



Peter Dinuš
Dominika Dinušová

Evolution of Ideological Discourse on Post-1989 Society in Slovakia

Abstract. After 1989, former Czechoslovakia underwent a fundamental social transformation, which manifested itself not only in political and economic systems, but also in ideological discourse. Materialist perception of social processes was replaced by an idealistic perspective. The dichotomy between totalitarianism and democracy became the central mental construct. The problem found its reflection in pertinent legislative acts, historiographical and other official social-science production within the so-called coping with the past. How should one read the dramatic shift in ideological discourse of contemporary Slovak society as compared to that permeating the pre-revolutionary socialist society? Is the answer to the question determined by the selected scientific methodology? Or is it contingent on the prevailing political relations that engender a particular type of ideology?

Key words: ideological discourse, society, Slovak left, Slovak right, social sciences.

© **Dinuš Peter** – PhD, an independent researcher at the Institute of Political Sciences of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava (Slovak Republic). E-mail: peter.dinus@savba.sk

© **Dinušová Dominika** – PhD., Department of Social Sciences, Academy of Police Force in Bratislava. E-mail dominika.dinusova@minv.sk

The study has been released as a partial result of the joint scientific VEGA project of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Academy of Sciences, No: 2/0152/20, Developmental trends of current capitalism: contradictions and conflicts.

In the early 1990s, Czech and Slovak society found itself in a new political situation. The political changes in 1989 represented a qualitative transformation of social order, which, in the following period, took place not only in the economic but also in the ideological arena. Economic transformation became a prerequisite for the change in the perception of social reality. The struggle for history, science and art began, spawning until then unprecedented interpretations of historical contexts, which presented social reality in a new form. The ambition was to pursue a pluralistic, objective and independent grasp of social reality, which would not be contaminated by political commitment or a single political doctrine. Such were the visions, with such resolutions Slovak society entered new horizons of a different social order 30 years ago. After three decades of implementing the «project» of independence and applying «democratic» rules across a broad social spectrum, it is now time to ask many questions: were the ambitions of 1989 real? Were they fulfilled? Are we now part of an objective independent science, of a free public political space, or are we, under the guise of «independence» and objectivity, presented with a one-sided and dependent vision of social aspects?

In the early 1990s, Indian economist Prabhat Patnaik pointed out that the notion of imperialism, which had until then been frequently used in public debate and in professional discourse, gradually disappeared from scientific journals. He wrote, «The radical outrage at the invasion of Panama, or the sponsored wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador, did not give a solid form to theoretical articles on imperialism. This theme disappeared from Marxist periodicals, especially from those that later became top-ranking (Patnaik 1990: 73) «During the 1990s, the term «imperialism» was gradually replaced with the new terms — «globalization» and «global capitalism». Regardless of the content and social implications of the change in the terminological apparatus of describing reality, this particular example demonstrates the trends in ideological development. The new era required new concepts. Apparently, relabelling social phenomena was supposed to suggest a new reality, one freed from the deposits of historical facts that exposed the essence of new socio-economic relations setting in. While ridding the concept of imperialism of its negative connotations is hard for it will always conjure up violently enforced dominance, the concept of globalization evokes a conciliatory perception of social reality in the sense of an evolutionary process. We perceive globalization as a developmental phase of humanity — a new stage emerging from the current context of the information age, an irreversible and so to speak a natural part of the evolution of human history. The concept of global capitalism or globalization limits the room for reflection on social change; it is neither possible nor necessary to overthrow it by means of revolution or replace it with a new socio-economic order as it is part of the natural progress of humanity. At the

dawn of the 21st century, social disparities, deepening social polarization, fatigue due to overwork, exploitation and militarism are problematized from the positions that do not question the economic doctrine of new relations. Their solutions are pushed out of the economic sphere and into the field of ethics — they are becoming a subject of innovative theories of justice or are articulated through the moral requirements of recognition.

This scientific study will focus on the evolution of ideological discourse on society in Slovakia, which has embodied these generally outlined prevailing tendencies of the perception of the present. The ideological shift in Slovakia will be discussed at three different levels: firstly, we will focus on the political area, namely on the ideological foundations of the right and the left in Slovakia and secondly, on an area that explains, describes and analyses political and social developments. Finally, we will analyse the development of social science discourse in Slovakia, the theoretical treatment of political aspects of contemporary Slovak society and the promotion of ideological concepts explaining social reality in the academic environment. The interplay between these areas is noticeable in the face of the fundamental post-November 1989 socio-political changes. These in turn have been reflected in the shifts that have occurred in the existing concepts, theories and official evaluations.

