

Reviews

Juraj Marušiak a kolektív: Za zrkadlom politiky

VEDA, Bratislava 2010, 305 pages

The Institute of Political Science of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) is one of the most creative institutions among the Slovak departments of political science. By studying the policy, politics and polity the researchers mainly consider primary role of history, because this institution above all was created by historians. This approach to political science, a relatively new scientific discipline in Slovakia, with its establishment beginning not sooner than after 1989 system change, is altogether legitimate, but should not remain the only one. This fact is surely recognized also by the staff of the Institute, because they cooperate closely with other Slovak political science departments in preparation of collective monographs or volumes. In case of peer-reviewed publication the Institute cooperated with the representatives of political science departments in Trnava, Nitra and at the University of Economics in Bratislava.

The collective monograph of 11 authors, with Juraj Marušiak from the Institute of Political Sciences of SAS at the head, is the publication examining not only one paradigm of political issues. Certainly, one could argue whether the publication title – "Through the Looking Glass of Politics" – describes sufficiently its varied content and the main goal of the book. And perhaps, because of heterogeneity of articles, the team only managed to agree on the common title, which can spoil nothing on the one hand, but reveals nothing substantial on the other one. I will not speculate, however, I prefer looking at content. The publication begins with a contribution about state and statehood early in the 21st century, the second chapter considers national interest and foreign policy and the third chapter outlines totalitarianism and approaches to the past. In the next chapters we can find considerations about relationship of civil and national principle, about social justice, the next chapter presents approaches to research of political parties and the next author outlines conservative ideology and conservative discourse in Slovakia in the first half of the 1990s. The book comprises also articles on minorities, period of Czechoslovakism, church autonomy, and finally, the last chapter is devoted to global environmental crisis.

Readers themselves determine whether heterogeneity of the book content can be considered as an advantage or disadvantage. Obviously, this will depend on the nature of readers. If the readers are students, they will enjoy that they can find basic information on several areas for their study; when the readers are researchers of foreign policy or environmentalism, they will find their research object in only one chapter. If someone examines shifts in meaning of the same

words used in politics and in science, they can find many interesting contributions in this book, although in some of them they will find a bit of ballast. A disadvantage of this publication certainly includes the fact, and it sometimes happens with collective monographs, that not all chapters are of equal quality. However, before evaluating selected contributions, let us have a look at the conditions under which the publication was written, as well as goal of the authors, to understand the substance of this monograph better.

The collective monograph is the result of cooperation between Political, Historical and Philosophical Institutes under auspices of the Centre of Excellence of Slovak Academy of Sciences. The interdisciplinary approach is evident at first sight in the book, but interdisciplinarity should not interfere with the coherence of the text. In the words of Juraj Marušiak, aim of the monograph is “to analyse relationship between politics, journalism and political science through the use of political terminology.” Although we might draw attention to a small detail, that analysis can be regarded as a method, and not as the goal itself, further words of Juraj Marušiak explain a really interesting aim of researchers, namely, to see how politics, journalism and science interact through the language. This objective can be considered as very interesting in Slovakia, because journalists often confuse columnists with political scientists. For inclusion of a person in the group of political scientists, the single criterion for some Slovak redactors is his or her willingness to comment on politics. Experts from others branches like archivists, journalists, geographers, sociologists, public opinion researchers, historians or even people without university education are therefore sometimes wrongly presented in the media as political scientists. Under these conditions it is very interesting to analyse the relationship between journalism and science expressed through the language.

It is therefore questionable whether all authors have followed the main goal of the book. To confirm my concerns, I will start with critique of article on political parties by Svetozár Krno. Author presents basic theoretical approaches to research of political parties and party systems. Returning to the primary aim of this book observing the mutual influence of science, politics and journalism through the language, especially in this contribution the author could comment the unnatural term "Mečiarism" (or “mečiarizmus” in Slovak language). Marián Leško, a columnist, is regarded as its author, and the term is heard too often not only in everyday language or found not only in the newspapers, but also in the language of scientists to simply and misleadingly call the period of the coalition government of three political parties between 1994 – 1998. It's a pity that the author doesn't take a chance to review this misleading term.

