-1972)*] (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2016)

Summary

The issue of relations between the government and the individual in Croatia during the period of socialist Yugoslavia has previously been almost completely outside the scope of the historical research. This book aims to change this, focusing on the 1960s, which are usually considered to be a decade of reforms in the history of the communist systems. During that decade Yugoslav communists also introduced some elements of free-market economy, liberalization and democratization, in order to resolve the problems within the system. The political leadership was able to see many of these problems through social impulses “from below”, meaning from ordinary citizens. A valuable source for studying the government-individual relations in this period are the documents of written communication between the citizens and the government such as various petitions and complaints sent by the citizens to the authorities. Through the analysis of these sources, and using the interdisciplinary approach, this book also presents the history of everyday life in Croatia during the 1960s.

The main goal of this research is to show the relationship between the government and the individuals from 1958 to 1972, in the period which is here considered as “the long sixties”. The research seeks to determine whether the position of an individual in the society changed during the analyzed period, to determine whether there has been a significant change in the attitude of the authorities towards the individuals, and reciprocal change in the relationship of the individuals towards the authorities. This book also tries to determine whether the liberalization of Croatian society occurred during the analyzed period. By trying to answer these question the author aims to present the main outlines of the Croatian society during the 1960s - what were the peculiar characteristics of the Yugoslav self-management socialism; how the League of Communists of Yugoslavia was positioned within the social structure; how citizens perceived the highest state officials; how the government perceived and understood



the position of an individual and what was the position and meaning of fundamental human and individual rights and freedoms in such a society.

The author tries to answer these questions with analysis conducted at two main levels. The first level is the theoretical analysis of the fundamental political and state documents of socialist Yugoslavia (Program of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Yugoslav and Croatian constitutions and laws). The second level is the analysis of everyday written communication between the government and the citizens.

The theoretical analysis shows that, although the government announced a different approach towards the individuals, the position of an individual in society nevertheless remained determined by the totalitarian ideology of the ruling League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

The analysis of the practical communication between the citizens and the authorities shows that the reforms announced by the government, toward liberalization and more democratic relations, were indeed put to practice, but to a very limited extent. Therefore, a large gap remained between the theory of Yugoslav self-management socialism and its actual application in lives of the citizens of the Socialist Republic of Croatia.

Theoretical and practical analysis of relations between the government and the individuals is also applied to the relationship of the individuals with persons which were considered the highest authorities, both at the Yugoslav level (President Josip Broz Tito), as well as on the level of the Socialist Republic of Croatia (Vladimir Bakarić, the head of the League of Communists of Croatia).

Throughout the "long sixties" the position of the individual in society underwent a certain change, which is evident from the fact that the citizens during that period much often demanded the practical application of their formal rights. However, given the totalitarian nature of the socialist system governed by the League of Communist of Yugoslavia, the majority of these demands were not related to political issues. Instead, citizens demanded the solution of their rights from the social domain. Open expression of the critical opinions that were in opposition to the ruling system and ideology were possible only in anonymous letters.

The authorities paid great attention to the letters, petitions and complaints submitted by the citizens, primarily because they considered them a form of insight into the public opinion. The government could see that various fields of social life did not function as it was theoretically designed. Croatian citizens were faced with poor legislation and the practical difficulties derived from it. This showed a huge gap between the proclaimed theory of self-management and its practical application. Due to the changes in the international political context, Yugoslav communists were forced to take theoretical "turn" from Stalinist model to the principles of democracy and respect of human rights. This turn can be recognized in everyday life, but mainly in some peripheral spheres, and not in the essence of the relationship between the government and the individuals. This is evident from the fact that the communist government abandoned liberalization reforms after they realized that the increase of individual

freedom threatens their political monopoly. The character of the ruling political organization, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, was and remained totalitarian. Therefore it was, in its core, theoretically and practically irreconcilable with the very concept of “the individual” which is essentially liberal because of its values of freedom and the concept of fundamental human and individual rights. This is why the reform processes that have occurred in the analyzed period in fact cannot be considered as a real liberalization of society.