Ideological background of the Slovak right

On the part of the agents of socio-political change, the November coup was legitimized by the struggle for freedom, democracy, political and opinion pluralism and the rule of law. Political aspects thus became a criterion for assessing socialism. Playing up general political criteria and using a rhetoric based on words like truth, love, freedom, democracy, free elections, the rule of law, human and civil rights, representatives of the new government had not made an explicit mention of the word «capitalism» for a rather long time, replacing it (which they still do) with the term «market economy». A certain part here was played by the awareness that the word «capitalism» was synonymous with an evil and socially unfair regime among the general public. During the November 1989 events, the vast majority of population wanted some form of socialism, or rather a third way between socialism and capitalism. Thus, people continued to believe in the ideas of socialism (such as, for instance, socially just and solidarity-based society, the right to work or fundamental equality between people).

The fundamental shift in the principles of organization of Slovak society brought about some extreme reactions to the past state of society and the historical need for its change. One of such reactions was a dichotomy resulting from the concept of totalitarianism, which yielded a vulgar distinction between «totalitarianism» (pre-November system) and «democracy» (post-November

system), where within the notion of «totalitarianism» another dichotomy emerged, that of an «evil» regime, imported from abroad as opposed to «a good society», violated by that regime (Pullmann 2008: 703–717).

What is more, a number of other dichotomies emerged: an administrative-directed economy versus maximum liberalization; state «paternalism» as opposed to the individual's sole responsibility for his or her life; the dominant role of the State versus the minimum State; the idea that the state-owned economy and state ownership are always inefficient and that only private ownership guarantees economic rationality; the view that privatization is harmful on the one hand and the idea that everything needs to be privatized on the other; the view that foreign capital threatens national interests has been opposed with one that foreign capital is more efficient than domestic capital; «get rich however you can» as opposed to the former egalitarianism and more (Weiss 2005: 74). Between these and other poles of perception based on the previous organization of society and ideas about the shape of a new society, identification of the political circles and population took place with specific proposals for change in the organization of society or rejection of these proposals (Ibid. 74).

Building on the controversial theory of totalitarianism, the right managed to assert the idea of semantic proximity of Nazism to «communism». In the form of the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the Establishment of the Nation's Memory Institute, this idea was elevated to a state ideology. It acquired a legal form, which became an instrument of a unilateral interpretation of Slovak, or rather Czech-Slovak post-war history. This Act defined a «period of non-freedom» which included not only the so-called Prague Spring and people's democracy — a period between 1945–1948, but also the Slovak National Uprising¹. The anti-fascist struggle of the Slovak rebels and the liberation from fascism by the Red Army represented an illegitimate period of non-freedom (!).

1 Even though the day of the declaration of the Slovak National Uprising (SNP) is a public holiday, appreciation of its significance in post-November Slovak society has suffered considerably. In addition to the «revisionist» interpretations of the uprising (especially in the Nation's Memory Institute), excessive influence of the privileged Roman Catholic Church, recognition of A. Hlinka and associated attempts to exonerate the Ľudák regime and the wartime Slovak State labelled as «the First Slovak Republic», this situation was also compounded by Act No. 219/2006 Coll. on the anti-communist resistance, which indirectly legitimized Tiso's clerical-fascist regime. Under this law, the «anti-communist resistance» allegedly began on October 6, 1944; i.e., during the Uprising. The «anti-communist resistance» thus turned into a struggle against anti-fascists, since their large, if not decisive, part were either communists or communist sympathisers. In this sense, the «anti-communist resistance» was led by the Tiso regime itself, whose security forces cooperated with Nazi Germany or with members of the anti-partisan terrorist units.

Equally characteristic was, for instance, uncritical adoption of American role models in the transformation of the economic and legal system, dismissal of certain features of the European Union's organization such as socially and ecologically oriented capitalist economy (the European social model) as purely socialist products, the turning of anti-Sovietism into a priori mistrust of Russia and rejection of the idea of strengthening European defence and security identity, seen as an inevitable threat to the North Atlantic Pact (NATO) (Weiss 2005: 71).