Peter Weiss, one of the other authors, outlines the concept of "national interest". In relation to the main goal of the book the consideration of national interest is a very good choice, because of its usage in different contexts. The

term national interest has a rich history in Slovakia, too. It is an important category nowadays and it is discussed at several levels, including in the context of deepening European integration. It is a part of professional, political and journalistic language and as the author points out, it is a part of outputs of domestic and foreign policies of nation states. The foreign policy is here defined as a "dynamic process of formulating and implementing national interest in polyarchy, polycentric and international environment" (pp. 62). At first, the author analyses the national interest in terms of realistic concepts of international relations and then, although not in much detail, he presents critical view of idealists. In the last part of his contribution, author presents the internal and external objective and subjective conditions of foreign policy. However, the issue is discussed only at theoretical level and the author does not analyse the term from the view of language of contemporary Slovak actors in domestic or foreign policy. Thus, it remains unanswered whether definition of Slovak Republic's national interest is influenced more by normative and ideological position of current power holders, or it can be seen as a category of foreign policy which is independent of party politics. It would be interesting to assess, given the main goal of reviewed publication, how the meaning of national interest varies in science, politics and journalism.

Among Slovak political scientists, sociologists or historians, research of minorities plays traditionally an important role because of two large minorities living in Slovakia (Hungarian and Roma). The state's relationship to minorities is very important within objective assessment of the democracy level. Giovanni Sartori, a classic of European political science, defined democracy as a system in which the government protects minority rights. Zuzana Poláčková also tried to define minority in the reviewed publication. Regarding the goal of the book, the term "minority" often occurs in the language of Slovak politicians or scientists and so it is correct to include this term in the author's thinking. Reserved or aggressive verbal attacks against the Hungarian and Roma minority are used by Slovak populists as already traditional and unfortunately one of the best instruments of voters' mobilization. Attitudes to the Hungarians played an important role not only in parliamentary elections, but they appeared to be an important factor in the election campaign and voting behaviour in presidential elections. But I think the minority should not be seen only as a "marginalized, oppressed or discriminated group of people which should be protected", as it is defined by Zuzana Poláčková. In advanced democratic societies, minorities have equal rights and duties as the majority. Although the author uses the term minority from ethnic or national point of view, the word minority is associated also with other connotations, because we recognize other minorities as well (minded, socio-economic, religious, or minority of people with homosexual orientation). Obviously, I could not write these critical words

if the author had indicated in the title of the contribution that she considered only nationality or ethnic minority groups. On the other hand, the author describes interestingly the circumstances of the genesis and usage of this term in domestic politics and policy of international organizations. She does not forget to point out that unlike in Slovakia, in Western Europe there have been currently talks about allochthonous minorities, created after World War II due to immigration. I think it's important in this context to write that not only multiculturalism (which is currently denied by some Western European politicians), but also assimilation or ethnic segregation are terms of minority policy or integration policy. The multiculturalism is (was) not the only model of integration policies in Western Europe. She notes that the Slovak Republic can be seen as a positive example for other countries on the issue of integration of minorities. "We cannot see the position of Hungarian minority in Slovakia and the Muslim minority in France from the same perspective, but we can find some common traits related to maintaining a balance of democratic institutions" (pp. 220).

The term "Czechoslovakism" has an important place in the Slovak research of the relationships between politics, journalism and science. In the book, this term is analysed by Norbert Kmeť. Although it is important to point out that this term does not play such an important role in actual political terminology as it was by creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 or by its dissolution 75 years later. It's very important to underline that the author outlines the main goal of this book and points to semantic shift when various terms are used by researchers from various scientific disciplines. So the author followed the main line of publication, which some other authors forgot (Krno, Šmihula). This contribution should be placed at the book's beginning not only for this reason, but also because the author also analyses the term which was differently interpreted in the historical development of Czechoslovakia and therefore has also been abused by political actors in the early 20th century. Although the author points out in conclusion that the article does not mention all meanings of the term, yet it was also necessary to point out the importance of this concept in relations of Czechs and Slovaks as members of the so-called nation-state and citizens of Czechoslovakia with German nationality in the first half of the 20th century.

Finally, the last part of this book is conclusion. Unfortunately, it is very short and it does not contain answers to questions representing the main focus of this publication. Thus, the reader will not know if the authors managed to achieve the objective or not. I think the authors should have given a detailed summary conclusion in this type of publication, especially in situation where final assessment is absent in some texts. Conclusion is, therefore, expressed very briefly and generally, without answering the question, whether any

expressions taken from journalism really appear in scientific terminology, and whose meaning can be impugned if they are approached scientifically, and conversely, whether concepts taken from the language of political science emerge in journalism and political discourse, or to what extent the meaning of some terms are shifted. Certainly, it would be useful if the authors pointed to additional identified gaps in research selected issues. This deficiency is important in the assumption that the publication will also serve as a textbook for students of political science, for whom it is important that political terms are used in the correct meaning.

Critical view on all book's contributions would exceed the framework of this review. Also positively evaluated texts could be marked as having deviated from its original intention. However, despite some critical remarks, the book is attractive for scholars and students of political science, history and law, and also for the public.

Radoslav Štefančík