**Miroslav Tížik: Religion in Public Life in Slovakia. Struggles for the Ideological Character of the State and Society**

Bratislava: Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences 2012, 423 p. ISBN 978-80-85544-72-5

Despite several reservations about the theoretic and methodological approach of Pierre Bourdieu that the author of this peer-review has (particularly in terms of corporeality, political subject and general social ontology, Nordmann 2006) the review can hardly begin with anything else than complimenting on the overall quality of the publication. By depicting the dynamics of religiousness in the territory of Slovakia in the 20th century in great detail the book has pretensions to become an important reference not just for Slovak sociology, but also to offer several highly relevant observations and ask historiographical and politological questions.

Already the first chapter shows that Tížik's aim is to shatter the political consequences of black and white narrative categories and demystify the symbolic power of Church institutions and practices. He has carried out this on meso- and macroscopic level primarily by looking at the development of state's regulation of churches and religiousness, by describing “blanket” symbolic practices as pictures on post stamps or tenders or by studying political and religious holidays and events. Author keeps illustrating their impacts with available statistical data and survey on their responses. In addition, all information is supported by bibliographic references of secondary literature, synthesized, as already indicated, through Bourdieu's concept of the symbolic field. All in all, this gets us closer to some kind of an “Archimedes' point”, which can help social sciences avoid accepting and strengthening the current doxic (habitual) game rules in the conditions after 1989 and after the Slovak Republic gained independence in 1993. In many ways, the 20th century can be called the century of secularization, even if the context of its form is political. Tížik illustrates that in spite of its smaller homogeneity than in the territory of Czech Republic Catholic religiousness in Slovakia in the period of the first Czecho-Slovak Republic had been identified with tradition and even backwardness, whereas secularization on federal level was often radically enforced in connection with the de-churchification of schools, land reform or forming formal administration also related to the migration of upper (clerical) classes from the Czech Republic to the Slovak Republic (p. 47), often in conflict with the former, primarily clerical elites (p.45). Even if this tendency had not been reversed during the first Slovak Republic due to international focus on the Vatican, the era of independence until 1945 was accompanied mainly by clerical elites re-taking the state and by the effort to eliminate non-Catholic Churches (apart from the Evangelical). In the context of post war expulsion of Germans, reciprocal exchange of citizens with the Hungary and the so-called Beneš Decrees (important from the perspective of religiousness), this helps to break the stereotype of the onset of radical de-churchification as late as after 1948.

The mentioned developments help Tížik focus on public manipulation with religious symbolism while legitimizing historically fragile state structures. Furthermore, author accentuates a far more plastic and from ideological perspective incoherent relationship between the churches and the communist regime, in which at first mainly, the political regime did not avoid referring to ecclesiastical symbolism when emphasizing the aspect of “people's” in people's democracy and partially provoked hostility (to different extent) by the effort to reduce Vatican's influence and the “western” even “imperial” influence in the dominant Catholic church. Partial liberalization of the regime in the mid 60's as well as subsequent concessions that the Vatican made to the communist regime (mainly due to the fact that the new Pope came from a deeply Catholic Poland) make the relationship between the state and religion far more complex. Similar also crisis of the legitimacy of the regime in 70's and particularly in 80's, when in order to maintain the power there were efforts to search for new symbolic sources instead of using popular and progressive slogans (p. 143). Hence, author can analyse the formation of social field of religion after 1989 and particularly after the separation of federation in 1993 on the grounds of the described hybrid and not always direct antagonistic structure, in which the doxic entrenchment (such as mutual reference points, symbols, and norms) is missing and whose political role could not therefore be organized: “Several studies on November and post-November events have shown that the Church had only much later become an important changer and that the so-called Velvet Revolution itself brought about a change, which created a new symbolic world rather similar to secular and non-church religion.” (p. 146) Gradual formation of the symbiotic patronage of churches, which strived to expand their symbolical power and of political elites searching for support and legitimacy of their activities in Christian mythology and in Churches is subject to extensive and detailed documentation. The period after 2000, when an international treaty with Vatican had been signed was of vital importance. In spite of its purpose to legitimize Slovakia internationally this step actually provided churches with economic and legal autonomy while having a financial model, which assumed a total ban on their autonomous activities. This led to privileging their status well beyond the period before 1948 and from the perspective of power outside the acceptable level expected from a country with a successful transition to liberal democracy. Apart from that, government machinery favours dominant churches in the process of neoliberal welfare state outsourcing as a civic society participant also in such cases as a care for the unemployed even if they only do pastoral work. While in USA the break-up of union organizations or social services provided by the state led to an increase in the support of fundamentalist Christian right (Conolly 2009), Tížik shows that the political response to these changes has been faint and that the public has reacted to power effort of churches with great indifference.

In comparison with a study on the break-up of the Soviet Union in the Caucasus territory and on the increase in Islamic nationalism, in which G. M. Derluguian has used an extensive ethnographic research to show that in such a highly diverse environment political Islamism is a tool of a two-faced social destruction caused by the shift of borders of economic periphery (Derluguian 2005), the reviewed study primarily arises several questions about the real practice of religiousness in everyday life. Furthermore, the need to analyse in detail the influence of the described changes on the ideological and economic focus of citizens, as Bourdieu himself would probably highlight or even issue of “anthropotechniques”, which P. Sloterdijk relates to (by Sloterdijk rejected) hypothesis about the “return of religion”. (Sloterdijk 2012) Nevertheless, this remark goes far beyond the scope of the enormous province of this book, which thanks to a number of important data and provocative conclusions aims to become a fundamental milestone in analysing the issue of religiousness in Slovakia.

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