To a large extent, the ideology of the right has been characterized by criticism of «populism» and «etatism». This criticism was inspired by the rule of the Movement for Democratic Slovakia led by its chairman V. Mečiar. His style of governance and political ideas provoked a strong reaction – «antimečiarism» in the right-wing liberal circles. Criticism of Mečiar's administration in the right-wing ideology was ideologically based on modelling, which in the form of the theory of totalitarianism acted as a foundation for discrediting the ideology of «communism». The right-wing thinking here swayed within the manicheistic boundaries of two basic models: «evil» (non-democratic, authoritarian, intolerant, non-transparent) and «good» (democratic, civic, tolerant, transparent). While parties being in opposition to Mečiar were to represent the model of democratic or social transition, Mečiar's government, by contrast, deviated from this model. The same premises in the ideology of the right that served to criticize and blame Mečiar's administration are now used to criticize and blame the current government of R. Fico. Again, the assumption is that there is a model of liberal-democratic regime, which should be protected by «civil-democratic» parties and which is interfered with by R. Fico. While (populist) Mečiar undermined democracy, (populist) Fico taints the democratic atmosphere in society, impairs the quality of the country's democratic political environment, or seeks to use economic crisis to delegitimize the opposition (Ibid. 18–19). Fico is criticized and rejected for paternalism, etatism, nationalism, confrontational political style, partocracy, lack of transparency (public procurement), clientelism, selectiveness, inefficiency, corruption, for insensitive state intervention in the economy that may distort it, for non-standard anti-crisis policy. By contrast, representatives of «civil-democratic» parties are decent, they take a critical stance, offer alternative solutions and are non-confrontational, as are «independent» media, «independent» institutions and «independent» experts. At the same time, in their resistance to Fico (like previously to Mečiar) they allegedly speak on behalf of society.

As claimed by the Slovak right, the main benefit of the change is the amount of GDP, which, according to American political scientist A. Przewor-

ski, affects the quality of democracy². Apart from the idea of measuring the quality of democracy, it is characterized by subscribing to the civic principle, understood as the antithesis of the national principle.

Consolidation of the positions of the right and conservatism went hand in hand with the rise of the influence of religion following the capitalist restoration in 1989. Recognition of the social and legal status of the Church as a public institution facilitated gradual clericalization of Slovak society in the 1990s.³ The demand of the dissidents and protagonists of the November coup for the separation of church and state was soon abandoned. Clericalization received its constitutional and legislative framework. This was significantly aided by the signing and approval of the «Basic Treaty between the Slovak Republic and the Holy See» in 2000. Incidentally, clericalization occurred in contravention of Article I of the first chapter of the Slovak Constitution, which declares that as a sovereign, democratic and legal state, the Slovak Republic is not bound to any ideology or religion. In such a case, the State should not associate with any organization based on religious or other ideology, should remain impartial in world-view matters, and there should be no official religious ideology. However, the reality is fundamentally the opposite. Religious concepts are portrayed as traditional and family-based (read: patriarchal) values that must be preserved as the essence of national identity and cultural sovereignty.

Ideological premises of the Slovak left

In the wake of the post-November crisis of solidarity of society and of the systematic destruction of social protection and social benefits, the left ideology was characterised by its focus on the theme of social solidarity and social cohesion policy, consisting in preserving the elements of the surviving welfare state. The latter continues to be perceived as «a living idea and a living practice, past and present» (Faič 2005: 7). The key issue is the practical question of how Slovakia will sustain its social model and what should be chosen as the basic strategy for its own development. In other words, how social democratic policy will be able to withstand the pressure of the right for the eradication of the welfare state by privatizing everything that is privatizable, from infrastructure to public services, which — to the ordinary citizen — means paid

2 According to the argument of the American political scientist of Polish origin, A. Przeworski, as soon as GDP reaches a certain level in the country and the country is democratic, it is very unlikely to slip back into the authoritarian regime. In support of his argument he quotes the following: Slovakia's GDP per capita is now higher than that of Greece or Argentina in the 1970s, when these democratic countries slipped back into authoritarianism. Thus, the Slovak Republic (and the Czech Republic) are countries «condemned to democracy».

