

Štefančík, R. (2019). *Christlich – demokratische Parteien in der Slowakei. Eine neue Perspektive. (Christian democratic Parties in Slovakia. The New Perspective)*. Hamburg: DR. Kovač, 2019, 212 pages. ISBN 978-3-339-11192-0.

The Christian democratic parties play an important role in several Western European countries, since they were behind many of the successes and failures in the process of uniting European states after World War II. In general, Christian democracy is considered by many experts to be the most successful political movement in the modern history of the political life of the people of the European continent. This idea is followed by the author Radoslav Štefančík in his latest publication entitled *Christlich-demokratische Parteien in der Slowakei* with the subtitle *Eine neue Perspektive*. In the introduction the author explains his focus on the scientific investigation of this issue. It is clear from his words that he has been dealing with this topic since 2005, when his study stay in the Federal Republic of Germany aroused his interest in it. No wonder, the political parties CDU/CSU still fundamentally define the economic, social and political character of the present Federal Republic of Germany.

In the context of the success of Christian democratic parties in several European countries, the author focuses on the successes and falls of Christian democratic political forces in Slovakia. In the case of Slovakia, this topic is even more interesting, because until 2006, the political parties with the Christian democratic orientation (KDH and SDKÚ-DS) belonged to those who formed the policy, but after the parliamentary elections in 2016 there is no political party which can be objectively described as a successor of traditional Christian democracy. The above-mentioned political parties are therefore at the center of the author's attention. He seeks to answer the question why, in a post-communist country, in which the Church (Catholic) and Christian faith played a particularly important role, there was not only one political party representing this thought and value stream, but several parties, unable to form one large political party or electoral block in order to achieve a better election result (Štefančík, 2019, p. 12). In order to answer this key question, but also many others, the monograph is divided into eleven separate sections: 1. *Vorwort (Preface)*, 2. *Einleitung (Introduction)*, 3. *Grundzüge des slowakischen politischen System (Fundamentals of the Slovak Political System)*, 4. *Die Vorgeschichte der christlich-demokratischen*

Parteien (History of Christian democratic Parties), 5. Die Position der slowakischen Christdemokraten im nationalen Parteiensystem. Übersicht über die Parlaments-, Kommunal- und Europawahlen seit 1990 (The Position of Slovak Christian democrats in the national Political System. Overview of parliamentary, municipal and European elections since 1990), 6. Die Position der slowakischen Christdemokraten in der politischen Konfliktstruktur der Gesellschaft (The position of Slovak Christian democrats in the political conflict structure of society), 7. Institutionalisierung und Programmatik der slowakischen Christdemokraten (Institutionalization and program policy of Slovak Christian Democrats), 8. Fazit (Conclusion), 9. Literatur (References), 10. Abkürzungsverzeichnis (List of abbreviations), 11. Verzeichnis der Tabellen und Graphiken (List of tables and graphics).

In the preface *Vorwort (Preface)* of the monograph the author expresses his belief that one of the political entities representing the Christian democratic stream in Slovakia has not yet spoken the last word. It is caused by the fact that KDH is one of the few political parties which managed to survive its founder and the party is currently headed by its fourth chairman. It makes the following text much more interesting. The second chapter, which is entitled *Einleitung (Introduction)*, contains also a methodological aspect of the processing of the topic and the related current and past state of research of this issue. He mentions here the names of some authors with reference to their publications on party systems in post-communist countries, or directly those who have recently addressed the issue of Christian democracy in the domestic political environment. At this point, however, it is necessary to say that in our environment there is no scientific publication (except this one) about this issue. For better orientation, in terms of time and space, the author has tried to introduce the environment of the Slovak political system to an objective reader (Chapter 3). It can be classified as a parliamentary form of government, with its own political realities. An integral part of any political system is the party system. The author tries to identify it on the basis of knowledge of important theorists of the party system and political parties (for example Huntighton, 1968, Lipset, Rokkan, 1967, Panebianco, 1988, Mainwaring, 1988, Sartori, 1997, Rybář, 2011), their ideological or programmatic orientation in the context of the party system. In the context of voter behavior, he notices the fact that voters decide not on the basis of a political party's election program, but on the basis of other factors - this leads to personification of voter behavior. Within this chapter, the author briefly introduces political parties (in terms of ideological and programmatic orientation), which in some way accepted

the existence of God in their programming documents and which accept the Christian values or the Cyril-Methodius tradition, present in the history of the Slovak nation.