3 For more detail see: Tížik M. Vplyv právnej regulácie na rozvoj náboženského života v SR // Sociológia. 2005. Vol. 37. No. 1. P. 71.

healthcare, education, private insurance of occupational and social risks (Zala 2005: 20). The post-1989 ideology of the left made efforts to implement in politics a socially acceptable «reform» of the economy; this was done because, in terms of Slovakia's stability, further escalation of social disparities could endanger the «reform», or more exactly, the «transition» process. From the perspective of the European Union, the Slovak left-wing thinking is opposed to the promotion of the neoliberal concept of integration, which reinforces not only inequality between poor and rich individuals and social groups, but also inequality between poor and rich countries and regions.

Communists, who adopted the political strategy of anti-system opposition, were (and still are) opposed to the November and post-November changes, denying their historical legitimacy; they are convinced that the victory of capitalism is only temporary, they reject the transatlantic orientation and question the economic and political integration trends in Europe, Slovakia's membership in NATO and its participation in the occupation of foreign countries. In reaction to the condemnation of socialism, the communists have begun to think that the past regime was a regime like any other, with its flaws and shortcomings, that structural violence is an inherent part of any political system, that its forms only differ in context and in the ways of its legitimisation, that there is no regime in which violence is ruled out and is practically non-existent, in which (albeit in a minority of cases) there is no violation of human and civil rights. In opposition to the right-wing conservative understanding of «communism» as a phenomenon fundamentally alien to the traditional Slovak setting, as something that was inorganically enforced, implanted from the outside (from the Soviet Union), they believe that socialist ideological perception is inherently domestic, belonging to the Slovak tradition, a phenomenon that has grown organically in the Slovak setting as part of the domestic cultural-social tradition.

Reflection on the political and social situation in Slovakia in social sciences

After 1989, description and explication of social aspects (as a follow-up to political realities) began to take place in different theoretical terms to those used previously. In contrast to the materialistic grasp of social relations, idealistic understanding started to take shape and assert itself as a result of the change in socio-economic order. This has become a platform for official social science discourse, permeating other social areas (education, culture and art). The incongruity between the reality of grave social problems — poverty, unemployment, exploitation, inadequate health care, inaccessibility of basic social services, which are determined by citizens' ability to pay and which have been put out of reach for the majority of the population, have led to a gradual interest of academia in bringing the methodology of dialectical materialism up

to date. Alongside the prevailing idealistic perception, we have seen a growing interest in Marxism over the past 10 years.

The science research project *Marx and social changes after 1989* (Dinuš 2011: 197–201) with related research activities, focusing on the theoretical analysis of social processes in contemporary capitalism using Marxist methodology, has been a milestone that embodies Marxist reflection of social reality in social science discourse. This work involves several publications by a team of authors, including *Spor o Marxa* (Dispute over Marx) (Takáč, P., Dinuš, P. a kol. 2011: 131–139), *Svet v bode obratu* (The world at the turning point) (Dinuš 2019), *Revolúcia alebo transformácia?* (Revolution or transformation?) (Dinuš, P.; Hohoš, L.; Hrubec, M. 2014), *Október 1917 a súčasnosť* (October 1917 and the present) (Dinuš 2018) and others. Interest in revising the Marxist analysis to adapt it to the contemporary social situation or in the historical-philosophical treatment of this theoretical tradition is also observed in independent scientific works, of which those worth mentioning include *Vyrovňávanie sa s minulosťou?* (Coping with the past?) (Dinuš 2011), *Späť k Marxovi?* (Back to Marx?) (Blaha 2012), *Politika bez masky* (Politics without a mask) (Dinuš 2015), *Zabudnúť na Marxa* (Forgetting Marx) (Novosad 2018) and others.

Critical discourse on capitalism found its outlet in the systemic questions of feasible alternatives to the ruling capitalism, the questions of economically viable and ethically compliant economic models based on economic democracy or participatory economics (the so-called parecon). The debate over systemic alternatives to capitalism touches on a wide range of subjects in the economic, social and political spheres. This line of thought has not been new in our country; as early as the 1940s, President of the Democratic People's Republic of Czechoslovakia E. Beneš came to the conclusion that political democracy ought to be supplemented by economic democracy. In a similar vein, some social democrats reasoned that it was due to the absence of economic democracy in the post-1918 period that the fascist forces were able to launch an attack on democracy and freedom of nations.

Through focusing on the issues of formulating the visions of socio-economic development in the future, visions based on the assumption that the optimistic version of globalized capitalism is heading for a collapse, a theme has emerged which, with the deepening of disparities and contradictions of the capitalist society may, in the long run, cut across the entire society. The time will show.

REFERENCES

- Blaha, L. (2012). *Späť k Marxovi?* [Back to Marx?]. Vydavateľstvo: VEDA.
- Dinuš, P. (2015). *Politika bez masky* [Politics without a mask]. Vydavateľstvo: VEDA.
- Dinuš, P., Hohoš, L. Hrubec, M. (2014). *Revoluce nebo transformace? Revolúcia alebo transformácia?* [Revolution or transformation? Revolution or transformation]. Praha-Bratislava: Filosofia.

- Dinuš, P. et al. (2011). Marx and Social Changes after 1989, in: *Filozofia*. Vol. 66. № 2. pp. 197–201.
- Dinuš, P. et al. (2019). Svet v bode obratu [The world at the turning point]. Vydavateľstvo: VEDA SAV.
- Dinuš, P. (2011). Vyrovnávanie sa s minulosťou? [Coping with the past?] Vydavateľstvo: VEDA.
- Faič, V., (2005). Úvodné vystúpenie [Keynote address], in: *Sociálny štát — praktická politika a programové výzvy pre sociálnu demokraciu* [Welfare State — Practical Policy and Program Challenges for Social Democracy]. ASA. Bratislava.
- Novosad, F. (2018). Zabudnúť na Marxa [Forgetting Marx]. Vydavateľstvo: IRIS.
- Dinuš, P. et al. (2018). Október 1917 a súčasnosť [October 1917 and the present]. Vydavateľstvo: VEDA.
- Patnaik, P. (1990). Whatever Has Happened to Imperialism?, in: *Social Scientist*. #18. pp. 6–7.
- Pullmann, M. (2008). Sociální dějiny a totalitněhistorické vyprávění [Social history and totalitarian-historical narrative], in: *Soudobé dějiny XV/3-4*. Institute for Contemporary History AS CR. pp. 703–717.
- Takáč, P., Dinuš, P., et al. (2011). Spor o Marxa. Bratislava : Veda, vydavateľstvo SAV, 2011.
- Tížik, M. (2005). Vplyv právnej regulácie na rozvoj náboženského života v SR [The impact of legal regulation on the development of religious life in Slovakia], in: *Sociológia*. Vol. 37. No. 1.
- Weiss, P. (2005). K problematike postkomunistickej identity [The issue of post-communist identity], in: Marušiak, J., Ferencová, M. (eds.) *Teoretické prístupy k identitám a ich praktické aplikácie*. Veda, Bratislava.
- Zala, B. (2005). Teoretické východiská sociálneho štátu [Theoretical Background of the Welfare State], in: *Sociálny štát — praktická politika a programové výzvy pre sociálnu demokraciu*. Inštitút ASA, v spolupráci s Konfederáciou odborových zväzov Slovenskej republiky, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, zastúpením v Slovenskej republike, Renner Institut [ASA Institute, in cooperation with the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Representation in the Slovak Republic, Renner Institut Vienna]. Bratislava.

Эволюция идеологического дискурса об обществе после 1989 года в Словакии

Авторы. Динуш Петер, PhD, независимый научный работник Института политических наук Словацкой академии наук. E-mail: peter.dinus@savba.sk
Динушова Доминика, Ph.D., Кафедра общественных наук, Полицейская академия в Братиславе (Словакия). E-mail: dominika.dinusova@akademiapz.sk

Аннотация. После 1989 года государства, появившиеся на территории Чехословакии, претерпели фундаментальные социальные преобразования, которые проявились не только в политической и экономической системах, но и в идеологическом дискурсе. Материалистическое восприятие социальных процессов сменилось идеалистической перспективой. Дихотомия между тоталитаризмом и демократией стала центральной ментальной конструкцией. Проблема нашла свое отражение в соответствующих законодательных актах, историографических и других официальных исследованиях об обществе в рамках т.н. примирения с прошлым. Как следует понимать драматический сдвиг в идеологическом дискурсе современного словацкого общества в сравнении с дореволюционным социалистическим обществом? Возможно ли найти ответ на вопрос в рамках выбранной научной методики? Или это зависит от преобладающих политических отношений, порождающих определенный тип идеологии?

Ключевые слова: идеологический дискурс, общество, словацкие левые, словацкие правые, социальные науки.