The fourth chapter presents an interesting historical excursion. It addresses primarily the beginnings of confessional political parties in our territory in the light of the struggle for the right of the Slovak nation to self-determination within the monarchy and after its disintegration, for the place in the common state of Czechs and Slovaks, the autonomy-related efforts. In this context, the author also includes political events during the Second Czechoslovak Republic and the Slovak State. Interesting is also the part about finding a connection between Catholics and Protestants within the Democratic Party. This should ultimately prevent the Communists from gaining more success in the first post-war elections. This eventually succeeded, but only in the Slovak part of the post-war state. The author also points out the differences between Czechs and Slovaks during the period of communist rule after 1948 in the context of the way of fighting against the then state-party power.

The chapter entitled *Die Position der Slowakischen Christdemokraten im Nationalen Parteiensystem. Übersicht über die Parlaments-, Kommunal- und Europawahlenseit 1990* (*The Position of Slovak Christian democrats in the national Political System is very interesting for the reader interested in the political science aspects of the Christian democrats in Slovakia. Overview of parliamentary, municipal and European elections since 1990*). In this chapter, the author pays attention mainly to electoral successes as well as to failures in individual types of elections. In this context, parliamentary elections, which ultimately determined the position of Christian Democrats in the party and political system, could be considered to be the most interesting.

The sixth chapter, entitled *Die Position der slowakischen Christdemokraten in der politischen Konfliktstruktur der Gesellschaft* (*The position of Slovak Christian democrats in the political conflict structure of society*) begins by stating that (also on the basis of the nature of the preceding chapters) traditional cleavage lines presented by Rokkan and Lipset are no longer topical after systemic changes in the Slovak Republic, since the transformation of political systems after 1989 in the countries of the former Soviet bloc creates new conflicts and problem areas such as communism versus anti-communism, mečiarism versus anti-mečiarism, pro-European orientation versus orientation towards Russia and so on. These are areas which not only in the past, but many of them also today (although in various modifications) significantly influence the economic, social and political system of Slovak

society. In this context, we still face the question of how and with what result Christian democratic political parties can cope with these challenges.

In the final chapter entitled *Institutionalisierung und Programmatik der Slowakischen Christdemokraten (Institutionalization and Programmatik der slowakischen Christdemokraten (Institutionalization and program policy of Slovak Christian Democrats))*, the author first briefly introduces the organization of the two most successful Slovak Christian democratic parties so far. Subsequently, the author offers a deeper analysis of the institutionalization of KDH as a political entity, as well as an analysis of the KDH party program. In the context of institutionalization, he pursues the following criteria: (rooting/consolidation in society, autonomy, level of organization and coherence, which the author describes as the weakest aspect not only of the Christian democratic political parties but also of all political parties in Slovakia). The argument in favor of the author's assertion of the last of the above-mentioned criteria within institutionalization may be the in-party events of several relevant political parties before the upcoming parliamentary elections.

To summarize, we consider it necessary to recall that the submitted publication meets the quality parameters of the professional publication, scientific monograph. It appropriately complements the space that has not been filled for a long period of time and remains at the margins of interest of the political science community. In this context, the publication represents a unique discussion attempt on the position of Christian democracy in Slovakia in the past, present and future. It is intended especially for readers who are interested in specific political topics. Last but not least, it is intended for students of political science and related disciplines and can undoubtedly help them to understand many of the undisclosed pitfalls of the Slovak party and political system over the past period.

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